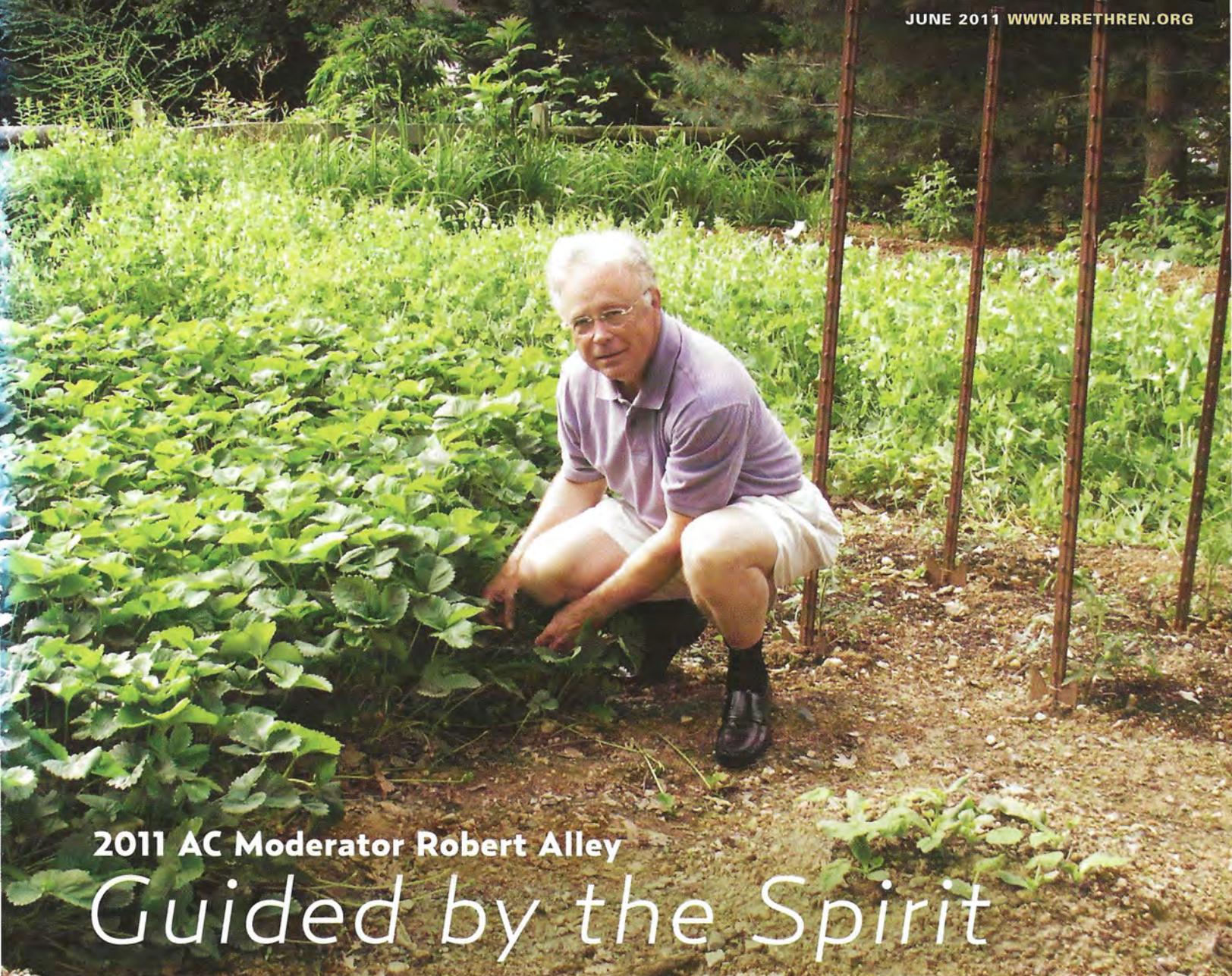


Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

JUNE 2011 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



2011 AC Moderator Robert Alley

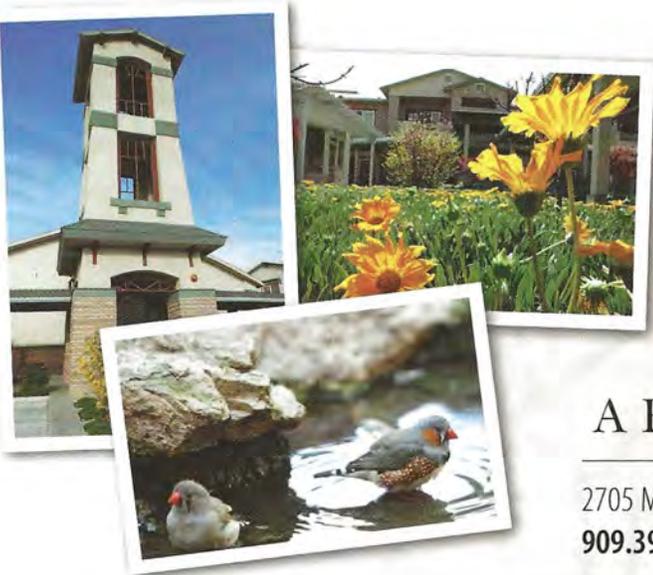
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Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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Glenn Riegel

ONTHECOVER

Moderator Robert Alley most likely will be wearing a suit and tie as he guides delegates through the business of Annual Conference this summer. But his interests extend beyond meetings about church policy. Known for his green thumb, Alley plants a vegetable garden each spring. Annual Conference director Chris Douglas sees the garden itself as Alley's source of spiritual grounding and centering. "It's fascinating to me that it is the very earth that is one of the things that grounds Robert."



DEPARTMENTS

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8 Guided by the Spirit

When moderator Robert Alley takes the gavel this summer at the 2011 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Mich., he will challenge his fellow Brethren to live out Jesus' call to mission and discipleship—a vision expressed through the theme he has chosen, "Gifted with Promise: Extending Jesus' Table." Alley's advice to delegates this summer is to "Listen well, speak slowly, and respect the genuineness of people."

14 Learning to listen

Ken Gibble echoes moderator Robert Alley's encouragement to Annual Conference delegates in this meditation on the art of truly listening. "Most of us have had one or more people in our lives who really listened to us," Gibble says. "How did they do it? Probably by looking at us while we were talking; they didn't keep their eyes on a book or on the TV screen; they didn't stare at the ceiling or out the window."

16 This we hold in common

In this sixth installment in our series dealing with the Special Response Process, Elizabeth Keller reflects on her own steps as a young girl growing up in the Church of the Brethren, and how important the guidance she received from youth advisors was as she explored issues surrounding her adolescence. "Our youth leaders answered with vulnerability and openness, admitting their past and present mistakes, expressing joy and excitement, and wanting healthy and intimate relationships for us all."

18 Mutual assistance yesterday and today

Graydon F. Snyder, former dean and professor of New Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary and Chicago Theological Seminary, continues his MESSENGER Bible study series that examines what it means for a denomination to take the entire New Testament as its creed. In this installment, Snyder discusses the Brethren penchant for helping our neighbors, whether within our denomination or beyond, and some biblical passages that may lie at the root of that continuing trend toward outreach.

According to some accounts, cursive writing may be a casualty of the digital age. Most states no longer require this training, opting to reallocate education time toward keyboarding and standardized testing. As a result, apparently there are now college-age students who can't read old letters written by their grandparents.

One of the keepsakes in my home is the guest book from my husband's grandparents. His grandfather was the local pastor, and the guest book is a fascinating collection of names from Brethren history books, a few relatives of individuals named in our own guest book, and several people who are still active in the church he used to pastor.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

As notable as the roster of names is the quality of penmanship. Page after page, the graceful, legible script recalls order, practice, and the Palmer Method. Today's guest books often show a good bit more diversity.

So who cares if we have sloppy handwriting? Does it matter?

More important, how do we know when to give up the ways of the past?

That question is one that comes up all the time when publishers get together. It's a companion to another question: How do we know when to adopt the ways of the future? VHS versus

DVD. Print versus digital. Being the church of 2011 versus being the church of 1950.

Is the capability to text at lightning speed a satisfactory substitute for the capability to read old handwriting? Is singing from words on a screen as good as singing four-part harmony from a musical score? Is a devotional on a smart phone more practical than a devotional on paper?

The answer is that these aren't the right questions. Rather, does the way we write our life together build community? Are we using technology to enhance relationship? Are we finding new ways to communicate more quickly than we're losing old ways? Is the message communicated convincingly for a new generation? Are we being God's church today?

Wendy McFadden

Speaking of digital: MESSENGER's series of Special Response essays has been collected into a single resource available as a download. The six essays were published from September 2010 through June 2011 to help readers prepare for the 2011 Annual Conference. *Considering the Special Response Process* can be downloaded for \$1.99 from www.brethrenpress.com.

HOW TO REACH US

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'East Chip' holds Youth Fishing Derby, complete with golden trout

East Chippewa Church of the Brethren near Orrville, Ohio, held a Sixth Annual Youth Fishing Derby sponsored by the church's senior high youth, Family Life and Recreation Commission, and the Witness Commission on Saturday, May 21, at the residence of Larry and Lysa Boothe, north of the church.

A large crowd with dozens of children attended with their parents and grandparents. "At one time we had 122 fishing," said pastor Leslie Lake, minister of Youth and Music.

Two golden trout were placed in the pond with a special prize being given to those fortunate enough to catch them. Two-year-old Marley Cupp, shown with her grandfather, Chuck Deeter, won one of two gift certificates for catching a golden trout. Jason Short of Apple Creek, Ohio, caught the other.

Each child who caught a fish had his or her photo taken, and a large photo gallery from the Youth Fishing Derby has been posted on the church's website at <http://eastchip.wordpress.com>.

Attendees also had lunch provided on a sunny and warm spring day that was full of fun, frolic, and fishing.

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.



Photos courtesy of Lysa Boothe



Jason Short (top) and two-year-old Marley Cupp shown with her grandfather each caught a golden trout.

Northeast The 28th annual Brethren Heritage Festival is scheduled for Sept. 17 at Camp Harmony. Brochures and application forms will be available in July. There will be a pastor and district leadership team bake-off this year. Also, there will be an open stage from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for choirs, youth groups, or individuals. Those interested in participating are encouraged to contact the Western Pennsylvania District Office.

Southeast French Broad Church of the Brethren is expanding its outreach and ministries in the area through the Dandridge Ministerial Association. The DMA recently became the owner of a 17,330 square foot building for its growing ministries. It now houses the Area Emergency Food Pantry, a thrift store, a computer training room, and a planned meals on wheels ministry.

Midwest Youngsters attending Elementary I camp at the end of June will be the first to enjoy the newly renovated swimming pool at Camp Emmaus. The original pool was built in 1952. . . . Cold, rainy weather did not discourage volunteers who helped get Camp Emmanuel ready for the camping season. Ranging in age from 10 to 83, they came from as far away as Mulberry Grove in southern Illinois to scrub cabins, wash windows, make curtains, clean out boats, and set up picnic tables.

Ozarks/Plains At the request of FEMA, teams of Children's Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers are working in Joplin, Mo., in the aftermath of the tornado that hit the city on May 24. CDS also has dispatched a Critical Response Childcare team to accompany the American Red Cross's Integrated Care team on home visits to families who have experienced a death when there are children in the home. Darrell Barr, Western Plains District disaster coordinator, who lives some 30 miles from Joplin, has been representing BDM in meetings with FEMA and other disaster response partners.

West The Koinonia (Grand Junction, Colo.) congregation sent a group to El Salvador in early June to build schools in rural villages. This is the fifth year they have made this trip. Koinonia has also paid tuition for students and helped pay for teachers. . . . The Wichita (Kan.) congregation is again offering its fellowship hall to neighborhood children and families for a free lunch over the summer. This is a joint venture with USD 259, who provides the food daily. Volunteers from the congregation provide extra staffing.



YOU SAID IT

"Ministry is not a function of only those licensed and ordained, but a calling and activity of all."

—Illinois/Wisconsin District executive Kevin Kessler in "The Reflector," May 2011

BY THE NUMBERS

100

Countries represented by the nearly 1,000 attendees at the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Jamaica in May who declared, "We are unanimous in our aspiration that war should become illegal."

Montezuma Church of the Brethren pastor David Miller presents the first Shenandoah Pastors for Peace Living Peace Award to Dean Neher at a banquet held March 15 at the church.



Living Peace Award presented to Dean Neher

In the spirit of the New Testament's teachings on peace, the Shenandoah Pastors for Peace has chosen to recognize Church of the Brethren persons who have by their faith in Christ, their life, and their work contributed to peace in their own time, and who have inspired others to embrace this calling in a similar manner.

The first person to receive the Living Peace Award is Dean Neher of Bridgewater, Va. Born and raised on the Kansas plains, Dean grew up on a farm near Oswego and was nurtured in his faith by the Osage Church of the Brethren. Early in his life, Dean connected the Gospel's promise of "on earth peace," declared by

angels at Christ's birth, with public acts of peacemaking and with the potential costs of those acts at a personal level. Under the cover of darkness, neighbors painted his grandfather's barn yellow after it became public that Dean's father had chosen to be a conscientious objector during World War I.

Beyond family, Dan West and summer church camps provided Dean with strong foundations for peace and service. Dean attended the 1948 Annual Conference in Colorado Springs and watched as the church gave birth to Brethren Volunteer Service. Dean interrupted his studies at McPherson College to enter BVS's third unit in June 1949. In Europe, Dean served projects in Germany, Austria, and Greece. After volunteer service, Dean completed his undergraduate studies at McPherson College in 1954, but before that, in 1953,

Mission ministry in northern France

Kim and Collin Sanford and their 1-year-old son, Micah, will be leaving in late June to begin their three-year commitment to a ministry in northern France, where they will live in a Muslim community as part of a team with whom they will seek to befriend, serve, and share Christ. Kim grew up in Lancaster County and attended Florin Church of the Brethren, Kraybill Mennonite School, and Lancaster Mennonite High School. After graduating from high school, Kim attended Wheaton College, west of Chicago, where she met

her husband, Collin.

On March 26, a fundraising dinner was given in their honor to celebrate the northern France mission ministry. During a service at Florin on Sunday, May 29, a check for \$2,500—the amount raised at the March 26 dinner—was presented to Kim and Collin.



Presenting the check, and representing the Florin Outreach Ministry Action Team, are, left to right: Earl Dehmey, Nancy Shonk, Cora Kaylor, Collin and Kim Sanford, Ruth Ann Barr, Jim Heisey, Bonnie Brinkman, and Bob Price.

he married Betty Young.

Dean did graduate work in physics at the University of Chicago and the University of Kansas before joining the faculty at Bridgewater College in 1961. He completed his doctoral degree in 1964. Though he started in physics at Bridgewater, Dean later taught computer science at the college.

While Dean described himself as "peace-minded" during his early years at Bridgewater, his focus was on physics, and it wasn't until 1968, when one of his students faced the possibility of being drafted, that Dean realized he needed to reach out to the young adults around him as more than a physics teacher.

By the fall of 1968, Dean was helping to establish a peace awareness group on campus with an emphasis on draft counseling. Even before the peace awareness group, Dean was mentoring young Christians as the advisor for the Inter-district Youth Cabinet (IYC), a position in which he served for more than 30 years. He worked closely with more than 100 college students during that time to reach beyond the college into church youth groups, and to coordinate dozens of roundtables.

In 1982 Dean worked with the peace awareness group to mail letters to every teenager in the Shenandoah District for whom they had an address and a birthdate. The letters were mailed to 16-, 17-, and 18-year-olds to encourage them to embrace the heritage of peacemaking as part of their commitment to Jesus Christ. At the conclusion of that academic year, Dean carried on the project himself over the summer, and he has continued to do

so every year and summer since then. Hundreds and hundreds of letters have been mailed out.

In the last years of his professional career at Bridgewater, Dean served on the board of On Earth Peace from 1986-1995, serving as chair from 1992-1995.

Fletcher Farrar, Bethany commencement speaker

On Saturday, May 7, Bethany Theological Seminary celebrated its 106th commencement. Commencement speaker Fletcher



Fletcher Farrar

Farrar, moderator-elect of the Illinois-Wisconsin District, gave an address entitled "Nicodemus at Dawn," based on the biblical texts of Isaiah 59:9-19 and John 3:1-10, at the academic ceremony. Farrar is the owner and editor of *Illinois Times*, a

weekly newspaper in Springfield, Ill., and the former editor of *MESSANGER*. Three members of the graduating class spoke at the afternoon service: Anna Lisa Gross, Kimberly Koczan Flory, and Larry Taylor. Their presentations were based on the texts Proverbs 8:1-12 and Luke 1:76-79,

Ten students received master of divinity degrees, eight students received master of arts degrees, and two students received a certificate of achievement in theological studies.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

MESSANGER magazine won an **Award of Excellence** from the Associated Church Press (ACP) for Ken Gible's poem "Entry Room." The Christmas poem, which appeared in the December 2010 issue, tied with entries from *Friends Journal* and *The Mennonite*. The Award of Excellence is the equivalent of a first-place award from ACP. Second-place awards in the poetry category went to *Sojourners* and the *Christian Century*.

Dawna Welch began May 1 as youth advisor for Pacific Southwest District. She is a licensed minister in the Training in Ministry (TRIM) program, and for the past seven years has been director of the Children and Young Families Ministries at La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren. In her work for the district, she will be establishing a District Youth Cabinet and helping organize junior and senior high events.

On July 11, **Virginia Harness will begin a one-year internship** in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. She is completing a bachelor's degree at St. John's College in Annapolis, Md., and carried out an internship with Lost Towns Project in Annapolis.

Retiring Elizabethtown (Pa.) College president Theodore E. Long gave the final address of his presidency during the college's 108th commencement on May 21, when approximately 500 undergraduate and graduate students gathered to receive their diplomas. Long received an honorary degree, and was granted emeritus status by the college board of trustees. On April 29, a new Steinway D grand piano appeared in the college's Leffler Chapel and Performance Center, given by the trustees in appreciation for Long's 15 years of service as Elizabethtown president.

REMEMBERED

N. Geraldine Plunkett, 86, died May 20, 2011. An educator and writer from Roanoke, Va., she served as registrar at Bethany Theological Seminary (where she earned a master's degree) and earlier as administrative assistant for the Foreign Mission Commission of the General Brotherhood Board. She also taught school in Virginia and Illinois and was a senior editor for Scott Foresman and Company. Plunkett was the author of two children's books published by Brethren Press, *Nathan's Secret* (2000) and *Sarah Beth's Problem* (2003).

A circle that takes all in

Since early childhood, I have been a part of the Church of the Brethren. A high percentage of that time I have appreciated, supported, and promoted the ministries and mission of the denomination. Our history is marked by many "firsts" that have become examples that others affirm and emulate.



ELAINE
SOLLENBERGER

Yet there have been times when I have been disappointed by the Church of the Brethren's slow response to calls for positive change. For me, this is one of those times when the church is struggling to add another positive chapter to our history, but in ways not in keeping with our best efforts and commendable moments. I refer to the ongoing challenge to somehow find resolution to our diverse understandings of homosexuality.

What troubles me most is the way some have used scripture to make their case and to denigrate sisters and brothers in a very judgmental way. One of the Bibles I use has 1,274 pages. The scriptural passages being

used to back up the judgment being made against homosexuals—from both the Old and New Testaments—would all fit on less than one page.

I'm not without blame for taking a verse out of context to make a judgment. For some years I had a fairly low opinion of the apostle Paul, a judgment I made based on the verse where Paul tells the women of one congregation to cease speaking in church. After deeper study and accepting others' insights—Anna Mow's among them—I realized that verse was really not the best measure of Paul's attitude toward women. It was much more Paul's way of dealing with a perceived problem in a certain church, in a particular place, at a particular time. He devoted many more words to affirming women, even naming those whose leadership he considered very valuable to his ministry and the growth of the church. Unfortunately, there are still those among us who let that one verse guide their thinking regarding women in leadership roles—serving as pastors, for example—while ignoring guidance from the broader text.

Today, that "page" of scriptural references being recited and included in writings to make the case against those in

the LGBT community does not fit with who we claim to be in the Church of the Brethren. I find it deeply troubling when the conversation is limited to a few scriptural verses taken out of context to pass judgment, while other more instructive passages are overlooked. Choosing one directive from Leviticus that includes punishment by death (while ignoring the myriad others before and after that one), over the words and teachings of Jesus—from whom there are no words to quote on the subject—challenges our claim to be a New Testament church.

The word "homosexuality" is not in the Bible, and many biblical scholars would say it is not an accurate synonym for the language in those passages. More accurately, it is an example of the way we sometimes allow our existing prejudices to interpret selected passages from scripture. Over the years I have turned to the insights and wisdom of quite a few others who have helped me replace prejudices with much deeper understandings, more in keeping with how I believe Jesus would have us meet this challenge before the denomination.

The Special Response process that was set in motion at the 2010 Annual Conference was designed to help us come together across the denomination to listen to each other, to

THE CALL FOR ANOTHER POSITIVE CHANGE FOR THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN IS A SUMMONS TO ALL OF US TO FIND NEW WAYS TO AFFIRM THAT ALL OF US MUST BE COUNTED AS GOD'S CHILDREN, MADE IN GOD'S IMAGE.

seriously question our prejudices, and perhaps deepen our understandings. In some cases, those discussions have been very instructive and worthwhile. In others, they have only deepened the existing divide. Efforts designed to bypass the accepted process and influence the final outcome raise ethical questions.

The call for another positive change for the Church of the Brethren is a summons to all of us to find new ways to affirm that all of us must be counted as God's children, made in God's image.

I hope Edwin Markham will forgive me for this modification of his famous poem, which I offer here for us at this time.

We drew a circle that shut some out—

Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout.

But Love and we had the wit to win:

We drew a circle that took all in. 

Elaine Sollenberger of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was Annual Conference moderator in 1998.

“There’s no question that Oprah created a kind of religion over the past 25 years.”

—Brad Hirschfield, rabbi and president of the National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, in “On Faith,” in washingtonpost.com

“More Americans believe that Christian values are at odds with capitalism and the free market than they believe are compatible.”

—Religion News Survey conducted by Public Religion Research Institute in partnership with Religion News Service

“The Decade to Overcome Violence has given us the tools, information, and connections we need as Christians to be effective peacemakers. It is now up to the churches to use all of that to build a culture and community of Just Peace in their context.”

—Jordan Blevins, ecumenical peace coordinator and advocacy officer for the National Council of Churches of Christ, USA, and the Church of the Brethren, speaking about the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held May 17-25 in Kingston, Jamaica

“One big sky covers us all equally.”

—Coffee mug, Big Sky Café, San Luis Obispo, Calif.

“We have the capacity to feed everyone on the planet now and in the future. If the political will is there, no one will be denied their fundamental human right to be free from hunger.”

—Former Brazilian president Lula da Silva, in an article from oxfamamerica.org about rising food prices

“I am one of those Christians who believes we should still have the right *not* to kill, even in an empire that has a military bigger than Rome’s.”

—Shane Claiborne, writing in “God’s Politics—a blog by Jim Wallis and friends.” Claiborne, a founding partner of the Simple Way community, was a speaker at last year’s National Youth Conference in Fort Collins, Colo.

➔ The only people warming pews in the future church will be children and old women, according to bestselling author Jawanza Kunjufu in his new book, *The Role of Teens in Your Church*. Kunjufu—who drew upon research and his own 35 years as an educational consultant and youth advocate—says 40 percent of eighth grade students leave the church as they are entering their teens, and 70 percent of female teens and 90 percent of male teens leave the church as soon as they graduate from high school. He claims age segregation is the primary factor, and notes that most youth do not feel respected, valued, or welcomed by the church. “If children and teens really are our future, then how will the church survive such a massive exodus of youth?” he asks. Kunjufu urges older church members to be more intentional in including youth in service and worship.

➔ **Feel the need to pray?** There’s an app for that. iPray, a new iPhone application, pro-

vides users with a convenient tool to read daily scriptures and prayers as offered by the traditional Book of Common Prayer. Four daily prayer offices are displayed based on the liturgical calendar and the time of day. iPray is modeled after the Church of England’s 1662 Book of Common Prayer and based on the ancient practice of the church as refined by the English Reformation.

➔ **National Back to Church Sunday**, a cross-denominational movement to reverse declining church attendance and encourage everyone to revisit congregational life, will be celebrated Sept. 18 across the United States. Some 10,000 congregations are expected to participate this fall, a dramatic increase from the 3,800 churches who took part in 2010. National Back to Church Sunday has become the single largest community outreach in the nation.



JUST FOR FUN: SCRAMBLE

ROYAL HEADING Following all the royalty talk this spring, unscramble the 12 names below to identify 12 kings of Israel and Judah named in the Old Testament. Answers are printed below.

- | | |
|-------------|----------|
| MOONSLO | BOORJAME |
| ZEEKHAHI | HUJE |
| BAAH | RIMO |
| SHAPEHJOTHA | HOAJS |
| DDIVA | SHOJA |
| HAZEDIKE | LASU |

ANSWERS: Solomon, Hezekiah, Ahab, Jehoshaphat, David, Zedekiah, Jeroboam, Jehu, Omri, Joash, Josiah, Saul.

AC2011

2011 AC Moderator Robert Alley



Karen Doss Bowman

Guided by the Spirit

by Karen Doss Bowman

As Robert Earl Alley sees it, one of the Church of the Brethren's strengths is its collective sense of the church as a faith community—both within individual congregations and throughout the broader denomination.

"It's a community of connectedness," explains Alley, who served nearly 40 years in full-time pastoral ministry before retiring in May 2009.

Alley hopes this year's Annual Conference will be an opportunity for Brethren to extend that faith community by helping Brethren to experience in new ways the gift of God's promises and to embrace their role in sharing the Good News throughout the world. When he takes the gavel this summer during the July 2-6 Annual Conference in Grand Rapids, Mich., Alley will challenge his fellow Brethren to live out Jesus' call to mission and discipleship—a vision expressed through the theme he has chosen, "Gifted With Promise: Extending Jesus' Table."

"We are given an assignment, as Jesus gave the assignment to his disciples: 'You give them something to eat,'" says Alley, of Harrisonburg, Va. "We have an assignment too, to give people something to eat. When we come to worship, we want people to leave with something that doesn't just reinforce what they may have thought before, but that they can chew on and ponder and reflect upon. . . . All of our service ministries fit into this [idea], but we don't

want to stop there. We have to help people to discover the new life that is in Christ."

Foundation of faith

For Alley, the experience of church as community has spanned a lifetime. Born to Earl and Helen Alley, he was raised in Augusta County, Va., near the town of Verona, where his relatives were faithful members and leaders of the Barren Ridge Church of the Brethren. Alley recalls attending worship services, revival meetings, love feasts, vacation Bible school, youth fellowship—his family was present just about any time the church doors were open. The example set by his parents, grandparents, and other relatives was instrumental in nurturing Alley's spiritual growth.

"[Spiritual formation] happened in what we might call the routine life of the church," says Alley. "Church was an important part of our life. I'd come home from church on Sundays and play church—it was that kind of modeling."

Alley adds that the Laurel Hill Baptist Church, located near his home community, played a significant role in his spiritual growth as well. It was at Laurel Hill, where he participated in children's and youth activities, that Alley made his first commitment to Jesus Christ, at the end of vacation Bible school. The next year, at age 11, Alley was baptized in the Barren Ridge congregation.

Alley credits numerous church leaders—particularly

“I THINK HIS GROUNDING IN SPIRITUAL DEEPENING WILL BE A TREMENDOUS STRENGTH AS HE COPES WITH THE DIFFICULT ISSUES THAT ANNUAL CONFERENCE IS FACING.”

Sunday school teachers—with nurturing his spiritual growth throughout his childhood and adolescence. He recalls the influence of people such as the late Rev. Homer Miller, pastor at Barren Ridge during his younger years, and the late Dr. David Metzler, who at one point served as a co-interim pastor at Barren Ridge. Metzler, who eventually became a professor of philosophy and religion at Bridgewater College, was later one of Alley's parishioners at the Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

Alley also was inspired by his great-uncle Howard L. Alley and his wife, Hattie (both deceased), who served in India for 30 years as part of the denomination's mission program in that nation. Last fall, Alley had the honor of traveling to India as part of a delegation celebrating the 40th anniversary of the Church of North India, formed in 1970 by six Protestant denominations, including the Church of the Brethren. During his stay, Alley toured the Brethren mission points and preached at one of his uncle's congregations at Ahwa.

Though Alley was licensed to the ministry in 1965, shortly after graduating from Fort Defiance High School, at the time he had no plans to become a full-time pastor.

“I saw licensing as a way of authenticating some of my ministerial gifts, but did not necessarily think it would become vocational,” says Alley, who attended his first Annual Conference that same year.

Alley enrolled at Bridgewater College in the fall of 1965 as a math major, but after a couple of years he began to feel the call to pastoral ministry. Partly inspired by a sermon about mission and ministry preached by the Rev. Robert Sherfy, then pastor of the Bridgewater Church of the Brethren, Alley soon switched to a philosophy and religion major with plans to answer the call to ministry.

During the summer of 1968, Alley was an Earn & Serve worker at the Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren. The following two summers he served as a summer pastor at the Peace Valley (Mo.) Church of the Brethren and at Harrisonburg (Va.) First Church of the Brethren.

After earning a bachelor's degree in philosophy and religion from Bridgewater in 1969, Alley enrolled at Bethany Theological Seminary, where he attended for a year. He transferred to Eastern Mennonite Seminary (EMS), earning an M.Div. degree in 1972. It was also at EMS that Alley met Linda Mary Lefever, a Mennonite from

Lancaster County, Pa., who was a junior English major at Eastern Mennonite College. They met in the supper line during spring break, and after dating for two and a half years they married. They have three adult children—Leanne, Linetta and Jonathan—and four grandchildren.

During his first year at EMS, Alley was called to Fellowship Church of the Brethren near Martinsburg, W.Va., a new church plant he served while a seminary student and continued to serve until 1981. He then served the Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren from 1981 to 1989, and the Bridgewater (Va.) congregation from 1989 to 2009.

Throughout his ministry, Alley says one of his priorities was a strong focus on continually improving his preaching skills—including trying to grasp the biblical text while listening for the Spirit's message within the Word. In preaching, he says, it's important to master the balance of “giving people something to think about without making yourself the center of attention.” Another important job of any pastor, he says, is to listen to congregational members and to allow God's will to be revealed through them.

“If you really believe that the spirit of God is in all of us, then you work with those people, you listen to them, you incorporate their ideas,” Alley says. “You might challenge their ideas; you make your input along with theirs....I saw my role as working along with the people, not above them.”

Along with his passion for the church, Alley is a history buff who has indulged an interest in genealogy since a



Courtesy of Robert Alley

“IT’S FASCINATING TO ME THAT IT IS THE VERY EARTH THAT IS ONE OF THE THINGS THAT GROUNDS ROBERT.”

fifth-grade homework assignment required him to complete a family tree. Using information he has collected over the past 50 years of pursuing this hobby, Alley has written on the history of his home congregation and about the life and mission work of his great uncle, Howard Alley. Now that he’s retired, he plans to write several volumes of family genealogy.

“Genealogy has been my golf,” says Alley, who has applied for designation as a certified genealogist through the National Genealogical Society’s Board for Certification of Genealogists. “I’m not a sports enthusiast, I don’t play sports well, but genealogy is what I do in my spare time.”

Alley’s interest in history and faith—and the Church of the Brethren in particular—converged nine years ago, when he was asked to serve as president of the board for the Valley Mennonite-Brethren Heritage Center. The Harrisonburg, Va.-based center, which opened to the public in 2006, strives to bring to life the history of the Mennonites and Brethren of the Shenandoah Valley, emphasizing both religious groups’ values of pacifism, voluntary service, disaster relief work, and international understanding.

“I have an appreciation for the center [and serving the center] because it meets my interest in both faith and history,” says Alley, who has been active in the Interfaith Association of Harrisonburg. “When they asked me to be president of the board, I felt like the call of God was in that.”

Alley also has a



green thumb and starts early each spring planting his vegetable garden. Annual Conference director Chris Douglas sees the garden itself as Alley’s source of spiritual grounding and centering.

“He’s an avid gardener, and even in the midst of the busyness of Annual Conference last summer and this summer, he plants a huge garden and is very conscientious about it,” Douglas says. “It’s fascinating to me that it is the very earth that is one of the things that grounds Robert.”

For Alley and his wife, Linda, spiritual formation and spiritual direction have been important disciplines and ministries. In 2008, Linda earned a master’s degree in spiritual formation from EMS and is now ordained with a ministry as a spiritual director. Douglas adds that work in spiritual formation is one of the greatest gifts Alley will bring to the table at this summer’s conference.

“I feel like one of his greatest strengths as a moderator is the spiritual depth that he brings,” says Douglas, noting that Alley has been involved for many years with the denomination’s Spiritual Director’s Network. “I think his grounding in spiritual deepening will be a tremendous strength as he copes with the difficult issues that Annual Conference is facing.”

Despite the challenges facing delegates this summer of dealing with the controversial Special Response Process, Alley is optimistic that the Brethren will be able to come together and discuss the issue with a spirit of love for one another. He urges the church body to be in prayer for the process even before Annual Conference begins and to remember those on the Standing Committee as they prepare recommendations and respond to the queries.

“Listen well, speak slowly, and respect the genuineness of people,” is Alley’s message to this summer’s delegates. “If we really believe that the Holy Spirit has been given to each of us, then we need to listen to where the Holy Spirit may be present in each other. I would say to all of us, ‘Let’s not be afraid of what’s ahead. God is with us, and God *will* be with us.’”

Karen Doss Bowman is a freelance writer based in Bridgewater, Va. She is a member of the Sunrise Church of the Brethren in Harrisonburg.



ON THE AGENDA AT GRAND RAPIDS

The 2011 Annual Conference will address three items of unfinished business and two items of new business when it convenes July 2-6 in Grand Rapids, Mich. The items of unfinished business include: "A Statement of Confession and Commitment," "Query: Language on Same-sex Covenantal Relationships," and "Query: Guidelines for Implementation of the Congregational Ethics Paper."

With regard to the **"Statement of Confession and Commitment,"** Annual Conference approved a motion that the Statement from the 2008 Standing Committee be approved as a Special Response Statement, using the procedure for dealing with strongly controversial issues. In a later action the query on **"Language on Same-sex Covenantal Relationships"** was combined with this item to also be a part of the Special Response conversation. It was decided that the item would be carried on successive Annual Conference agendas until the Special Response process is completed.

The 2010 Annual Conference had two hearings and a review of the resources prepared for the study. Since the 2010 Annual Conference, through February 2011, Standing Committee has held more than 100 hearings in various districts focused on responses to those two items of business.

Since the conclusion of the hearings, a Forms Reception Committee consisting of three members of Standing Committee has reviewed the reports from the district hearings and from e-mail responses from people unable to attend the hearings. That committee has reviewed and summarized those reports and prepared a quantitative and qualitative report to Standing Committee. They have not provided specific recommendations to Standing Committee. In their meeting prior to Annual Conference, Standing Committee will review the report and prepare recommendations to the delegates to respond to those two items of business. Delegates will then process those recommendations according to the outline that is in the structural framework for dealing with strongly controversial issues.

"Query: Guidelines for Implementation of the Congregational Ethics Paper" deals with Annual Conference's answer last year to a query from the Western Pennsylvania District asking if it would be helpful and contribute to the unity of the denomination if Annual Conference developed a uniform denominational process by which districts might deal with a congregation that engages in activity that violates the Congregational Ethics paper of Annual Conference. This query recognizes that the denomination already has a

process for dealing with ministers who transgress the ministry ethical standards

Last year's Conference assigned this question to a committee of staff from the denomination's Congregational Life Ministries plus three members from the church at large who were confirmed by Annual Conference to study and bring a report back to this year's Conference. That committee is recommending that the Congregational Life staff continue to work on this in consultation with the Council of District Executives and the denominational Ministry Office. If Annual Conference adopts this recommendation, the study can continue without additional Conference funds because it will be handled by the Congregational Life staff.

As for new business, the **"Query: Guidance for Response to the Changing of the Earth's Climate"** has been submitted by the Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz., and the Pacific Southwest District Conference. This query asks, "What is the position of Annual Conference on climate change, and how can we as individuals, congregations, and as a denomination take concrete action to live more responsibly and offer leadership in our communities and our nation?" The query goes beyond the United States and asks about the effects of the Earth's warming on the people of the world. It further points out that the United States is among the world's leaders in fossil fuel consumption, and that we are not responding with sufficient urgency to protecting God's creation. The query suggests that this is an issue of faith because of the biblical injunction for us to be stewards of creation.

"Query: Proper Decorum" comes from the Mountain Grove Church of the Brethren in Fulks Run, Va., and the Shenandoah District Conference. This query asks Annual Conference to consider if it is the will of Conference to have rules of proper decorum relating to persons' positions on issues before the Annual Conference. The query cites the sense of community and accountability we have with brothers and sisters of the denomination. And yet, it points out, the strong division we experience when we deal with issues on which we do not agree is disturbing. "Often," the query states, "our actions toward one another neither honor one another nor Jesus." Through this query, the congregation is seeking more clearly defined guidelines on the manner in which members of the Church of the Brethren express themselves at Conference and how they address one another. ❧

AC2011
Agenda

AC2011 In Brief



Where: Grand Rapids, Mich. (population, metropolitan area: 1,302,372), De Vos Place and Amway Grand Plaza Hotel.

When: July 2-6, 2011, with some related events beginning June 28

Theme: "Gifted with Promise—Extending Jesus' Table"

Fees: Delegates, \$300, advanced; \$350 on site; non-delegates, \$95 advanced; \$130 on site. For young adults ages 12-21, \$30 advanced; \$50 on site. Children under 12 are free. Special rates are available for weekend only, Sunday only, and daily participants, and for current Brethren Volunteer Service workers.

Conference site: Grand Rapids is second only to Seattle in the most LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Certified buildings in the United States. It is home to more than two dozen colleges



and universities, and has more than 2,000 acres of park land. Michigan's second-largest city (after Detroit) was originally known as the furniture capital of America. It is known for its unique combination of urban sophistication and small-town warmth.

De Vos Place is a state-of-the-art convention center located in the heart of downtown Grand Rapids. The multi-level facility has 1 million square feet of new and renovated space on a 13-acre riverfront site. Business session, exhibit, worship, exhibit hall, conference café, and age-group activities will all be held at De Vos Place, along with some insight sessions.

The Amway Grand Plaza opened in 1913 as the historic Pantlind Hotel. Amway Corporation acquired and refurbished the original building and reopened



Grand Rapids Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau

De Vos Place convention center



Grand Rapids Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau



Statue at the Rosa Parks Circle in downtown Grand Rapids.

in 1981. Renovations included the addition of a new glass tower building. The hotel is connected to De Vos Place. All meal events, pre-conference meetings, and some insight sessions will be held at the Amway Grand Plaza.

Unique facts about Grand Rapids: Ottawa Indians were the city's original inhabitants, and in 1826 the city was settled by French fur traders. The city's name comes from the Grand River, Michigan's largest inland river. While it was once known as the furniture capital of the nation, it is today known as the office furniture capital of the nation, and is headquarters to many national and multi-national companies including Steelcase, Herman Miller, Haworth, and Alticor (formerly Amway). In 1945, Grand Rapids was the first American city to add fluoride to its drinking water.



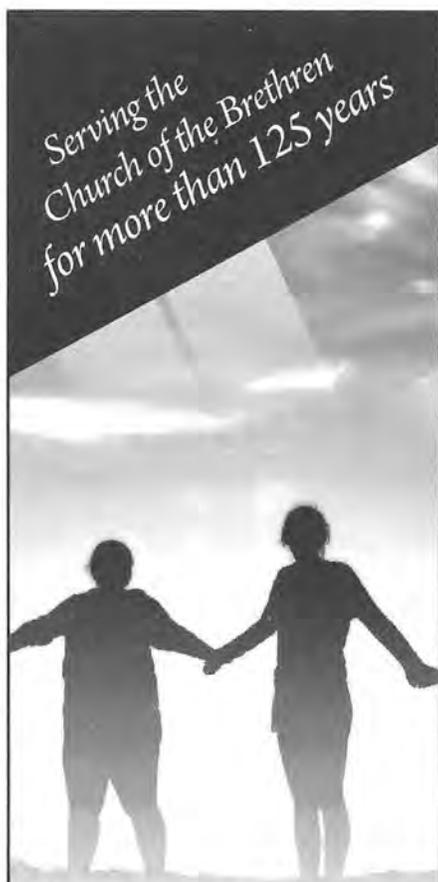
Grand Rapids Kent County Convention & Visitors Bureau

Grand Rapids Art Museum

2002, *Men's Health* magazine ranked Grand Rapids as the fifth-healthiest town in America for men from among 101 cities surveyed.

Worship Services will be held Saturday evening, Sunday morning, Monday and Tuesday evenings, and Wednesday morning. Speakers, in order, are: Robert E. Alley, moderator; Craig Smith, Atlantic Northeast district executive; Samuel Saripiya, pastor of the Rockford (Ill.) Community Church of the Brethren; Dava Hensley, pastor of the Roanoke (Va.) First Church of the Brethren; Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger.

For more information: Visit www.brethren.org/ac.



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Learning to listen

by Ken Gible

My mother was one of five children. When they reached adulthood, married, and had children, we would all get together at Christmas and other times for meals and family fellowship. The usual custom, after the meal, was for the women to visit in the kitchen doing the dishes, while the men went to the living room, sank back in the easy chairs, and told stories, some of them probably true.

On the way home, Mother would sometimes say to Dad, "I could hear the other men talking in the next room, but I never heard your voice." "Well," he would answer, "every talker needs a good listener." But she wasn't through. "Yes, but when I looked in, it sure looked to me like you were sleeping." "I wasn't sleeping," he would protest. "I just listen better with my eyes closed."

Well, with eyes closed or open, Dad was right—every talker needs a good listener. If Dad had needed a scripture text for his claim, he couldn't have done better than the book of James, chapter one, verse 19: "Let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak."

Listening well is especially important in the faith community. When a brother or a sister is speaking, either one-on-one or in a group, you can offer a wonderful gift by tuning in to what he or she is saying. Oh, not about the weather or the latest sports event, but about things that go deeper than casual conversation. If you greet someone with a "How're you doin'?" and the response is, "Okay, I guess," that may be an invitation to go deeper. You could say, "That's good," and move right on, or you might say, "You guess?" and then ask "What's happening in your life?"

We can listen with our ears by hearing the tone of voice and noting the pauses. We can also "listen" with our eyes by noting posture, facial expression, and other evidence of what we call "body language." Studies have



shown that up to 90 percent of interpersonal communication is non-verbal. If your friend says "I'm doing fine," but she looks tired and sad, you know that's not the whole story. Good listening uses more than ears.

Most of us have had one or more people in our lives who really listened to us. How did they do it? Probably by looking at us while we were talking; they didn't keep their eyes on a book or on the TV screen; they didn't stare at the ceiling or out the window. And they didn't keep interrupting with comments like, "Oh, you shouldn't feel that way," or "Let me tell you what happened to *me*," or "Don't worry, it'll all work out." They usually waited to give advice until it was asked for. They might have said something like, "This means a lot to you, doesn't it?" or "How did you feel about that?" or "Go on, tell me more." Somehow, when we were with them, we sensed that what we said and felt really mattered to them, that, even if they didn't agree with us or approve of what we had done, they really tried to understand what we were going through. We felt safe. Their listening communicated trust and acceptance.

If you have known one or more people who really listened to you, you are fortunate and blessed, not only

LISTENING IS MOSTLY BEING QUIET WHILE THE OTHER PERSON TALKS, BUT THERE IS ALSO A TIME TO TALK... BUT WE SHOULD, AS JAMES ADVISES, BE SLOW TO SPEAK BECAUSE WHAT WE SAY SHOULD COME AFTER WE HAVE LISTENED, AND LISTENED WELL.

because they listened, but because they can serve as a model for you on how to listen to others. Without realizing it, they were mentoring you, teaching you how to be about the ministry of listening. They were good teachers; now it's time for you to be a good learner.

Listening is mostly being quiet while the other person talks, but there is also a time to talk. In the words from Ecclesiastes, "There is a time to keep silence and a time to speak" (Ecclesiastes 3:7b), or, as Eugene Peterson translates it: "There is a right time to *shut up* and a right time to *speak up*." So, yes, there is a time to speak, but we should, as James advises, be slow to speak because what we say should come *after* we have listened, and listened well.

Not long ago, during the Sunday worship sharing time in a congregation I was visiting, a middle-aged man said something I found both enlightening and moving. He told us that soon it would be one year since his beloved wife had died. He asked for prayers on this sad anniversary, and also for prayers as he relocated to a new home that he and his wife had planned to move into together. "It's going to be hard for me," he said. And then he told us he had something to say that was very difficult. He hoped everyone would understand. He said he had been getting invitations to take responsibilities in the life of the congregation, some of which he had held previously. "But right now," he said, "I'm just not up to it. Please don't ask me to do what I don't feel ready to do." Then he took his seat.

After the service, I approached him and told him I much admired his honesty and his courage. He said he was worried that people might be offended by what he had said. He told me that a few days before, a friend and member of the church had called him and asked him to take on a responsibility, and when he said he wasn't ready, the caller insisted that he needed to get active again, that he should say yes.

"It was hard to say no," he told me, "but I just had to."

And I thought afterwards that sometimes in the church we just don't listen to each other very well. My guess is that the caller thought that, after a year, it was high time for the widower to stop grieving and get on with his life. The caller apparently didn't understand that grief doesn't have a timetable. The caller either wasn't able or didn't try to hear what was being said. The caller didn't listen.

I remember going to visit a member of one of the congregations I served as pastor. I'll call him George. He was in the intensive care unit of our local hospital. When I got there, I saw someone was already in the room with George, so I waited outside. But I couldn't help overhearing George say to his visitor: "I think this might be it for me. I may not make it out of the hospital." And his visitor replied, "No, no, no! Don't say that, George. You've got to think positive!" George got quiet. Maybe he really wanted to talk about facing the end of his life. But his visitor's discomfort or anxiety took over and made that possibility all but impossible. His visitor wasn't listening.

The book of James tells us that religion that is pure and undefiled is about caring for those who need caring. That's the kind of religion church folks have usually been pretty good at. But we can do better. You and I can improve in our ministry of listening. Someone once said that the first duty of love is to listen. Someone else once said that few, if any of us, will *talk* a single person into the kingdom of God, but that we may *hear* a few in.

I think maybe that's what James had in mind. 

Ken Gible is an ordained pastor in the Church of the Brethren living in Greencastle, Pa. His poem, "Entry Room," published in the December 2010 MESSENGER, won an Award of Excellence from the Associated Church Press.

This we hold in common

by Elizabeth Keller

[Note: This is the sixth in a series of essays that MESSENGER has run periodically during the year leading up to the 2011 Annual Conference. This series is intended to provide different viewpoints that we hope will increase understanding of the issues being discussed in the Special Response Process. All opinions expressed are those of the authors. —Ed.]

I will begin with my story, because when talking about such dangerous and intimate matters like God and sex, stories matter.

I have always felt deeply drawn to the Divine. When I was just 6 years old, I asked my father to take me to church. I remember vividly that first day he dropped me off. I was adorned in the fancy, flowing yellow dress I wore as a flower girl in my cousin's wedding (because only my best seemed fit for such an occasion). I stared at the doors three times my height, looked back as Dad drove away, and then entered that sacred, majestic place.

When I reached 11, my parents divorced and I turned away from the church, but never away from prayer. Deep down, I still believed. Finally, when I became a teenager, I found you, the Church of the Brethren—but the reasons were more primal than pure.

Truth be told, it was a cute guy who lured me back to the church. Being young and curious, I was consumed with questions—and hormones—and since I didn't know better than to think infatuation with God, sex, my body, and boys as a teenager is anything other than normal, I turned to the church for answers.

I am thankful still that as I asked questions about such matters, our youth leaders (who identify as theologically conservative) answered with vulnerability and openness, admitting their past and present mistakes, expressing joy and excitement, and wanting healthy and intimate relationships for us all.

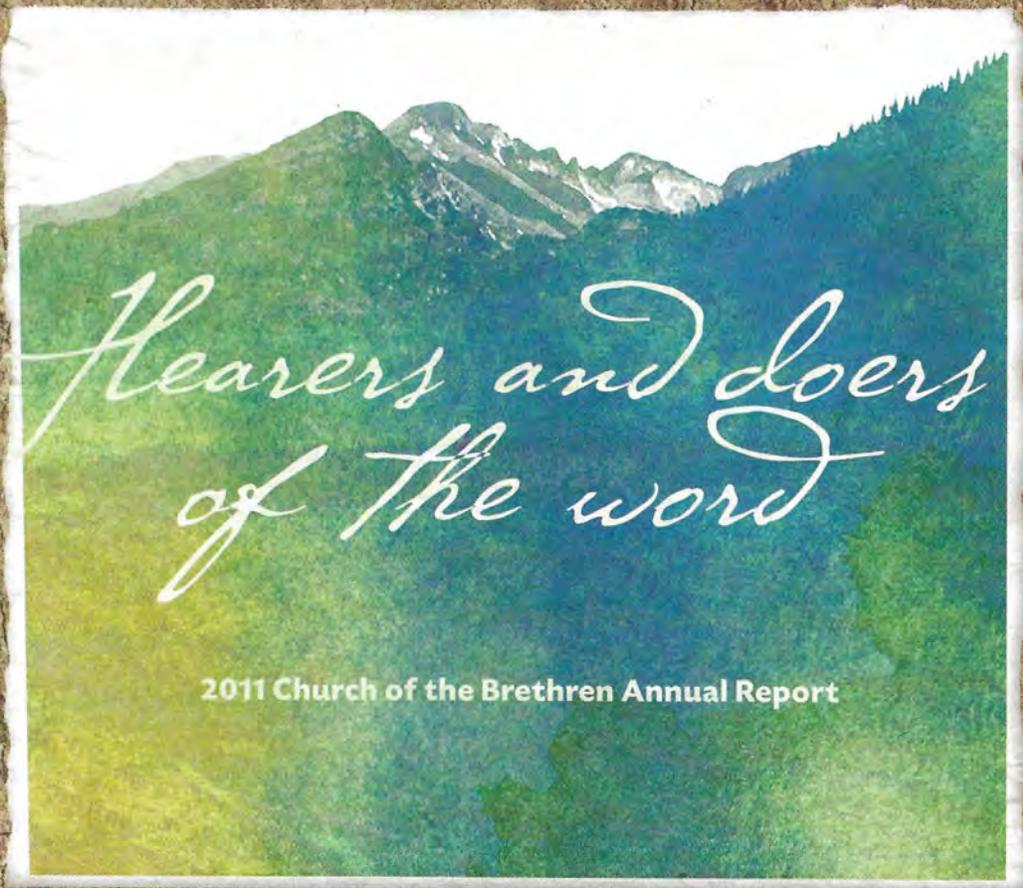
I want the Church of the Brethren to be like my youth leaders, curious and honest about the complexity and possibility of sexuality and spirituality. I want to belong to a

church that talks about things that matter, *and sex matters*. When women are sexually assaulted every two minutes in the United States and \$3,000 is spent every second on pornography, sex matters. When our country holds the highest percentage of teenage pregnancy (in the western world) and when one in five girls and one in seven boys are sexually abused before age 18, sex matters. When we are only told "thou shall not" do this or that, but never really wrestle and wonder, "What does it mean to be sexual beings created in the image of God?", then our primal, sexual instincts are more likely to turn toward violent, unhealthy patterns, rather than the intimate connections God desires.

Some in the church want to place a moratorium on discussing sex in the church: some for the sake of legalistic morality; others for the sake of false unity. If we choose to do so, we will have failed. We will have failed to see that this is such an incredible opportunity to go not left or right ideologically speaking, but to grow deeper with one another. Sex matters. The body matters. We are all sexual beings; this we hold in common. "Don't you know your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit already within you?" (1 Cor. 6:19). What if these cares and concerns of sexuality and the body become a part of our Christian peacemaking? Building homes *and* holy temples where all can feel safe in our own skin.

Please, before you label me a red, white, or blue Christian, remember that I am a member of *this* body, this body of Brethren, and I have not arrived at this place alone. Anyone who knows me—and as my story above suggests—knows I have engaged my spiritual journey with intensity and intentionality, with sacrifice and study. As a Brethren convert, I did what you asked of me. I attended a Brethren college and the Brethren seminary. I accepted the call to ministry. I listened and learned from countless pastors, professors, and peers. It is because of you that I have become who I have become. It is because of this body of Brethren that I believe talking about the things that matter is the way forward.

What if we reframed the "homosexual" conversation entirely? Turning our fingers away from "the other" and instead turning them inwardly toward the log in our own



Church of the Brethren

2011 Church of the Brethren Annual Report

hearers and doers

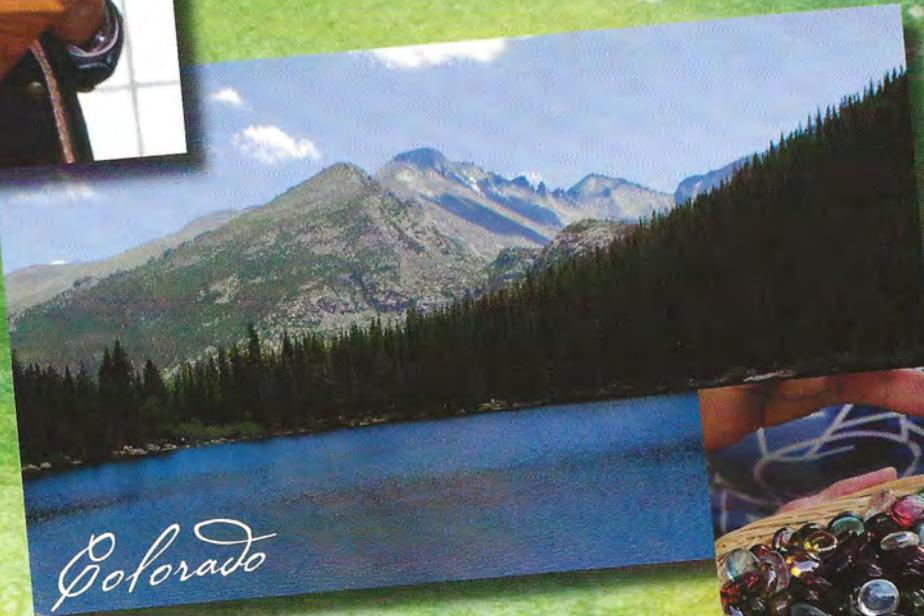
For the last two years, the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board has been working with the theme "Hearers and doers of the word," which has its foundation in the beloved text from the first chapter of James. The importance of hearing and assimilating the word into both our personal and community lives has infused all the work of the board and its staff.

In the Church of the Brethren we understand that service to the world is an outward expression of the inner transformation we experienced through our baptism in Christ, and that the two—hearing and doing—serve together inseparably as our light, our guide, our life, and our breath.

Marcia Shetler

In these pages, see some of the ways that you—through the many ministries of the Church of the Brethren—are loving your neighbor, going into the world, growing in faith, witnessing for peace, and listening to God. See how together we are hearers and doers of the word.

Stanley Proffinger
General Secretary

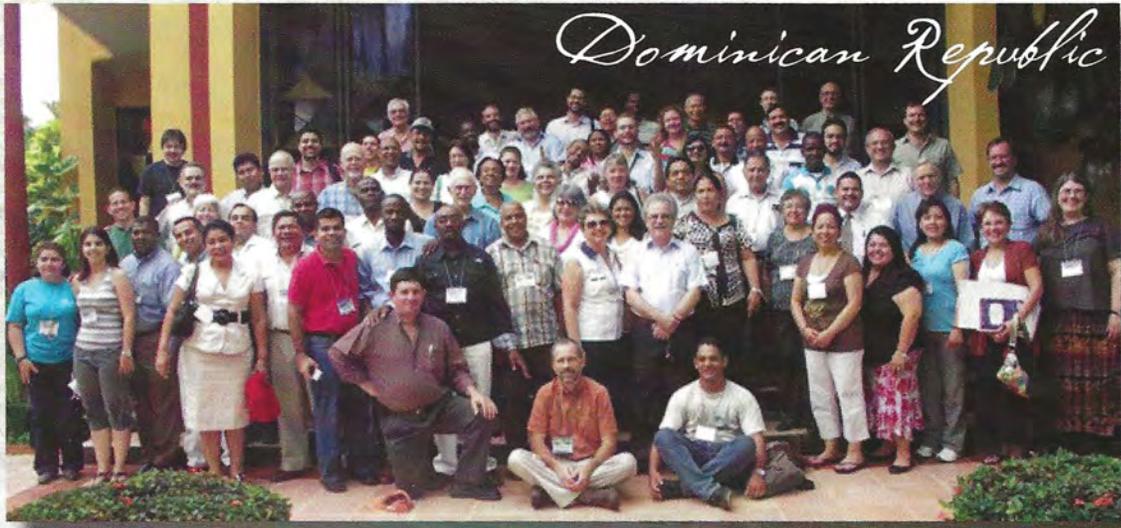


Glenn Riegel

Glenn Riegel



Lindsay Frye

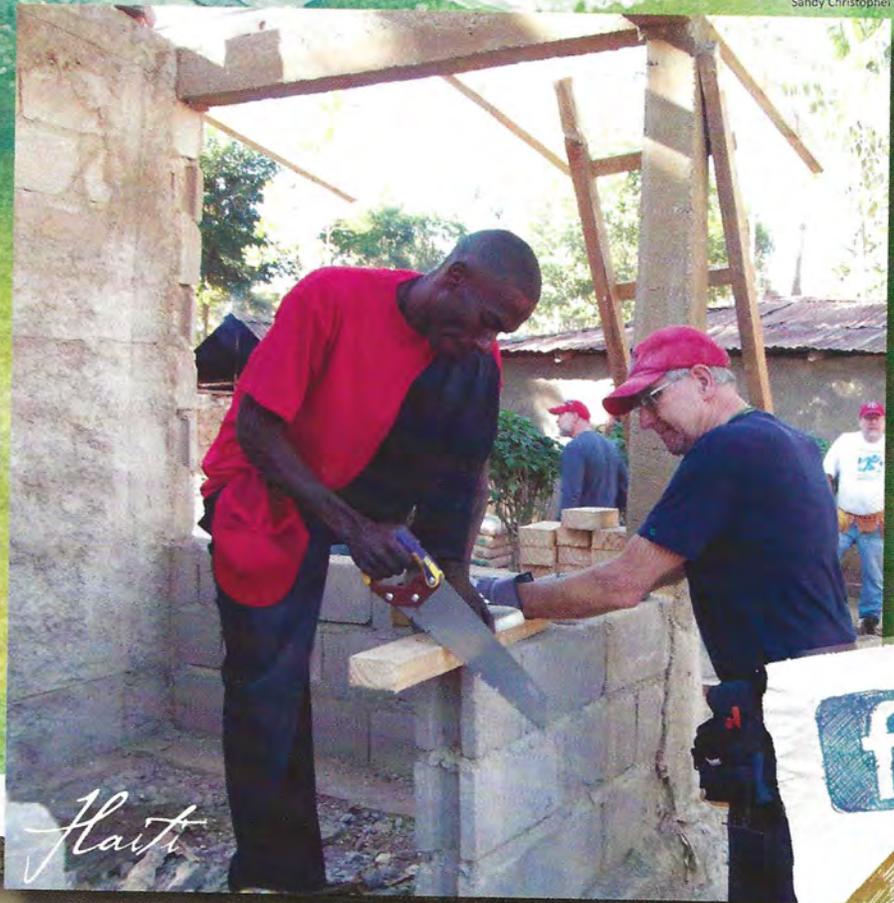


Dominican Republic

Core Value:

Servant leadership
Serving the church with
both humility and boldness.

Sandy Christophel



Haiti



[www.facebook.com/
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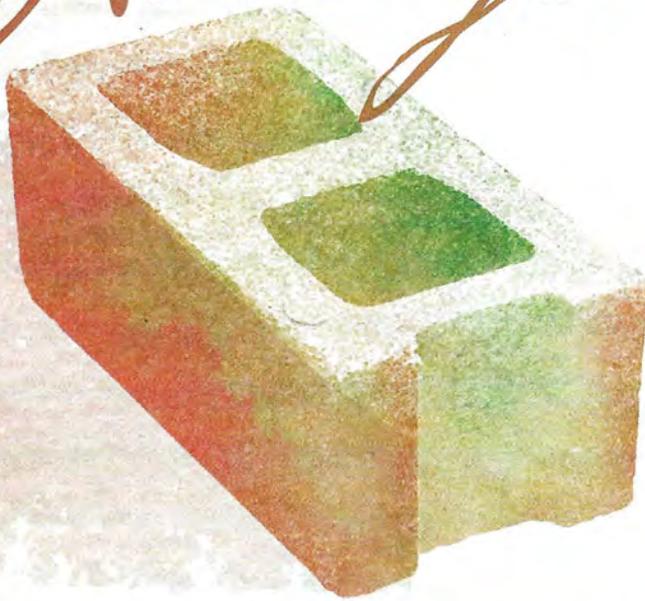


www.brethren.org

Robert Shank



Love your neighbor



For some, North Korea is an enemy country. But for Brethren, it's one more neighbor to care for. We've been giving relief and development grants since 1996. And now, Robert and Linda Shank are among the small number of westerners teaching at the Pyongyang University for Science and Technology.

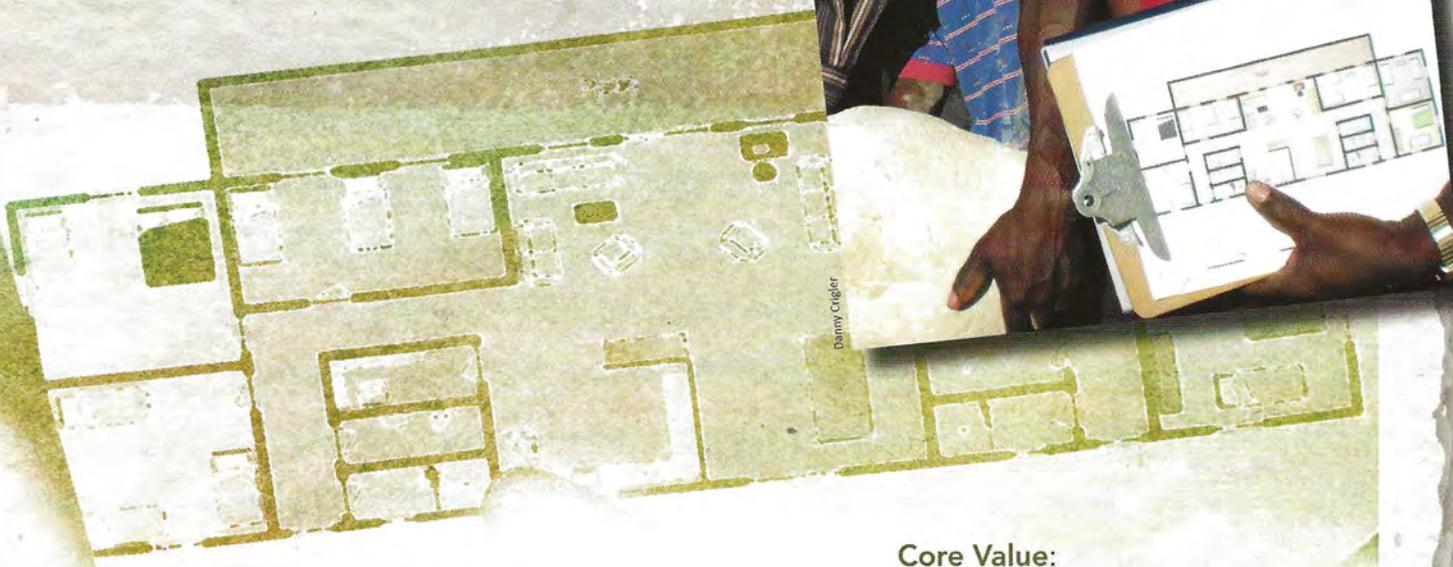
Jeanne Davies



Haiti

BRETHREN
Disaster Ministries

Danny Cigler



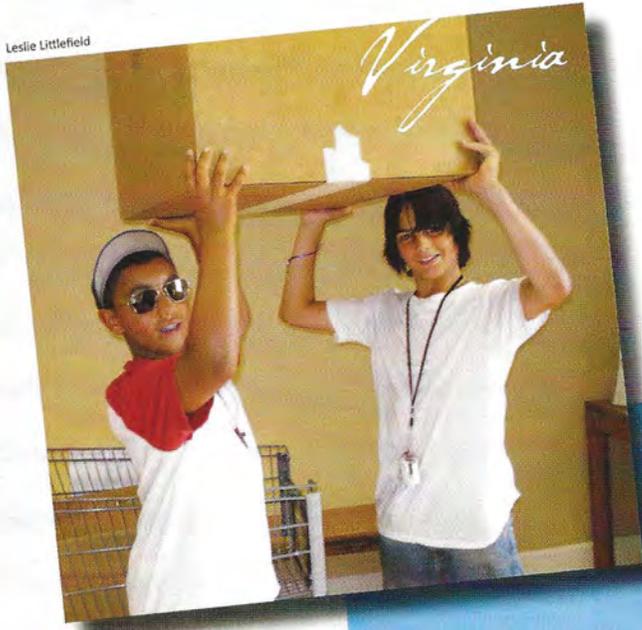
Core Value:

Simplicity

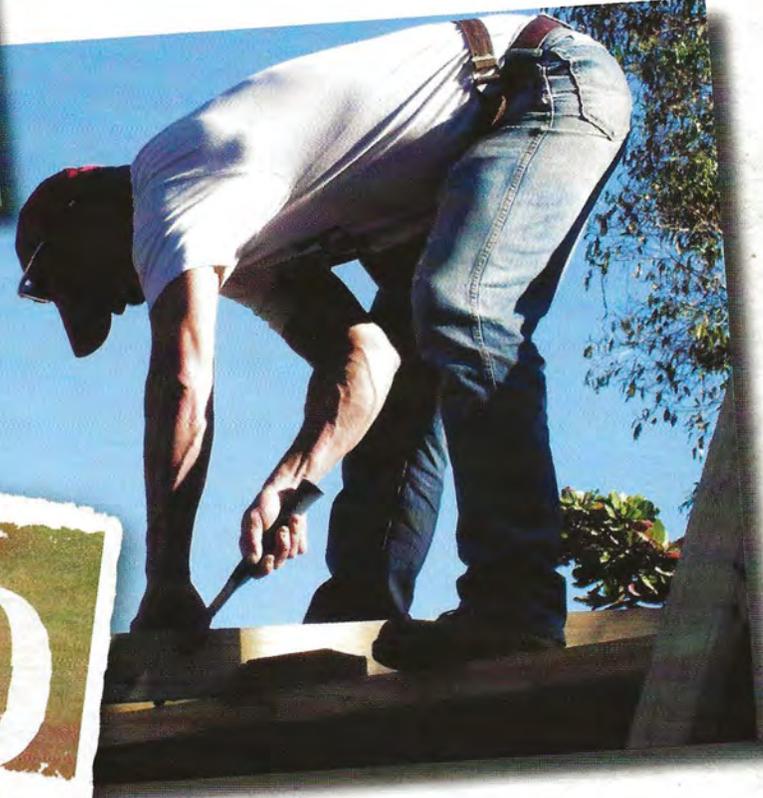
Living simply so that we have room
in our lives for God and for others.

Leslie Littlefield

Virginia



Sandy Christophel



50
Years of Brethren
Disaster Ministries

Go into The world

Michael Wagner opens a new chapter of Brethren work in southern Sudan when he is seconded in July to the Africa Inland Church. His assignment comes at a pivotal moment—months before the Referendum vote on self determination for the South. “As a historic peace church, we Brethren need to hold our Sudanese brothers and sisters in our thoughts and prayers at this momentous time in Sudan’s history.”

Mary Jo Flory-Steuery



Remembering the Ping Ding mission hospital, begun by Brethren 100 years ago.

Charlie Bruske



Haiti

Michael Wagner

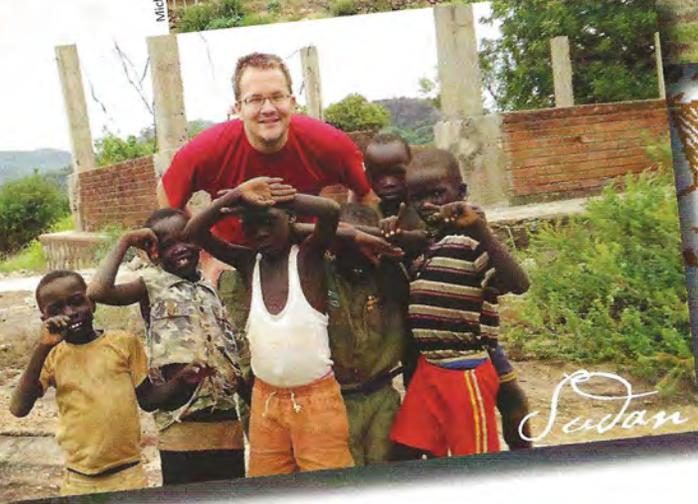


Core Value:

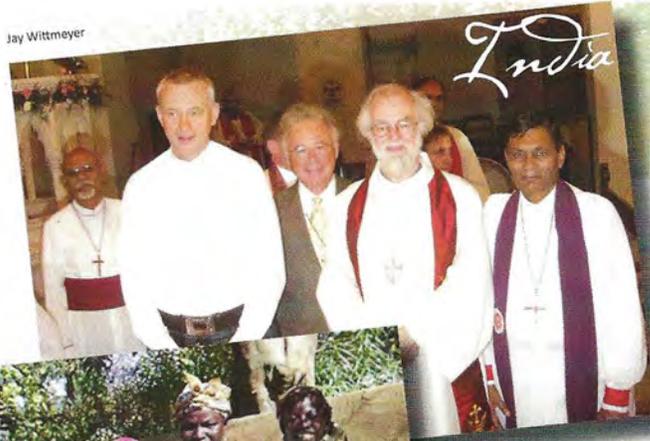
Hospitality

Following Jesus' example of respecting all people and inviting them into his fellowship.

Michael Wagner



Jay Wittmeyer



Moderator Robert Alley joins the Archbishop of Canterbury and other church leaders to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Church of North India.

Nate and Jenn Hosler



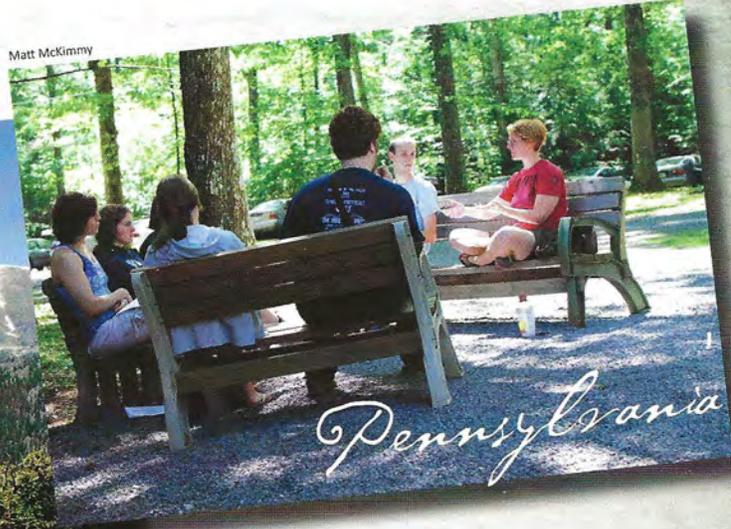
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tours of the Brethren Service Center

Glenn Riegel



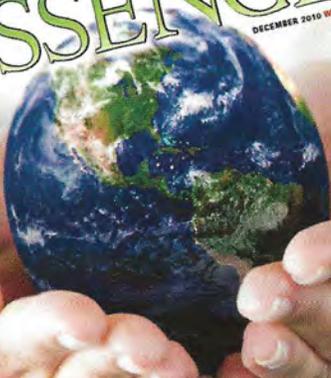
Matt McKimmy



Grow in faith

National Youth Conference made full use of technology—cell phones, Facebook, Twitter, webcasting, and video. But the overall aim was generations old—to connect youth with the life-changing good news of Jesus Christ.

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shalom
BIBLICAL VISION OF ECOJUSTICE

Glenn Riegel





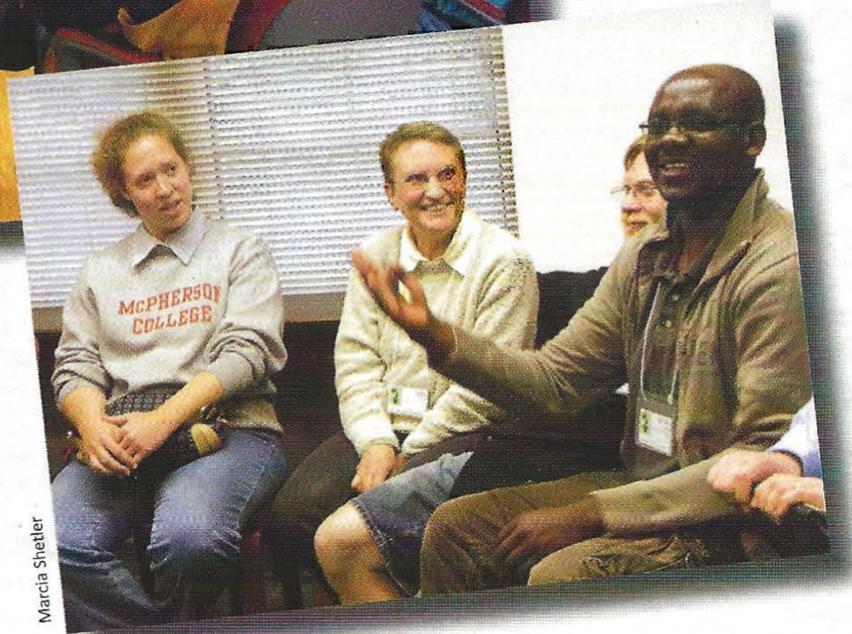
Marcia Shetler

Indiana

Core Value:

Community

Cultivating relationships and building up the body of Christ.



Marcia Shetler



Plant
Generously,
Reap
Bountifully



The Brethren Academy adds a Spanish-language track for ministry training.



Marcia Shetler

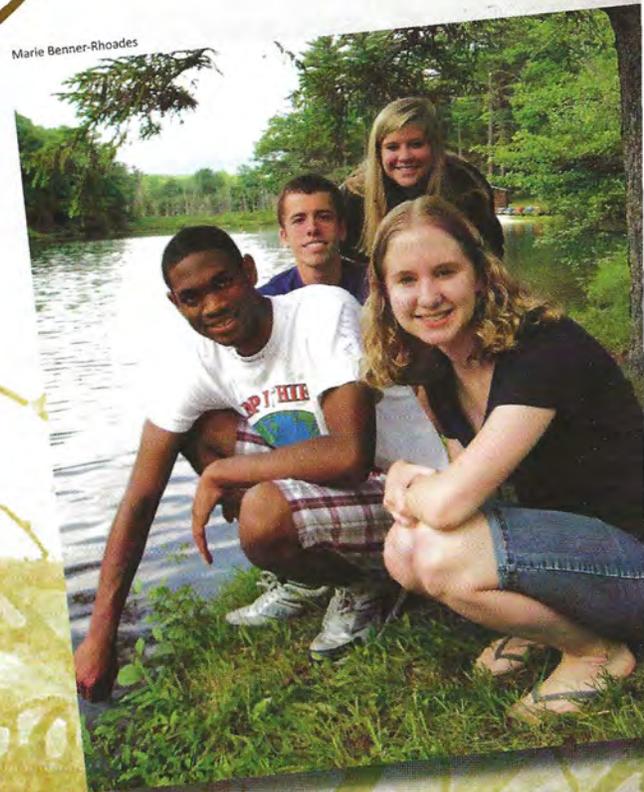
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Webinars and webcasts:
More than 8,000 hits

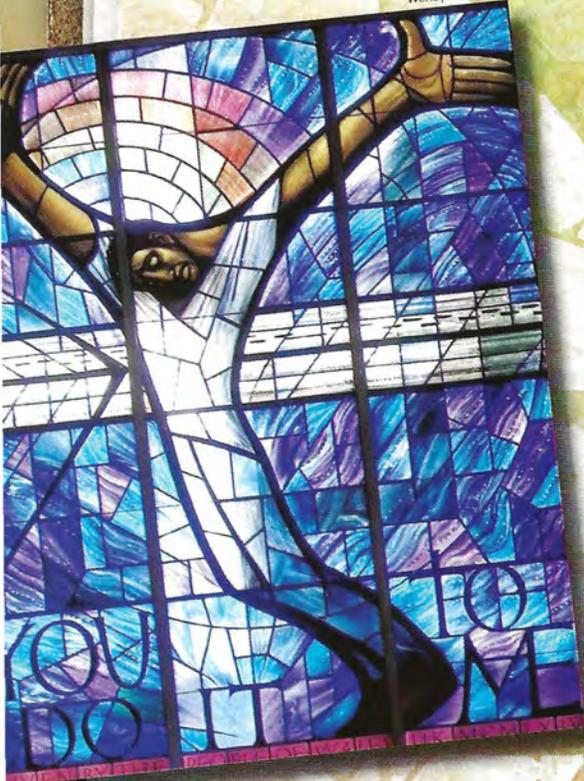
Witness for peace

Introducing campers to the church's teachings on peace. Strengthening the common message of the historic peace churches. Examining racial justice. Signing a new agreement on conscientious objection with the Selective Service. Speaking peace to the nation and the world—in new ways and with many voices.

Marie Benner-Rhoades



Wendy McFadden





Core Value:

Peacemaking

Acting as instruments of reconciliation and justice

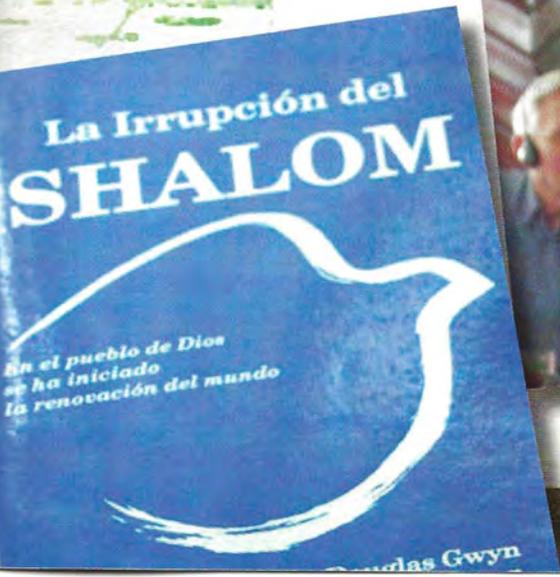
Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

A LA MESA
TODOS LAS
ESTAN INVITADOS



17

countries represented at the historic peace churches conference in the Dominican Republic.



Listen to God

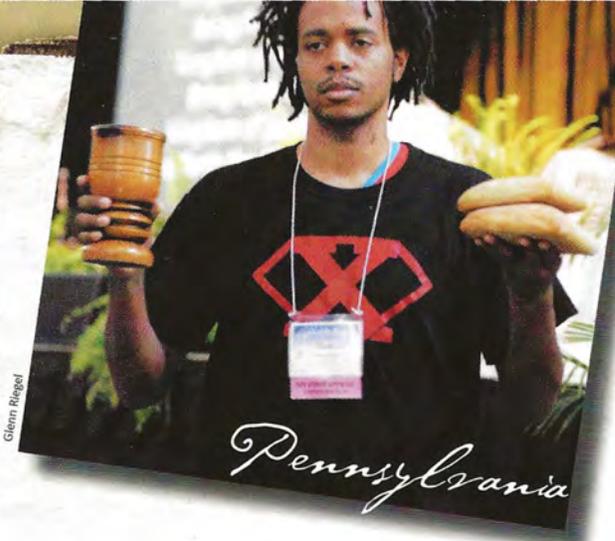
How do we tune ourselves to hear God? Through practice. Through worship and prayer, Bible study, and many experiences as a gathered spiritual community.

Matt McKimmy



Justin Hokenberg





Glenn Riegel

Core Value:

Discernment

Seeking the leading of the Holy Spirit through prayer, scripture, and the gathered community.

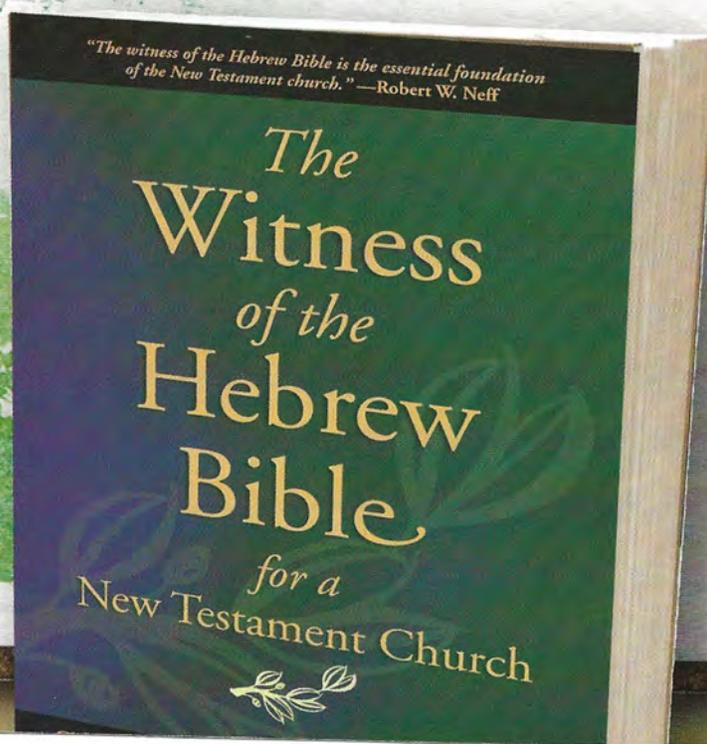


Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Glenn Riegel



Colorado



"The witness of the Hebrew Bible is the essential foundation of the New Testament church." —Robert W. Neff

The Witness of the Hebrew Bible

for a New Testament Church



Glenn Riegel

Jay Wittmeyer

Amber Sims



Your gifts make it possible

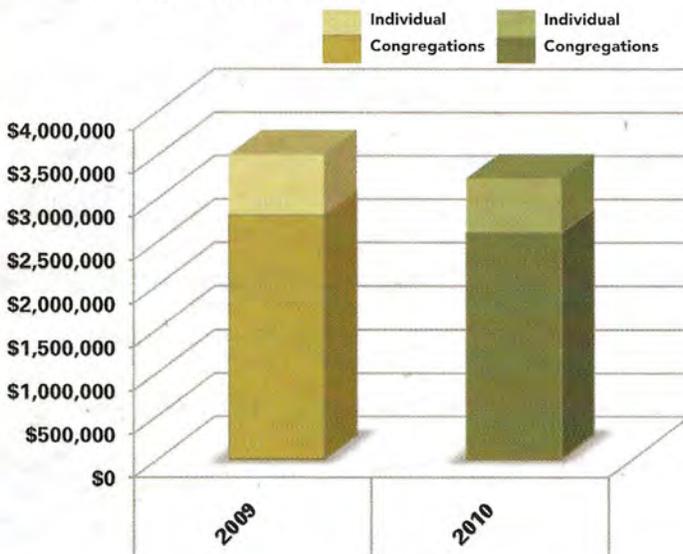
Core Ministries. For stability during the uncertain economic climate of 2010, the budget for Core Ministries was planned with a deficit of \$380,930 to be covered by net assets. Thankfully, the deficit was smaller than expected—\$327,750, according to pre-audit results. Overall income for Core Ministries was short of budget. Though individual giving had a significant shortfall of \$221,200 below budget, congregational giving exceeded budget and totaled \$2,602,590. This

generous amount is much appreciated; we know that congregations also struggle with finances.

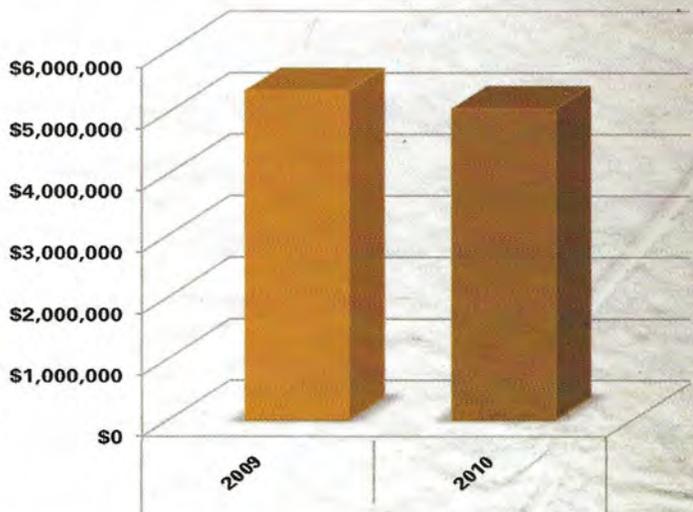
Self-funding ministries. Five self-funding ministries receive income from the sale of goods and services. Brethren Press ended the year slightly ahead of budget, with income over expense of \$4,250. *Messenger* finished with a positive \$34,560, largely because of transition in staffing.

CORE MINISTRIES

INCOME FROM GIFTS



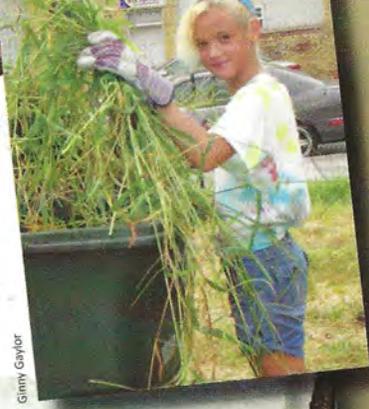
EXPENSES



Core value:

Stewardship

Caring for all God's gifts and the resources of the Church of the Brethren.



Ginny Gaylor

Jeanne Davies



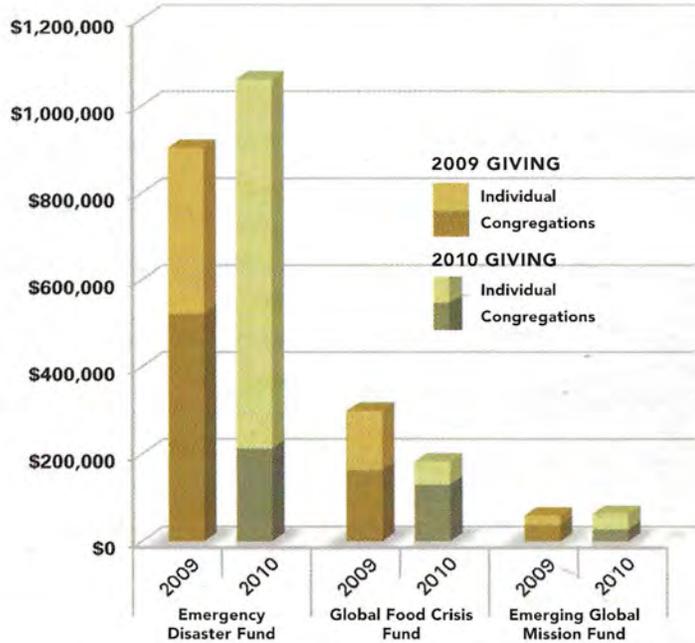
Because of a large special gift, the Annual Conference fund was able to significantly reduce the deficit that had developed from the San Diego Annual Conference. After receiving more income than budgeted and saving on expenses, the Conference Office finished the year with income over expense of \$254,570 compared to a budgeted \$32,040.

Material Resources ended with a net loss of \$24,690. The New Windsor Conference Center, especially hard hit by the economy, had a 30 percent shortfall in budgeted income. The year-end loss of \$244,500 doubled the conference center's accumulated deficits.

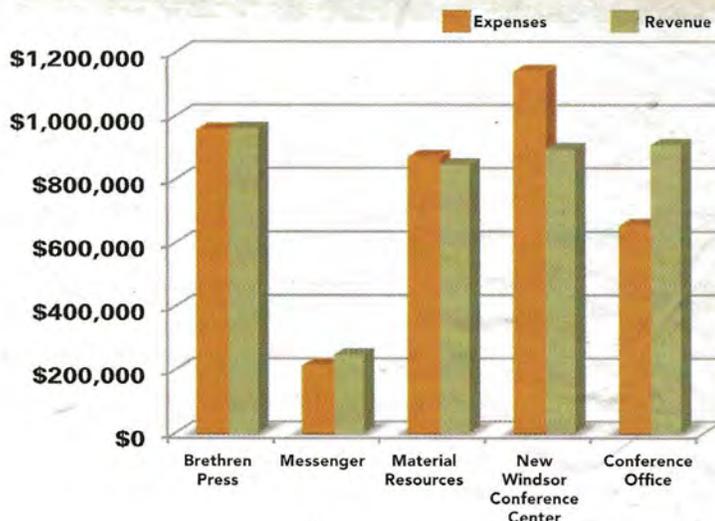
Special-purpose funds. In response to the Haiti earthquake, gifts to the Emergency Disaster Fund reached \$2,082,210—more than \$1 million higher than 2009. The Global Food Crisis Fund received \$182,290, about \$100,000 less than the year before. It is likely that giving to EDF affected individual giving to Core Ministries and the Global Food Crisis Fund.

Complete financial information is available in the Church of the Brethren audit report, published in June 2011.

SPECIAL-PURPOSE FUNDS



SELF-FUNDING MINISTRIES



Core Value:

Christ-likeness

Reflecting the love and heart of Jesus.

Under the direction of the Mission and Ministry Board, whose members are elected by Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren engages in ministries across the United States and around the world:

ANNUAL CONFERENCE • BRAZIL • BRETHREN ACADEMY FOR MINISTERIAL LEADERSHIP • BRETHREN HISTORICAL LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES • BRETHREN SERVICE CENTER • BRETHREN VOLUNTEER SERVICE • CHILDREN'S DISASTER SERVICES • CHRISTIAN CITIZENSHIP SEMINAR • CURRICULUM AND BOOKS DEACONS • DOMINICAN REPUBLIC • ECUMENICAL RELATIONS • EMERGENCY DISASTER FUND • EVANGELISM • FAITH FORMATION • FAMILY MINISTRY FINANCE OFFICE • GENERAL OFFICES • GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS FUND • HAITI HEALTH AND DISABILITIES • HOME REBUILDING • HUMAN RESOURCES • INDIA INFORMATION SERVICES • INTERCULTURAL MINISTRIES • MATERIAL RESOURCES MESSENGER MAGAZINE • MINISTRY SUMMER SERVICE • NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE • NEW CHURCH PLANTING • NEW WINDSOR CONFERENCE CENTER • NEWSLINE • NIGERIA • NORTH KOREA • OLDER ADULTS • PEACE CONFERENCES • PEACE WITNESS • SOCIAL JUSTICE • SPIRITUAL LIFE & DISCIPLESHIP STEWARDSHIP • SUDAN • WEBINARS • WORKCAMPs • WWW.BRETHRENPRESS.COM WWW.BRETHREN.ORG • YOUTH & YOUNG ADULTS • YOUTH PEACE TRAVEL TEAMS

Look inside for photo highlights of 2010. For a full written report, visit www.brethren.org/annualreport.



Church of the Brethren

Vision

The Mission and Ministry Board envisions the Church of the Brethren wholly engaged in the reconciliation of all people to God and to each other.

Mission

The Mission and Ministry Board is called by the Church of the Brethren to extend the church's witness around the world. It leads out in God's mission, serving as a bridge between the local and the global and creating opportunities for service and partnership.

The Mission and Ministry Board supports congregations in their task to create joyful communities of faith that proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ, cultivate discipleship, respond to human need, and make peace.

The Mission and Ministry Board cares for the whole fabric of the community, building up the Church of the Brethren as a distinctive part of the body of Christ, cherishing its unique heritage, and strengthening its witness.



eye, the stone in our own hand? Anyone who has had sex (or not) knows it is much more complicated than the parameters of the 1983 paper. We all have much to learn about our own temptations and addictions, power and destruction, insecurity and uncertainty when it comes to sex and the body.

How relevant might our church be if we dared to talk about the things that matter? Especially how relevant might we be to younger generations who are constantly stimulated by half-naked, sexually abusive, and body-objectifying media? I bet youth groups would grow and all those students studying youth and young adult ministry at Bethany Seminary would have full-time paid positions in the church. And I bet we would have fewer teenage pregnancies and a more holistic understanding of sexuality. And I bet . . . the possibilities are endless.

I know talking about sex is messy—and often times culturally and generationally taboo. It is private and intimate, and its mystery is somehow minimized when shared openly. I get it. I do. Yet for nearly a year we have dragged our lesbian sisters and gay brothers into the public square in these hearings. More times than not,

In what other ways might sexual ethics have evolved? How did we move from a man who committed adultery yet was crowned a king to a woman who committed adultery yet was about to be stoned? How did we move from a savior who was unmarried and childless and an apostle who warned that marriage was only for those too weak to resist sex (1 Cor 7:9)—all the way to marriage and children as *the* Christian lifestyle?

How then did we move from marriage as a business transaction (women being nothing more than virgins and property to be bartered) to a love connection (marriage as intimate, loving, and mutual)? And today, when divorce is a reality even among Christians striving to be faithful, how do we move from “thou shall not” to “how can I be Christ to you?” And as young people delay marriage well into their late 20s and 30s, how do we talk about the reality of pleasure when our natural bodily functions are urging us, and our pleading for intimacy prevails?

Sexuality, like scripture, is not static; it is living. It is refreshing and regenerative. It is resurrecting in every generation—revealing wisdom and depths that we have not yet been able to bear (John 16:12). Do not be afraid.

WHAT IF WE REFRAMED THE “HOMOSEXUAL” CONVERSATION ENTIRELY? TURNING OUR FINGERS AWAY FROM “THE OTHER” AND INSTEAD TURNING THEM INWARDLY TOWARD THE LOG IN OUR OWN EYE, THE STONE IN OUR OWN HAND?

straight people talked *about* LGBT people’s sexual identity and behavior, yet straight people refused to be vulnerable or unveiled in mutual ways.

When I participated in the Special Response Bible study, I was struck by how once again the Living Word revealed new understanding. I had not ever read the John 8 text about the woman caught in adultery through the lens of sexuality. As I did, I saw right there in scripture how sexual ethics have changed. When we think of adultery today, we think of a man and woman (at least one of whom is married) engaging in actual sexual intercourse. But in biblical times, a married woman caught even *talking* alone with another man (like Jesus and the woman at the well) could be perceived to be committing adultery. In fact, this still happens in parts of the world today; and now we consider this shaming and stoning as barbaric and oppressive.

What was true and good in ancient times, or even in 1983, may not be entirely true and good for today—not because culture says so, but because God is still speaking through the Living Word that abides in you and me (John 15:4). If we fail to listen, love, and learn because we are pointing our finger at “the other,” then this body of Brethren will remain broken. If we fail to delve more deeply into the dangerous and intimate places of God and sex, we will miss an opportunity to receive the goodness of God in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13). **W!**

Elizabeth Keller, who lives and works in Richmond, Ind., graduated from Manchester College and Bethany Theological Seminary and is a member of an online women’s spirituality circle. She serves as a leader in the church with special interest in calling leaders into ministry and working with women’s empowerment locally and globally.

Mutual assistance yesterday and today

by Graydon F. Snyder

[This Bible study by Graydon F. Snyder is the fourth installment in a series that examines how the Church of the Brethren's acceptance of the New Testament as its creed has worked over the centuries, and what it implies for us today. —Ed.]

Mutual assistance as practiced in exactly the same manner as the earliest followers of Jesus may be difficult to find today. Yet the spirit of that assistance can still be found, albeit in a somewhat different form.

In our everyday lives, we frequently help each other as families and neighbors, even if only in the simple act of sharing a cup of sugar. More striking examples occur at times of disasters. For example, when the BP oil spill occurred in the Gulf of Mexico, persons from all over the United States hastened to help clean up, establish shelter, and offer food. Or when scores of tornadoes ripped through the South, people in neighboring communities and states hurried to assist.

Mutuality is an inherent part of our existence. According to the Genesis narrative, individuality was not a satisfactory way of life, so God created woman from the rib of man, and the two lived as one body in the Garden of Eden. Unfortunately, mutuality did not always continue as a way of life. In the Genesis account there was a problem between Cain and Abel. The issue was not resolved by mutual caring but, to the contrary, by Cain killing Abel.

The Jesus sense of mutuality was caught up in his sense of "bodiness." At the last supper, he took a loaf of bread and, after blessing it, shared it with his disciples and said, "As you share in this bread, you create my body" (Matt. 26:26).

As the mark of its mutuality, the earliest church shared all in common:

Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:43-47).

It is difficult to determine how long the communality lasted. The author of Acts speaks of a continuing mutuality:

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. (Acts 4:32-35).

While the Acts text says the believers shared all they had, the story indicates they brought resources to the apostles from time to time. That is, by this time (Acts 4:34-35), complete communality had disappeared and the early Christians were sharing their resources as seemed appropriate. The story of Ananias and Sapphira in chapter 5 reflects this development of mutual assistance that followed the earlier communism. Even then the pair cheated the faith community by donating only a partial amount.

As the church became attached to the Roman Empire (after 313), the state cared for mutual assistance. To care for the ill, the state built hospitals. To help the poor, the state built shelters. To protect the disabled (especially the mentally ill), the state built asylums. The focus of the church stayed primarily on spiritual care, expressed in common worship and traditional rituals.

Despite the formal secular takeover of church functions, there were constant developments of groups that followed the lifestyle of the early church. Best known would be the Waldensians, who started in Lyon, France, around 1170. Though they did not share possessions in common, they did live a communal style of life. Eventually, because of persecution, they were forced to move to the Alps.

Another well-known group would be the Hutterites, who did hold all things in common. Related to the Anabaptists, they came to fruition about 1536. We know best the communal Anabaptists (adult Baptists) who came into existence in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525. The Church of the Brethren derived from these groups, with the first baptism occurring in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708.

These various post-medieval fellowships rejected formal care structures. The Brethren had no hospitals until they felt



Christ at Table / Christ of the Soup Kitchen by Fritz Eichenberg

**"ALL THE BELIEVERS
WERE ONE IN HEART AND
MIND. NO ONE CLAIMED
THAT ANY OF THEIR
POSSESSIONS WAS THEIR
OWN, BUT THEY SHARED
EVERYTHING THEY HAD."**

the need to help those attached to their mission work. The first Brethren dispensary work started in India in about 1903. Their foreign concern eventually shifted to the United States. In 1921, Bethany Hospital was established in Chicago next to the Bethany Bible School.

Education followed much the same process. The first Brethren, though lacking formal education, were quite literate. In fact, they were famous for publications from the Sauer Press in Germantown, Pa. Education occurred in academies and in local churches. Higher education was rejected for two basic reasons. Such education could separate the educated elite from those who still lived the more "simple life." Secondly, the leaders of local churches were "free ministers." Payment for expounding the Word of God was prohibited.

The founding of institutions of higher education would create a class of ministers who would offer service for financial gain. And indeed that happened. Toward the end of the 19th century a large number of Brethren colleges were founded—offering far more space than there were students seeking advanced education. By 1940, only seven Brethren-related schools of higher education still existed: Juniata and Elizabethtown Colleges in Pennsylvania; Bridgewater College in Virginia; McPherson College in Kansas; La Verne College (now University of La Verne) in California; Manchester College in Indiana; and Bethany Seminary in Illinois.

From the beginning, there was no primary organization or headquarters for the Church of the Brethren. Local churches and districts cooperated to make decisions. In 1959, the various responsibilities of the church were assembled in Elgin, Ill. Even that headquarters did not make final decisions. While it took care of various programs such as Brethren Service, Foreign Missions, Disaster Relief, and Volunteer Service, it did not determine policies. Those decisions were made by Annual Conference.

How do we maintain that original policy of mutual assistance today? While it is not simple, the congregational church does follow certain patterns of assistance. If some members of the church or community lack sufficient sustenance, the faith community will share and even establish food pantries. When people lack housing, the church will often assist, sometimes by offering housing in the church itself. In case of illness, there are very few Brethren sources. However, Brethren can utilize hospitals and doctors that share the free church beliefs. For example, Bethany Hospital was taken over by the United Church of Christ system called Advocate. Even in their TV ads, such faith-based hospitals say they "heal the body and the spirit."

And so, even in these modern, changing times, mutual assistance continues to remain available among Brethren and other free churches, even though the form of that assistance may not look exactly the same as it did in the days of the early church. **■**

Graydon F. Snyder, now retired and living in Chicago, Ill., was dean and professor of New Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary and Chicago Theological Seminary. He is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and author of many books, including *Ante Pacem: Archeological Evidence of Church Life Before Constantine*.

Dominican church holds 20th annual assembly

The 20th annual asamblea of Iglesia de los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic) opened at Camp Bethel near San Juan, D.R., on Feb. 17 and concluded Feb. 20. Pastor Onelis Rivas presided as moderator. About 150 persons including 70 delegates from 28 congregations met together in business sessions and in Bible study and worship.



Musicians lead worship at the 20th annual Asamblea of Iglesia de los Hermanos (the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic). The event was held near San Juan, D.R., on Feb. 17-20 and was led by moderator and pastor Onelis Rivas.

Church program in DR faces financial issues

The Church of the Brethren mission in the Dominican Republic and Iglesia de los Hermanos (the Church of the Brethren in the DR) have been facing financial and administrative problems in recent years. Global Mission Partnerships executive director Jay Wittmeyer reported that the program in the DR did not receive a clean audit report in its most recent annual financial audit.

"We've been working toward a clean audit and have been getting closer," Wittmeyer said.

One of the main problems has been the intermingling of the microfinance community development funds with church funds, he reported. A large amount of money is outstanding in uncol-

lected or unrecoverable loans given as micro-loans. Another problem has been undocumented expenses. Also donations from US congregations have gone directly to Dominican congregations without an accounting through the national church, and the practice has led to conflict.

Global Mission Partnerships has been making efforts to improve administration of the program in the DR, sending former Nigeria mission workers Tom and Janet Crago to work with the financial system for several months. The couple helped arrive at a recommendation that the community development program be registered outside the Church of the Brethren.

Irvin and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, who finished as mission coordinators at the end of 2010 after close to eight years in the DR, worked

Earl K. Ziegler of Lancaster, Pa., was the main speaker for the conference theme on "Receiving the Promise" based on Luke 24:49. Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of the Church of the Brethren Global Mission Partnerships, was the official representative from the US church. Marcos Inhauser, a leader in the Church of the Brethren in Brazil, also participated in the assembly.

Each session began with spirited singing supported by loud music involving drums, guitars, and vocalists. The singing was a way of gathering the people who came from all areas of the camp to attend the assembly, in an open air structure with a tin roof. Evening services continued to 10:30 p.m., with one night's service ending at 11 p.m.

The three basic concerns of the conference were the need for a stronger youth program, lack of finances, and leadership issues. Pastor Isaias Santo Teña of the San Luis Church was called to serve as the 2012 moderator-elect, with pastor Mardouche Catalice of the Boca Chica church serving as moderator for the next year.

Attendance was less this year due to the geographical location of the conference and the threat of deportation for undocumented Haitian Brethren who have come to the DR to work in sugar cane fields and farm fields and in construction. The Haitians are invited to come to the DR and work but are not given any permanent status. The tension around this issue is greater since the Haitian earthquake in 2010. About one-third of the congregations of Iglesia de los Hermanos are Haitian.—Earl K. Ziegler provided this report.



The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria recently elected a new president, Samuel Dali (at right). He is shown here with his wife, Rebecca S. Dali.

Report on Nigeria's post-election violence

In their April newsletter, Church of the Brethren mission staff Nathan and Jennifer Hosler reported on post-election violence in Nigeria. The Hoslers are serving in peace and reconciliation positions with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), teaching at Kulp Bible College (KBC) in northeastern Nigeria near the city of Mubi.

"Nigerian presidential elections occurred on Saturday (April 16) and there has been violence Sunday and Monday," the Hoslers wrote. "Supporters of one party are angry that their candidate did not win. Rioting has occurred in Mubi (30-minutes drive south) and Michika (40-minutes drive north), along with other main cities in northern Nigeria. This is the first time Adamawa State (the state we live in) has experienced violence like this. Stores and cars have been burnt. People were shot. Churches in Mubi including a main EYN church were targeted, but the army was able to intervene before the attack occurred."

The Hoslers have recently begun work with a KBC Peace Club, which successfully completed its first outreach program outside of the college. In March the club traveled to EYN Gi'ima—a large church in Mubi—to present a program on youth and young adults and peace. "Youths, aimless and without jobs to occupy their time, are often and easily persuaded to take up arms as thugs for politicians or others who wish to cause havoc. The program included two dramas and two speakers. The message, given to the 750 people in attendance, was simple but relevant: youth should avoid being used by politicians for violence and instead work for peace."

The couple also have been working on a peacebuilding partnership with the Women's Fellowship of EYN, known as ZME, one of the strongest groups within EYN. "One of the requests from the ZME director is for the EYN Peace Program to teach peacebuilding topics during the annual national women's training seminars," the Hoslers wrote. "Women from every church district gather together and learn topics that range from health and sanitation, skills acquisition (jewelry making, batik, etc.), and biblical and theological topics. The women then return to their districts as resource persons to teach others what they learned—a very effective way of spreading awareness and skills for peacebuilding."

hard to facilitate a clean audit and establish accountability structures, Wittmeyer said. They also encouraged stewardship and encouraged the DR church to overcome issues of dependency on the US church. In addition, Brazil mission coordinator Marcos Inhauser has been helping engage in the conversations with the DR church, in particular on spiritual growth.

At the root of the problems is that "Global Mission Partnerships tried to set up institutions that were beyond the capacity of the local church to administer," Wittmeyer explained. "In fact, they were institutions that were beyond the Global Mission Partnerships' capacity to administer."

Global Mission Partnerships plans to

move away from a long-standing practice of directly paying the salaries of Dominican pastors. The shift is necessary to help the church in the DR become self-sufficient, Wittmeyer said, as he acknowledged that many US Brethren who have lived or worked in the DR will have continuing legitimate concern for the people's needs.

"The Church of the Brethren wants to help support the ministries that address poverty and provide for needs like clean water, schools, help with immigration issues, theological education, etc. But this needs to be done in ways that are both accountable and build the capacity of the church."

For questions about the mission in the Dominican Republic contact Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships, 800-323-8039 or jwittmeyer@brethren.org.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

June 12-July 1 Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Summer unit orientation, New Windsor, Md.

June 12 Pentecost Sunday

June 13-25 "Protestant Church of Germany: Past and Present," study abroad offering of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, Marburg, Germany

June 17-19 National Junior High Conference, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

June 21 BVS Potluck, New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center

June 26-July 2 Song and Story Fest, Camp Brethren Heights, Rodney, Mich.

July 1-2 Ministers' Pre-Conference Event, Grand Rapids, Mich.

July 2 Mission and Ministry Board meeting, Grand Rapids, Mich.

July 2-6 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, Grand Rapids, Mich.

July 6 Brethren Benefit Trust Board meeting, Grand Rapids, Mich.

Intercultural consultation celebrates unity through the cross of peace

"I hope we are all looking forward to being in a sacred space . . . and just love each other," said Rubén Deoleo, director of Intercultural Ministries, as he welcomed participants to the 13th Intercultural Consultation and Celebration. It was a fitting opening to a meeting on the theme "United by the Cross of Peace" (Ephesians 2:14-22). Approximately 100 Brethren from across the US and Puerto Rico gathered April 28-30 in Mills River, N.C., hosted by His Way Church of the Brethren/Iglesia Jesucristo El Camino and Southeastern District.

On Earth Peace (OEP) offered a day and a half on peacemaking. Matt Guynn, OEP coordinator of peace witness, led several sessions with help from a team including Samuel Sarpiya, church planter in Rockford, Ill., and a non-violence organizer for OEP; David Jehnsen, nonviolence educator from the area of Columbus, Ohio; Carol Rose, co-director for operations for Christian Peacemaker Teams; Bob Hunter of Intervarsity Christian Fellowship in Richmond, Ind.; and Kay Guyer, Manchester College student and a member of the 2011 Youth Peace Travel Team. An afternoon on mentoring and coaching in churches was given by Stan Dueck, the denomination's director of Transforming Practices.

Each day included an evening worship service, moments for prayer, music from many different traditions, and warm fellowship during break times and meals provided by the host church and district volunteers. Concurrent



Matt Guynn of On Earth Peace makes a point during the 2011 Intercultural Consultation and Celebration, while in the background OEP intern and Manchester College student Kay Guyer draws a vivid representation of the Alexander Mack Seal. The heart placed at the intersection of the cross helped illustrate the meeting's theme, "United by the Cross of Peace" (Ephesians 2:14-22). On Earth Peace staff and friends led the main sessions.

Spanish-English interpretation was provided.

Throughout the weekend, speakers linked peacemaking to central themes of Christianity, in particular the love that Jesus expressed for the whole world, symbolized by the cross. General secretary Stan Noffsinger greeted the gathering with his conviction from scripture that "there are no ifs, ands, or maybes: love our neighbors as ourselves." His Way associate pastor Carol Yeazell, while listing areas of the world represented, said, "Christ's body is all over the world. He came for each and every one of us."

Guynn characterized the OEP-led sessions as being about the "holistic peace of Christ" that "ripples out to issues in the community, issues where we challenge the situations in the world where there's injustice and violence." Participants shared in Bible study of the Sermon on the Mount and Acts focusing on concepts of peace, and learned about nonviolence theory including the six basic principles of Kingian nonviolence and the three levels of violence posited by Dom Helder Camara. The meeting also identified barriers to peace or "bricks in the wall of hostility," and talked about how Christ's peace might break in. In small



Children from the host congregation for the 2011 Intercultural Consultation wave flags during a moment of celebration in the opening worship service. The event was hosted by His Way Church of the Brethren/Iglesia Jesucristo El Camino and Southeastern District. Approximately 100 Brethren from across the US and Puerto Rico gathered on April 28-30 in Mills River, N.C.

groups, participants shared about situations of violence and oppression, practiced listening to each other, and prayed for healing.

"How is God leading you in the midst of this? How might the love of Christ be available?" Guynn asked at one point during a session in which people listed "faces of violence" in their own communities. Some minutes later, a woman from Caimito, P.R., responded: "In the name of God, the reign of violence needs to be expelled out of human life."

Preaching for worship also addressed the theme of unity through the cross of peace. Jehnsen spoke for the opening service, saying, "We cannot participate in the violation of God's creation." He traced the development of nonviolence theory coming out of the New Testament, the historic peace churches, and the work of

Martin Luther King Jr.

Jesus came to shine "the light of love, the light of mercy, the light of truth," preached Hunter on Friday evening. "The vocation of the Christian is to shine the light" in times of darkness, he said, telling stories of nonviolent action that has shined light on situations of violence and oppression. "The gospel of peace is a revolution, and it is a place of reconciliation."

The Intercultural Advisory Committee that organized the consultation includes Founa Augustin, Barbara Daté, Rubén Deoleo (staff), Thomas Dowdy, Robert Jackson, Nadine Monn, Marisel Olivencia, Gilbert Romero, and Dennis Webb. Webcasts were offered on the Bethany Seminary website by a team including Enten and Mary Eller, David Sollenberger, and Larry Glick. View recordings at www.bethanyseminary.edu/webcasts.

NCC: Death of bin Laden must be a turning point for peace

The death of Osama bin Laden does not "eradicate the scourge of terrorism," but it should stimulate churches to commit themselves "to moving forward together as witnesses for God's love and peace," said a statement released on behalf of the National Council of Churches (NCC) member communions. Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger is one of the church leaders who have signed the statement.

Following is the NCC statement in full:

The death of Osama bin Laden is a significant moment in the turbulent history of the past decade. It does not eradicate the scourge of terrorism nor does it bring closure to the grieving and pain the world has endured since the terror attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, for which he was the primary architect. The National Council of Churches deplores and condemns the extremism he personified, the twisted illusions that wrought years of violence and evil in the world.

Now the member communions of the National Council of Churches pray for God's help as we commit ourselves to moving forward together as witnesses for God's love and peace. In Nov. 2001, as the world reeled from the terror attacks, the General Assembly of the National

Council of Churches and Church World Service challenged their communions to take the lead:

"It is time (we said then) for us as an ecumenical community to make a renewed commitment to a ministry of peace with justice, and to make real in these days the call of Jesus, 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you' (Matthew 5:44). In his Beatitudes, Jesus calls us, his followers, to be merciful if we are to receive mercy; he reminds us that the peacemakers are blessed and will be called children of God. And, he proclaims us 'the light of the world'; our good works should be a beacon to others so they may give glory to God (Matthew 5:14-16).

"We lift up 'Pillars of Peace for the 21st Century,' a 1999 Policy Statement of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. We reaffirm and highlight the statement's call to build a culture of peace with justice characterized by these convictions:

1. The transcending sovereignty and love of God for all creation and the expression of that love in the incarnation of Jesus Christ, whose mission was to reveal understanding about that divine presence, to proclaim a message of salvation and to bring justice and peace;

2. The unity of creation and the equality of all races and peoples;

3. The dignity and worth of each person as a child of God; and

4. The church, the body of believers, whose global mission of witness, peacemaking, and reconciliation testifies to God's action in history."

Osama bin Laden is dead. Just as Christians must condemn the violence of terrorism, let us be clear that we do not celebrate loss of life under any circumstances. The NCC's 37 member communions believe the ultimate justice for this man's soul—or any soul—is in the hands of God. In this historic moment, let us turn to a future that embraces God's call to be peacemakers, pursuers of justice, and loving neighbors to all people.

—Find the NCC statement and list of signers at www.nccusa.org/news/110503binladen.html. To sign up for action alerts from the Peace Witness Ministries of the Church of the Brethren go to www.brethren.org/advocacy/actionalerts.html. To join in discussion with Peace Witness Ministry staff and other Brethren about what the church should say about the war in Afghanistan and the war on terror, go to <http://blog.brethren.org>.

Suzuki Speaks

What do the ozone layer, money markets, the Amazon forest, an iPod, honey bees, the Church of the Brethren, rainfall, and you have in common? *Everything*. That is, according to the concept of interconnectedness.

I teach a course called "Spiritual Cinema" at the University of La Verne. Each semester as I unroll the unit in which the class explores the intersection of spirituality, interconnectedness, and film, and as we strive to make sense of the unseen lines that connect all of us to each



RYAN HARRISON

other and (quite literally) to everything else, I am grateful for the documentary *Suzuki Speaks*.

David Suzuki, a Japanese-Canadian doctor of zoology, professor of genetics, radio/television personality, and recipient of more than 20 honorary doctorates, has made teaching others about environmentalism, sustainability, climate change, and clean energy the focus of his life's work. In

Suzuki Speaks, he brings each of these topics to viewers in ways that directly awaken and challenge them, weaving the pieces together in a dizzying digital tapestry of information.

With computer-generated images, Suzuki unleashes an attention-grabbing stream of vignettes that simultaneously entertain and educate. Interconnectedness is no small subject, of course, but Suzuki admirably compresses his message into a 45-minute documentary broken into bite-sized chunks that examine aspects of life as seemingly disparate as biological needs, economics and growth, youth, and (by the end of the film, a much-needed dose of) hope for reconnection.

One of the most salient and potentially life-changing segments of the film—and one that I believe should be comprehensively discussed within our church communities—is Suzuki's evaluation of humankind's relationship with the four elements: earth, air, water, and fire. He reminds us of the understanding that traditional, nature-based cultures and beliefs systems have always suggested: there is no environment "out there" that we as a species have to deal with. Rather, we *are* the environment, literally made up of the food we eat, the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the energy of our fiery sun that is

released through digestion and metabolism.

If you follow this idea to its applicability in your life, it can have profound implications. On a spiritual level, this discussion opens us to new ways of understanding our relationship to God, to creation, and to our stewardship of the Earth. To put a new twist on a frustratingly simplistic bumper sticker phrase, what might our lives and world look like if we assumed the credo "God created it. I'm responsible for it. That settles it."? Can you truly believe in the sanctity of creation and not take better care of it? Further, what happens when you recognize that *you* are part of that sanctified creation? That everyone else is, as well?

Recognizing that we *are* the environment, and that by extension everything we do to it we are doing to ourselves, places us directly in the middle of a holy equation, rather than as observers who can choose to remain aloof. Suzuki lays it out there, plain as can be: there is no such thing as being aloof.

Suzuki Speaks diagnoses but does not prescribe. The result is that before the credits finish rolling, your head is full of questions: How can I personally make a difference in this global-sized issue? Where should I start? Are "small steps" good enough? Is there a "most important thing" to do or change right now? How do I awaken my family to the spirituality of interconnectedness? How can my church make a difference? What might that look like?

Fortunately—and I like to think that Suzuki recognizes this—we already are surrounded by the answers. When we give thought to these issues and the questions they raise, and then apply our collective wisdom, things start to "click." And when that happens, it becomes increasingly difficult to maintain the status quo. (Good news for a people trying to continue the status-quo-shattering work of Jesus!)

So, consider it a challenge: get a copy of the DVD from your local library (most online and brick-and-mortar DVD companies probably won't have it), watch it with a church group, and ask the above questions. You may be surprised at how readily the answers to these important questions come and the ways in which you will feel called to respond. **W**

Ryan Harrison attends the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren where he started and led monthly Spiritual Cinema Circle gatherings for more than five years. He now teaches "Spiritual Cinema" at the University of La Verne, and is currently pursuing a terminal degree (PsyD of Health & Wellness) at the University of the Rockies.



ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: Suzuki Speaks. **Released:** 2004. **Running time:** 46 minutes. **Director:** Tony Pappa. **Produced** by Avanti Pictures Corporation in association with CBC Television. Recipient of the 2004 Gemini Award for Best Science, Technology, Nature, Environment or Adventure Documentary Program. "We've framed the environmental problem the wrong way," David Suzuki says. "There's no environment 'out there' for us to interact with. We are the environment because we are the Earth."

ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (*Bridgewater, Va.*)

For her professional achievements and community contributions, Holly C. Ratwani, an associate professor of business administration at Bridgewater College, was awarded a "Top 5 Under 35" recognition from Disclosures, the bi-monthly magazine of the Virginia Society of Certified Professional Accountants (VSCPA). The recognition is annually awarded to five CPAs under the age of 35.

Elizabethtown College (*Elizabethtown, Pa.*)

Students at Elizabethtown College are helping to turn garbage into green energy—just by chowing down. Leftovers from lunches and other meals—up to ten 30-gallon buckets a week—are separated from trash, ground, and then shipped to Brubaker Farms in Mount Joy, Pa. The food waste is then mixed with manure and turned into methane gas that powers a generator producing 210 kilowatts an hour—enough to power 200 homes—which then is sold back to the power grid.

Juniata College (*Huntingdon, Pa.*)

Talia Valencia, a junior at Juniata College studying wildlife conservation, recently received confirmation that a 2010 grant she wrote for the African Wildlife Foundation received first prize and \$100,000 in grant funds from the Disney Co. and its Friends for Change: Protect Green program. Valencia's grant proposed establishing the Iyondje Community Bonobo Reserve in the Democratic Republic of the Congo as a safe haven for bonobos, an endangered primate species.

University of La Verne (*La Verne, Calif.*)

At the 2011 SIFE National Exhibition in Minneapolis, Minn., in May, the University of La Verne was named the Second Award Winner for the Campbell Soup Let's Can Hunger Challenge in the Urgent Hunger Relief category. The team also received the Campbell Soup Silver Spoon Award and the Second Runner-Up Award in the SIFE competition. SIFE is an international non-profit organization that works with leaders in business and higher education to mobilize university students to make a difference in their communities.

Manchester College (*North Manchester, Ind.*)

Several Manchester College graduates this spring spoke of how their involvement in church-related programs has influenced their goals. English and literature major Cambria Teter reflected at graduation ceremonies about her summer with the 2010 Youth Peace Travel Team. "This possibility opened my eyes to so much, including the realization that I could not only help people, but teach as well." Teter plans to travel to South Korea to teach English.

McPherson College (*McPherson, Kan.*)

The standout college for public service in Kansas is McPherson College—the only college in Kansas named to the President's Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll with Distinction. The Corporation for National and Community Service names the Honor Roll members annually, and McPherson College was named as a member with distinction for 2010—one of just 114 colleges nationwide, and the only institution in Kansas to receive this honor.

Bridgewater senior travels to Uganda for medical mission

A Bridgewater College rising senior is in the Republic of Uganda this summer for a two-month medical and teaching mission.

Bethany Hansberger, an athletic training and psychology double major from Sterling, Va., left the United States on May 25 headed for Masindi-Kitara in northwestern Uganda. Although her mission is under the guidance of the Society of Anglican Missionaries and Senders (SAMS), Hansberger's effort is an individual one and she traveled alone to the impoverished East African nation.

Once in Uganda, Hansberger was met by SAMS missionary Janine LeGrand, who has worked for years to improve basic health, nutrition, malaria control and sanitation in Uganda. Hansberger will stay and work with LeGrand until her departure from Uganda July 27.

While there, Hansberger will work with children, teaching them lessons related to health and hygiene. "For example, I will teach the importance of hand washing, as many people there do not use soap if they even bother to rinse their hands under water at all," Hansberger said. "I also received donations of toothbrushes and dental floss, which I will use in a dental hygiene lesson."

Hansberger said that, in addition to teaching, she would like to work in a clinic in Masindi-Kitara.

"I am really grateful to be able to go on this trip," she said. "Ever since high school I have felt called to go on a medical mission trip, and I am very glad that the time has finally come for me to get to go. I know that I will be doing things that I will always remember, and I want to leave a lasting impact on the people that I meet, and show them God's love through the things that I do while I am there."



Bethany Hansberger



Several Bridgewater College students are taking seriously the phrase "Eat Local." In addition to volunteering to help with a Bridgewater community garden, the students, who are all members of the Bridgewater chapter of New Community Project, have also planted rows of spinach for use in the main dining hall.

At last, a third way!

I am thrilled to be able to read and identify with Paul Munday's suggestion that our corporate response to the human sexuality issue should place its emphasis on our corporate and undeniable status as redeemed sinners (Special Response column, April MESSENGER). The scriptural "fact" of

this status is universal for Christians. Banishment of bigotry and the reign of love are scriptural "facts" as well. Finally, a position in the middle! At last, a "third way"!

Our congregation at Gettysburg, Pa., has studied not just the five principal scriptures, but also the 10 secondary scriptures, as suggested by the Special Response Study Curriculum. I

believe wholeheartedly that the impulse of the study supports Paul Munday's faith statement. I also understand that others may be led differently by the same study.

My thanks to Paul Munday and the editors for their courage and faith.

Karl Stone
Gettysburg, Pa.

 **Pontius' Puddle**



Thanks for an excellent issue

Thanks for a great issue of MESSENGER: April 2011. I appreciate the focus on the upcoming Annual Conference and the importance of worshipping together despite our differences of opinions. From cover to cover, we have a variety of material written in "agape," topped off by an excellent editorial from Randy Miller. Thank you, thank you!

Clyde Carter
Daleville, Va.



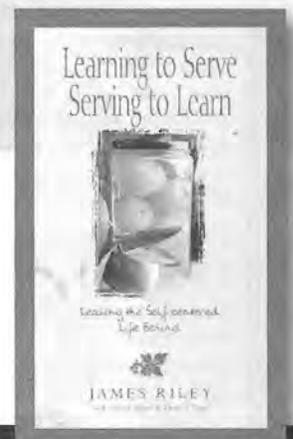
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Talking past each other

Some letter writers in the April 2011 MESSENGER made statements that lead me to question whether they understand the concept of sin. One wrote: "One thing stands out. An individual's sexual orientation is innate. It is not a choice. It is not sinful." Another wrote: "This genetically predetermined minority of gays and lesbians should be accepted for what they are. As such, many do not consider homosexuality a sin."

This conclusion is not logical. The whole concept of original sin precludes this conclusion. Many sinful behaviors, such as personal pride, gluttony, stubbornness, unrighteous anger, etc., are not conscious choices for the person exhibiting the behavior. Yet these behaviors, these "lifestyles," are sinful.

So it is with the homosexual lifestyle. Although a "homosexual gene" has never been positively identified, it seems apparent that much about the homosexual orientation of a person is not determined by conscious choice, but by factors more fundamental to the human condition. But this does not mean that the lifestyle is not sinful, in the same way that a promiscuous heterosexual lifestyle outside of the bonds of marriage is sinful.

Much of the time, the two sides of this conversation seem to talk past each other. My homosexual brothers and sisters are convinced that, since they have not "chosen" this orientation, they are not involved in sin. There is no repentance required. Others hold that unrepentant sin in this very area precludes full membership in the church.

The opinions expressed in "Letters" are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.

Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org. Please include hometown and phone number.

We must never, ever exclude anyone from membership in the Body of Christ. But we must never, ever overlook sin, even sin that is not the conscious choice of the individuals involved. To do so is to belittle the cross of Christ. This we cannot do.

Joe Custer
New Paris, Ind.

Where is the verse in Scripture?

In the April MESSENGER, James Myer wrote that for 30 years he has been waiting for someone to find one verse from the Bible where God clearly approves of homosexuality. I could not find one. However, I would like to ask Brother Myer to find me a verse that answers another question. I have asked it a number of times and no one has given me an answer. Before I get to my question, let me first give some background.

Case #1: An attractive woman went with her husband to their doctor because she could not get pregnant. Tests revealed that although externally she appeared to be female, internally she had testes, and so genetically was male (XY). However, her hormone production was more female, which gave her a feminine appearance. By appearance she is in a heterosexual relationship, but genetically, in a homosexual relationship. In which way is she sinning?

Case #2: A medical doctor was invited to witness the hysterectomy of a "man." This person was born female (XX), but with a missing enzyme, and at puberty started producing excess testosterone and developed a more male appearance, including a full beard and male pattern baldness. This person also preferred female companionship. By appearance, he is living in a heterosexual relationship, but genetically, in a homosexual relationship. In which way is he sinning?

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“IN INTERPRETING THE BIBLE, WE MUST BE AWARE OF ITS HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT SO THAT WE CAN UNDERSTAND ITS MEANING AND AUTHORITY FOR THE CHURCH IN OUR TIME.”

Case #3: In the early 1960s, I worked as an FDA inspector. During this time diethylstilbestrol (DES), a synthetic female hormone, was used in chicken feed. After discovering that it could be a cancer-causing agent, it was banned. A farmer who had used it told me he started to develop soreness and growth in his breasts. His doctor told him to wear gloves when handling the feed. Tiny quantities of DES had gotten into his bloodstream through little scratches in his hands. Gloves corrected his problem.

We might think the first two cases are unusual. However, statistics indicate that an estimated 1 in 2000, may be born with varying differences in sexuality. That means that in the Church of the Brethren there might be the equivalent of a couple large congregations with similar conditions. I did not choose to be heterosexual, as some of my friends did not choose to be homosexual. We just are. Might not slight sex hormone imbalances or other characteristics have an effect on our sexual orientation? We do not fully

understand sexuality. I doubt if the Apostle Paul understood much about hormone imbalance, but in 1 Cor. 13 he understood a lot about love.

So, Brother Myer, what should we do with cases 1 and 2, and others of our denomination who fall into this group? Should the couple in the first case get divorced? Jesus speaks against that. Should we deny them a committed, loving relationship with someone? May they get married? Can you refer me to the scripture that helps me understand? Jesus seemed to know a lot about love and being judgmental. The only answer I could find is when Jesus said, "Love the Lord your God with your whole heart, soul, and mind, and your neighbor as yourself," and also told us not to judge.

Denzel Short
Livonia, Mich.

More persuasive than any text

James Myer's letter in the April issue of *Messenger* invites conversation. Since becoming a member of this denomination, I believe conversation is what being Brethren is all about.

He writes, "I'm looking for a place where God explicitly approves of the homosexual lifestyle. Let me know, because I am still waiting." By using the phrase, "homosexual lifestyle," I assume he includes covenantal relationships.

My response to Mr. Myer is that I cannot provide a text that approves same-sex covenantal relationships. However, I believe a better option for me is to look for principles of love and compassion exemplified in Jesus' life and teachings, which are more persuasive than any text.

Steve Hottle
Greenville, Ohio

ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

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- A PORTUGUESE PILGRIMAGE (September 20-30)
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- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR GARRY JANZEN (October 14-23)
- FROM NAZARETH to ROME (November 10-22)
- BEHIND the VEIL-EXPERIENCING EGYPT with MEDA (November 14-26)
- OBERAMMERGAU CHRISTMAS MARKET (Dec. 7-11)

2012 TOURS

- AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 2-15)
- JAMAICA – ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 20-29)
- GUATEMALA (February 24-March 4)
- VISIT MEXICO and ITS COPPER CANYON (March 9-18)
- EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 18-31)
- FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES (April 16-27)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with NELSON KRAYBILL (May 2-11)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 3-16)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 7-18)

- GLORY of RUSSIA: MOSCOW & ST. PETERSBURG (July 3-13)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
- MENNONITE STORY in POLAND & UKRAINE (September 18-29)
- MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA & TANZANIA (Oct.12-22)
- SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (Oct. 13-22)
- ISRAEL/PALESTINE with NELSON KRAYBILL (Nov.12-21)
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Understanding historical and cultural context

In the April MESSENGER, Paul Munday suggests that the deeper issue behind the issue of homosexuality is the authority of scripture. He quotes biblical scholar Walter Wink, a supporter of same-sex marriage, who writes: "Simply put, the Bible is negative toward same-sex behavior, and there is no getting around it." For Munday, that settles the issue. The Bible is also negative toward women's leadership in the church—does that settle that issue?

Munday never asks why the biblical authors condemn homosexuality. I think there are three key reasons. First, the biblical authors cannot conceive that someone might be naturally attracted to someone of the same sex. They have no understanding of what we know today as a sexual orientation. For the biblical authors, everyone is born with a natural heterosexual orientation. Whether it is genetic or

learned, we know today that sexual orientation is formed very early in a person's life. For the biblical authors, the only reason a person might be attracted to someone of the same sex is if they are depraved and unnatural.

The second reason the biblical authors reject it is because they see humans as a fragile species in a hostile environment. This why God says to the first couple: "Be fruitful and multiply." The biblical authors see homosexuality as a hindrance to human fruitfulness. Third, the biblical authors associate homosexuality with pagan idolatry and temple prostitution. For all these reasons, they view homosexuality as an abomination.

Are these reasonable positions to hold today? I don't think so. First, sexual orientation is not a choice for most people; it is a fixed part of their personality. We do psychological damage to people when we try to force them go against their natural sexual orientation. (I do not mean homosexuals are free

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from all sexual restraints; I think homosexuals should observe the same ethical standards as heterosexuals.) Second, humans no longer need to propagate in vast numbers to thrive. Today, overpopulation is more of a threat. Third, homosexuality is no longer tied to paganism or temple prostitution. Most of the homosexuals I know have been raised in the church and want to be included in its fellowship.

In interpreting the Bible, we must be aware of its historical and cultural context so that we can understand its meaning and authority for the church in our time.

John Copenhaver
Winchester, Va.

Irresponsible claim

In his letter, "Not a Choice," in the April 2011 MESSENGER, Gerald Roller writes from his experience as a physician: "One thing stands out. An individual's sexual orientation is innate." This may be his opinion, but there is no scientific consensus on this point at all. To make this statement categorically and without qualification is irresponsible, especially for a physician. It will not help the dialogue to state as a proven fact something that is

not a proven fact.

In this case it is actually dangerous because it will encourage some to think that sexual orientation can be determined prenatally. If sexual orientation could be determined prenatally, the abominable possibility of selecting (via abortion) for or against a given sexual orientation would exist.

Dr. Roller's invoking his professional authority to lend credence to this unproven and dangerous hypothesis verges on blasphemy. Sexual orientation may or may not involve choice, and multiple inborn as well as postnatal factors may play a part in the development of what we call sexual orientation. But calling sexual orientation innate is, in my view, false. Indeed, there is not yet a consensus even on the legitimacy of using categories of sexual orientation, such as gay, lesbian, transgendered, transsexual, etc., for the purpose of classifying people.

A person's own experience is his or hers to recognize and grow with and name; but the false teachings of "experts" and ideologues will help no one find his or her true path.

Don Monroe
Hyattsville, Md.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Have you always wanted to work in a bookstore? Brethren Press is looking for volunteers to assist in set-up, operation, and tear-down of the Annual Conference Bookstore in Grand Rapids. If you have interest and time to volunteer, contact James Deaton at 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120 or jdeaton@brethren.org.

The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center (www.vbmhc.org) invites applications for the position of full-time Executive Director. The successful candidate should have expertise in fundraising, marketing, administration, public relations, volunteer coordination, and interpreting the vision of the Center to the church and community. The Director should be committed to the heritage which Brethren and Mennonites share, especially in the Shenandoah Valley. Salary and benefits as determined by the Board of Directors. Send letter of application, resume, and three recommendations to Beryl H. Brubaker, Chair, Search Committee, 965 Broadview Drive, Harrisonburg, VA, 22802 (brubakeb@emu.edu). Position open until filled.

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Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 206; jclements@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

- Alpha & Omega**, Lancaster, Pa.: William Santos, Betzaida Santos, Olga Figueroa, Pedro Madera, Loruhamia Costas, Jose Lopez, Ezaquiel Carrion, Martha Meras, Dora Melendez, Raquel Melendez
- Central**, Roanoke, Va.: Felecia Walters, Alan L. Malloy, Kathleen Y. Malloy, Rachel Malloy, Andrew Malloy
- Circle of Peace**, Peoria, Ariz.: Kimber Gish, Greg Gish
- Elizabethtown**, Pa.: Aaron King, Monica Melhuish, Zane Akers, Andrea Wagner, Amy Zimmerman, Shannon Zimmerman, Alexis Gonzales, Daley Maghan, Alexander Mora, Cassandra Mora, Olivia Nolt, Sarah Uhl
- Faith Community of the Brethren Home**, New Oxford, Pa.: Wayne Brant, Leah Brant, Norman Cain, Sara Cain, Lorene Trimmer, Paul Strausbaugh
- Fellowship**, Martinsburg, W.Va.: Charles Preston, Carol Preston, Jim Rhodes
- Harrisburg, First**, Harrisburg, Pa.: Betty Ann Barnes
- Heidelberg**, Myerstown, Pa.: James Burkholder, Janell Burkholder, Leah Roop
- Hempfield**, Manheim, Pa.: Peter Moore, Janet Moore, Kelly Moore, Doug Hinton, Jen Hinton
- Hurricane Creek**, Smithboro, Ill.: Bryant Briggs, Alice Schultz
- Knob Creek**, Johnson City, Tenn.: Maverick Coone, Mary Snyder, Jerri Phillips, Dorothy Bowman
- Lancaster**, Pa.: Dean Thomas, Joanne Thomas
- Linville Creek**, Broadway, Va.: Eileen Driver
- Manchester**, North Manchester, Ind.: Bob Hollenberg, Helen Hollenberg, Laura Stone, Jennifer Jones, Trisha Hanes, Dawn Shafer, Mona Bishop, David Young, Homer Hoover, Guy Buch, Jeanne Buch, Kate Eisenbise, Carl Myers, Doreen Myers, Vivian Morris,

Wedding Anniversaries

- Don Willoughby, Marie Willoughby, Leslie Pettit, Phyllis Pettit, Kenneth Miller, Rose Marie Miller, Kristen Pittman
- Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.:** Darren Bishop, Dawn Bishop, Jessica Bishop, Kelsey Bishop, Christine Martin, Timothy Martin
- Middlebury, Ind.:** Cory Smith, Ashley Painter, Austin Steward, Chase Schmucker, Cherie Schmucker, Linda Yeager, Doris Woodruff
- Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.:** Gabriel Hernandez, Kenny Boyers, Haley Coppage, Zachary McDaniel, Bonnie McLeod, Mary Ann Secrist, Kimberly Boyers
- Neighborhood, Montgomery, Ill.:** Lynda DeVore, Mary Jo Flory-Steury, Mark Flory Steury, Kiesha Fritz
- Peace, Portland, Ore.:** Lyla Berry-Bittinger, Jon Zunkel
- Pleasant View, Jefferson, Md.:** Robin Shackelford, Ronnie Sheppard, Kim Sheppard, Aaron Brunner, Hannah Brunner, Jamie Kidd, David Farmer, Rayna Farmer, Amanda Farmer, Allison Farmer, Olen Carpenter, Bernadette Carpenter, Brenda Carpenter, Robert Saliby
- Quakertown, Pa.:** Beth Moser, Tom Giuffrida, Megan Giuffrida
- Saint Petersburg, Fla.:** Robert Beach, Martha Beach
- Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.:** Colby Brinser, Julia Ferrer, Samuel Wootten
- Staunton, Va.:** Doug Snider, Sue Snider, Frank Allman, Darlene Allman, Evan Allman, Bob Armbruster, Beverly Armbruster, Cheryl Melton, Savannah Melton, Madeline Nolley, Alice Patler, Nick Patler, Dwayne Hottinger, Robin Hottinger
- Trotwood, Ohio:** Casey Johnson, Jared Bush
- Wilmington, Del.:** Sylvia Goberman, Jennifer Ann Hackett, Paul Kauffman
- Wyomissing, Pa.:** John Forster, Dot Forster, Kim Howe, Alexis Knarr, Tracey Oroxom, Brandi Ann Sensenig, Sophia Julianna Zientek
- Adams, Wayne and Betty, Union Bridge, Md., 55**
- Bashore, Alvin and Ada, Hershey, Pa., 65**
- Blickensderfer, Terry and Norma, Homeworth, Ohio, 50**
- Blosser, Bob and Phyllis, Nappanee, Ind., 65**
- Bradley, Larry and Dorothy, Dellroy, Ohio, 50**
- Bryant, Kenneth and Ruby, Goshen, Ind., 74**
- Buckingham, Samuel and Francis, Prairie City, Iowa, 65**
- Campbell, James and Ida Mae, Edwards, Mo., 60**
- Hahn, Harvey and Anna, Ephrata, Pa., 60**
- Hershey, Jacob and Verna, Lititz, Pa., 65**
- Hoffman, Don and Marge, Winona, Ohio, 72**
- Landes, Olen and Alice, Harrisonburg, Va., 74**
- Meyer, Samuel and Casimerette, Salem, Va., 55**
- Miller, Leroy and Sharon, Easton, Md., 50**
- Miller, Melvin and Hilda, Harrisonburg, Va., 73**
- Reeder, John and Sandy, Hershey, Pa., 50**
- Seitz, Harry and Dorothy, Phoenixville, Pa., 65**
- Soper, Paul and Shirley, Union Bridge, Md., 55**
- Stanley, John and Roberta, Middlebury, Ind., 60**
- Tomkins, Kenneth and Janice, Columbia, Mo., 50**
- Yeater, Dean and Mary Evelyn, McAlisterville, Pa., 50**
- Yordy, Marvin and Peggy, Eureka, Ill., 60**
- Brant, Phyllis E., 86, Berlin, Pa., Oct. 25**
- Brockwell, Anna Margaret, 93, Dixon, Ill., March 15**
- Burke, Hazel Irene Spangler, 52, Waynesboro, Pa., July 27, 2010**
- Burriss, Robert N., Sr., 67, Wilmington, Del., March 27**
- Carr, Elizabeth Elsie Dickerson, 89, Lancaster, Pa., March 10**
- Carter, John Wesley, 85, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 4**
- Chamberlain, Ruth G., 86, Aurora, Ill., Dec. 16**
- Clever, Grover W., 92, Boonsboro, Md., March 17**
- Cupp, Emily L., 95, Berlin, Pa., March 27**
- Custer, Lois Eldean, 79, Somerset, Pa., April 4**
- Daughtrey, Annette L., 67, Reading, Pa., Feb. 24**
- Decker, Jesse L., 50, Garrett, Pa., Feb. 25**
- Dennison, Melvin Paul, 89, DeKalb, Ill., Jan. 4**
- Earhart, Benjamin R., 91, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 6**
- East, Nora, 96, Harmony, Minn., Nov. 29**
- Ebersole, Mark C., 89, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 12**
- Eckert, Ruth M., 89, New Oxford, Pa., April 5**
- Elmore, Ralph, 77, Goshen, Ind., March 20**
- Fillmore, Donald William, 84, Live Oak, Calif., April 8**
- Flook, Carroll Joseph, 81, Myersville, Md., Feb. 27**
- Flora, Lydia M., 71, Chambersburg, Pa., March 16**
- Fox, Ruth Gordon, 95, Waynesboro, Pa., April 29, 2010**
- Frye, Paul Harrison, Jr., 75, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 28**
- Gable, Donald K., 89, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 5**
- Gable, Dorothy B., 87, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 26**
- Garber, Mary M., 91, Middlebury, Ind., July 13, 2010**
- Glessner, William J., 88, Berlin, Pa., Oct. 4**
- Good, Jannis Louise, 86, Broadway, Va., Feb. 4**
- Hadley, Helen Juanita, 101, Waterloo, Iowa, Dec. 27**
- Hepner, Donald O., 78, Mifflintown, Pa., Sept. 9**
- Holtzinger, Hilda E., 94, Goshen, Ind., April 17**
- Hossler, John Kenneth, 85, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 29**
- Hunter, Meredith M., 87, Harrisonburg, Va., March 29**
- Jones, Arlene, 85, Waynesboro, Pa., April 19, 2010**
- Kauffman, Lana K., 60, Syracuse, Ind., April 1**
- Kinsley, Lucile, 97, North Manchester, Ind., Dec. 29**
- Knepper, Kathryn Marie, 69, Markleton, Pa., March 21**
- Kope, Victor H., 87, Aurora, W.Va., March 8**
- Kruger, Naomi, 86, Palmyra, Pa., March 29**
- Kurtz, Esther R., 93, Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 19**
- Lahman, Robinson Dichl, 81, North Manchester, Ind., Sept. 19**
- Lehman, John William, 90, Campbelltown, Pa., April 4**
- Longenecker, Catherine M., 78, Lititz, Pa., Jan. 15**
- Loose, John A., 93, Martinsburg, Pa., April 5**
- Lymanstall, Robert, 83, Defiance, Ohio, March 22**
- Mattocks, Norman R., 75, Middlebury, Ind., Dec. 18**
- Maxwell, Pauline Kauffman, 97, Waynesboro, Pa., Sept. 13**
- McCulloch, Raymond W., 88, Middletown, Pa., April 17**
- McKee, Donald, 78, McAlisterville, Pa., Sept. 12**
- Michael, Leon C., 97, Roanoke, Va., March 11**
- Moore, Arlene Weaver, 98, Lancaster, Pa., March 11**
- Ogden, Marcia Anne, 68, North Manchester, Ind., July 9, 2010**
- Parson, Evelyn C., 80, Oaks, Pa., Jan. 28**
- Patches, Luke I., 75, Myerstown, Pa., April 18**
- Reed, Lamar, 100, Syracuse, Ind., March 9**
- Reinhold, Frances K., 85, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 2**
- Rice, Emmert F., 79, North Manchester, Ind., July 26, 2010**
- Ritter, Dallas Neil, 70, Springfield, Mo., April 20**
- Roberts, Nora, 94, Harmony, Minn., Aug. 22**
- Rowley, George E., Sr., 79, Somerset, Pa., March 7**
- Schroll, Flora, 93, Miamisburg, Ohio, March 25**
- Shipe, Norma M., 86, Broadway, Va., Feb. 11**
- Short, Marvin D., 83, Middlebury, Ind., Jan. 9**
- Sigrist, Ona Nancy, 79, South Bend, Ind., March 25**
- Smith, Harold Eugene, 80, Adel, Iowa, Aug. 18**
- Smith, Violet V., 101, Hershey, Pa., March 18**
- Torchio, Freda E., 97, Wilmington, Del., Jan. 14**
- Tracy, Ines L., 94, North Manchester, Ind., March 6**
- Turner, Mary-Alice Elizabeth Leidner, 91, Bryan, Texas, April 1**
- Vail, Wesley E., 82, Womelsdorf, Pa., Feb. 6**
- Wickersham, Dorothy Lee, 86, Newark, Del., March 17**
- Williams, Ruby Ellen, 86, Waterloo, Iowa, Feb. 26**
- Worthen, Agnes LaVange, 100, Mount Morris, Ill., April 19**
- Zunkel, C. Wayne, 80, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 21**

Licensings

- Owens, David K., S/C Ind. Dist. (Grandview, Pendleton, Ind.), Nov. 21**
- Smith, Michael V., S/C Ind. Dist. (Northview, Indianapolis, Ind.), Dec. 12**

Placements

- Hileman, Leah J., pastor, A Life in Christ, Cape Coral, Fla., March 20**
- Montgomery, Christopher, from intern to pastor, Drexel Hill, Pa., Dec. 19**
- Naff, E. Lee, Jr., team pastor, Hiwassee, Va., April 1**
- Naff, Robin Collins, team pastor, Hiwassee, Va., April 1**
- Shaver, Janet S., from interim to pastor, Creekside, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 19**
- Sheff, Claude C., from interim to pastor, New Covenant, Midlothian, Va., April 1**
- Spangler, Joyce H., associate pastor, Olean, Goldbond, Va., April 1**
- Wagoner, Zandra L., chaplain, University of La Verne, La Verne, Calif., April 1**

Agreeing to disagree

Late afternoon sun hit the shed's weathered boards. Its corrugated tin roof sheltered a slew of well-used tools and the old "hoopie," a black Model A Ford with a rumble seat in which my cousins and I loved to ride when Grandpa agreed to take us for a spin.

The shed was situated adjacent to my grandparents' house in the middle of California's sprawling Sacramento Valley. The house was surrounded by acres of orchards—walnuts, prunes, peaches—and next to the house itself was a well-manicured flower garden. In the back was a falling-down barn and a grassy yard with an outdoor barbecue. It was a perfect place for an 8-year-old like me to spend endless hours poking around, which is what I was doing that afternoon when I overheard my grandfather talking in the shed to one of my older cousins.

I could tell by the tone of their voices that this was not a casual, chatting-over-the-hoopie-engine conversation—it was serious. My cousin, who had not been married long, didn't say much. I don't remember all that my grandfather said to him, but one phrase stood out clearly: "You've got to agree to *disagree!*"

When you're 8, you don't understand the implications of



RANDY MILLER
Interim MESSENGER Editor

erwise the relationship becomes toxic and simply dead-ends. Sometimes intransigence comes disguised as conviction, but the two are not the same. And in order for there to be any real communication, one has to be ready to really listen to what the other is sharing.

On pages 14 and 15 in this issue, Ken Gibble shares insights he gleaned from his grandparents about the importance of listening to one another. "Every talker needs a good listener," his grandfather was fond of saying. And a good listener, Gibble points out, pays attention not just to the words that are said, but also to how they are said, and to the pain and struggle that may lie behind them.

"Listening well is especially important in the faith community," Gibble emphasizes. "When a brother or a sister is speaking, either one-on-one or in a group, you can offer a wonderful gift by tuning in to what he or she is saying."

Often we are so intent on making sure our own voices are heard—especially when we believe we are speaking for Truth (or even for God)—that we do not truly listen to what the other is saying. The concept of walking a mile in someone else's shoes becomes difficult when our own are nailed to the road.

Steven Tyler, of the rock band Aerosmith—and, most recently, a judge on the TV show *American Idol*—wrote an autobiography, the title of which asks: "Does the noise in my head bother you?" He's poking fun at himself, of course, referring to his often chaotic life as a rock star. But the ques-

OFTEN WE ARE SO INTENT ON MAKING SURE OUR OWN VOICES ARE HEARD—ESPECIALLY WHEN WE BELIEVE WE ARE SPEAKING FOR TRUTH (OR EVEN FOR GOD)—THAT WE DO NOT TRULY LISTEN TO WHAT THE OTHER IS SAYING.

everything you hear adults talking about. Later, telescoping back through the years, and with the added awareness of what was going on at the time, I realized that Grandpa was offering my cousin advice about marriage.

In the years since, I've often thought about that conversation, especially since getting married myself. I've come to appreciate the wisdom in my grandfather's words. There has to be room for ebb and flow, for give-and-take, in marriage. And for mutual respect in the face of honest differences.

The same is true for any healthy relationship. When it comes to points of view or interpretation of events, one party can't claim to have the entire corner on the truth; oth-

erwise the relationship becomes toxic and simply dead-ends. Sometimes intransigence comes disguised as conviction, but the two are not the same. And in order for there to be any real communication, one has to be ready to really listen to what the other is sharing.

"Yes, there is a time to speak," Gibble adds, "but we should, as James advises, be slow to speak because what we say should come *after* we have listened, and listened well."

If what my grandfather said inside the shed that sunny afternoon is true, then there first must be a willingness and ability to listen intently and respectfully to what the other is saying. It isn't easy, but it's always worth the effort. **W**

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