

Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2011 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

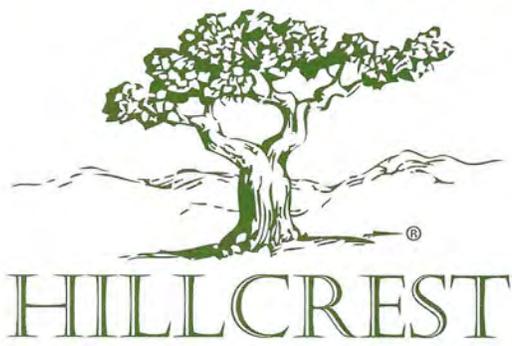


Brethren building
community in

haiti

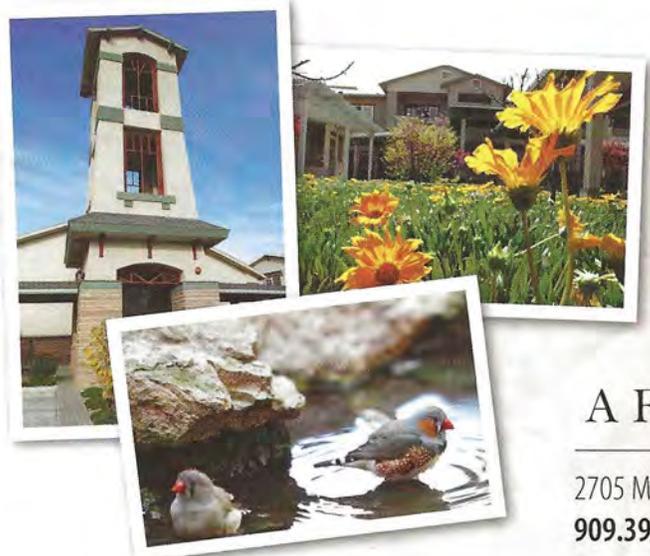


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{ Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }

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{ Resident Shantilal Bhagat }

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“... publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Psa. 26:7b KJV).

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER Children in the community of Morne Boulage joined US Brethren as they visited homes and a church constructed by Brethren Disaster Ministries. In the aftermath of hurricanes in 2008 and the earthquake in 2010, the Brethren in the US and Haiti are finding many ways to work hand in hand to build a community.

Photos by Wendy McFadden.

DEPARTMENTS

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8 Building community in Haiti

In a country where part of Highway 3—the road connecting Haiti’s capital with its second-largest city—is a quagmire, how does one make a difference?” Wendy McFadden, who visited the island nation in June, pondered this question. And found an answer.

14 The Brethren role in Decade to Overcome Violence

Brethren, by nature, are often so unwilling to toot their own horns that inspiring stories frequently are left untold. One such story has to do with the quiet persistence of Don Miller, former Bethany professor and general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, who doggedly pursued a vision which eventually became known as the Decade to Overcome Violence. Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford spoke with him in Jamaica, at the event that marked the official end to the Decade to Overcome Violence.

18 Sabbath musings

“We are the worker bees, the Marthas, the ‘...hearers and doers of the Word,’” says Becky Ullom, reflecting on a common Brethren trait. But when she took time for a retreat from her duties as director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Church of the Brethren, she found God speaking to her in new and unexpected ways.

It should go without saying that the opinions expressed in letters to the editor are not necessarily the opinions of MESSENGER. And that the opinions in the letters published are roughly proportional to those received. Sometimes readers think the editor stacks the deck by choosing to print letters on just one side of an issue.

To set the record straight: MESSENGER can't publish any letters that aren't received. Occasionally the mailbag brings only letters with a similar point of view, which means



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

that's the point of view that makes it into print. It's not uncommon for the next issue to lean the other way, as readers respond to the first set of letters.

Frankly, a vigorous debate is not to be feared, and providing that opportunity is one of MESSENGER's purposes. A lively, well-written set of letters is one of the most interesting sections of the magazine.

How do you get a letter into MESSENGER? We're a pretty small church, so you have a reasonable chance if you send something in. But here are a few guidelines to improve your odds:

- Brevity is next to godliness. Keep your thoughts to fewer than 250 words (which, by the way, is 100 words more than the *New York Times* limit).
- A letter should be from one reader. We generally do not print declarations from congregations or committees.
- Priority is given to letters that respond to content from the magazine.
- Expect to be edited for conciseness and clarity, grammar and spelling.
- Be respectful. Passion, opinion, critique are all okay; vitriol is not.

Actually, maybe it's *respect* that's next to godliness: "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen. The commandment we have from him is this: those who love God must love their brothers and sisters also" (1 John 4:20-21).

So, short *and* sweet. Send your letters to messenger@brethren.org. You can also mail them to MESSENGER at 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. We appreciate your including an e-mail address or at least a phone number, in case we have questions.

Wendy McFadden

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Visit MESSENGER online at www.brethren.org/messenger.

A free study guide for each issue of MESSENGER is available at this site, along with other information.

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Church help neighbors hit by flood

Instead of holding a regular worship service, about 85 members of Annville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren gathered for a short service one Sunday in early September, and then fanned out with mops, shop vacs, and sheer muscle to assist with flood clean-up.

The church itself suffered significant damage with about 12 inches of water in the basement, and volunteers had been working there since the previous Thursday morning. As some of the volunteers stayed behind to finish cleaning up there, others went to the homes of church members who had flood damage. Still others went to areas where they knew the damage was significant and simply knocked on doors, asking, "Do you need help?"



Annville members worked together to clean up their church building as well as homes in the neighborhood.

Several members went to the home of church member Sara Longenecker, where three feet of water inundated her basement. Longenecker has lived in the large, two-story home for 48 years, but the water damage this time was more severe than any previous storm, including Hurricane Agnes in 1972.

Across town, church crews assisted Irene Gingrich, who once babysat for several church members or their children. Water filled Gingrich's finished basement, destroying furniture and appliances, and threatening a lifetime of memories.

Now 86 years old, Gingrich wanted to save as many things as possible, so the crews there boxed up her treasures. After cleaning out her garage, which also had flooded, they set up tables where they carefully placed items they planned to clean in an effort to save them.

Although many of the recipients of the Annville Church of the Brethren work crews' assistance were members or somehow connected to members, Michael Schroeder simply was in the right place at the right time.

"They just showed up at my door and said 'Can we help' and I said, 'Yes, you may,'" Schroeder said. "The way the entire community has come together is just amazing. We have had neighborhood kids come by and ask how they can help, and some college kids came by on Friday."

As for the volunteers, many of whom had already spent three days dealing with their own flooding issues or assisting other friends and family members, why did they spend their "day of rest" assisting others?

Volunteer Terry Alwine succinctly summed it up, "That's what we do."

(This article is condensed from a story by Kathy Hackleman, and is reprinted with permission. It appeared in The Lebanon Daily News on Sept. 12.)

Northeast Footprints Conference for senior high youth will be held on Nov. 18-20 at Rhodes Grove Conference Center near Chambersburg, Pa. The theme is "Be Doers of the Word," from James 1:22-24. Sessions with former Messenger editor Walt Wiltschek and music led by Mutual Kumquat are scheduled. Visit www.midpacob.org for more details.

Southeast Peggy Gish was the resource leader for the fifth annual Family Peace Camp in Atlantic Southeast District. The event was held at Camp Ithiel Sept. 2-4 and focused on the theme "Dare to Act for Peace." Gish told stories from her experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Israel with Christian Peacemaker Teams. The event is co-sponsored by the Action for Peace Team of the district and Camp Ithiel.

Midwest The 2011 Powerhouse Regional Youth Conference will take place at Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) Nov. 12-13 for youth in grades 9-12. Jeff Carter, pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, will be the keynote speaker for the weekend, speaking on the theme "Follow, if you dare." The cost is \$50 for youth; \$40 for advisors. For further information, contact Walt Wiltschek at wjwiltschek@manchester.edu.

Ozarks/Plains Bethel Church of the Brethren, located nine miles north of Arriba, Colo., celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 2 with a history review and the sharing of pictures and stories. A time capsule dedication was followed by a meal and fellowship. In reviewing the church's history, the earliest minutes and records found were from June 17, 1911.

West The annual Alternative Gift Faire returns to the La Verne Church of the Brethren Nov. 6. The Faire provides holiday shoppers with opportunities to purchase unique gifts that assist those in need. Shoppers can purchase virtual doors, bricks, and nails to help build homes through Habitat for Humanity. The purchase of virtual cows, chickens, trees, and bees can provide assistance via Heifer International. In addition, shoppers can purchase tangible gifts from merchants specializing in fairly traded goods, such as chocolate and coffee.



YOU SAID IT

"The gospel is not about condemnation, or agendas, or prohibition, or debates. The gospel is good news."

—Robin Wentworth Mayer, South/Central Indiana District conference moderator

BY THE NUMBERS

26,174

Dollar amount of offering for Core Ministries at the Brethren National Older Adult Conference in September

A reprise in Grand Rapids

When the soloist's rich voice filled the hall, the crowd at the Annual Conference worship service was captivated. Who was this young man singing "The Basin and the Towel"?

Few knew that Derek Self's voice had captured the attention of the Brethren before. But the last time the audience was television viewers across the whole country, and the stage was the set for "Enter the Light of Life," a special Church of the Brethren Christmas Eve service produced for broadcasting on CBS in 2004. Derek was in fifth grade and sang "Away in a Manger."

"Every once in a while my mom will play the CD from that service, and I always have a hard time believing that it is me who is singing the solo," says Derek, now an 18-year-old high school senior. "I vaguely remember those two days I spent in Richmond, Ind. I do remember how intimidating it was to have a camera shoved in my face, and that moment when the audience disappeared and all I could see was a bright light."

"I was worn out after two days of long rehearsals and filming," he remembers, "but at the same time I knew I was part of something special. It was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

The children's choir for that service was organized by organist Marilyn Sexton Mason, who teaches music and theater at Manchester High School in Indiana, and is also part of

music leadership at the Manchester Church of the Brethren.

"Little did I know," says Derek, "that Ms. Mason would end up playing a huge role in my singing endeavors. . . . It has been a blessing to work with Marilyn not only on musical pieces, but also in musical theater and choir at school."

In addition, Derek is in his final soccer season, kicks for the football team, and plays in a band. "I keep busy with writing my own music with my guitar to accompany me, and hope to release an EP of some sort before the end of the year."

When he was invited to sing at Annual Conference, he "didn't hesitate to say yes." He went to Marilyn for advice, and practiced the song over and over again. "I wanted to be sure to get it right, knowing that I would be delivering a meaningful message in the midst of a conference that was confusing and sometimes frustrating for many of the people who attended."

He's grateful to accompanist Jenny Williams, whose ability to follow him "took a large load off my shoulders."

When the song was over, "I think my smile said it all. I was both relieved and satisfied with the impact I just knew I had on the crowd in front of me."

—Wendy McFadden was executive producer of the 2004 Christmas Eve service in which Derek sang. The soundtrack is available from Brethren Press (800-323-8039 or www.brethrenpress.com).



Cheryl Burnbaugh-Cayford



Regina Holmes

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

Wilbur Mullen of Greenville, Ohio, a former staff member of the Church of the Brethren General Board, was inducted into the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame on May 26. His nomination by Theresa Crandall noted his extensive history of service within and outside the church: more than four years in Civilian Public Service camps as a conscientious objector during World War II; direction of the

Brethren Service International Work Camp in Hamburg, Germany, beginning in 1949, and leadership of related study tours and peace seminars; participation in UNESCO events in Europe in the 1950s; presidency of the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville beginning in 1976, during a time of financial crisis for the home; disaster recovery work after a tornado hit Xenia, Ohio, in 1978; and

even his "famous lemon shakes that are served at the Darke County Fair," benefiting college scholarships through Rotary International. His name is among 350 inducted into the Ohio Senior Citizens Hall of Fame since 1977, alongside people like Bob Hope, John Glenn, Erma Bombeck, and Paul Newman. "Life must be a joyful journey," he wrote to Newsline, "one filled with constant surprises."

Pastor celebrates 70 years of ministry

D. Luke Bowser, Jr., celebrated 70 years of ministry on Sunday, Aug. 7 at what he affectionately called "the shindig," at Clover Creek Church of the Brethren in Fredericksburg, Pa.

Middle Pennsylvania District executive Dave Steele delivered the morning message, and Bowser's brother Harold, daughter JuliAnne, sons Tom and Bill, and daughter-in-law Paula all participated in the service. Steele presented a gift from the district. Even the children's story focused on the guest of honor, with the theme "The Rev. Daniel Luke Bowser, Jr., story: 88 years in the making." Visitors from several of the 20 pastoral placements Bowser served during his career joined the congregation for a celebration following worship.

Bowser was licensed to the ministry on June 25, 1941, and ordained on July 20, 1943. He was graduated from Juniata College in 1946 and from Bethany Theological Seminary (Chicago campus) in 1951.



D. Luke Bowser, Jr., stands beside a "Church Names Quilt," a gift from the Sipesville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren listing the names of its members.

REMEMBERED

William Robert Eberly, 84, former moderator of the Church of the Brethren, passed away on July 28, 2011, at his summer home on Big Chapman Lake, Warsaw, Ind. He served as moderator in 1980 and as Annual Conference secretary from 1968 to 1977.

He also served as a member of the Church of the Brethren General Board from 1995 to 2000, and as a member of the Brethren Encyclopedia board of directors from 1985 to 2008. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, he served many congregations, including Pleasant View Church of the Brethren in South Whitley, Ind., Roann (Ind.)

Church of the Brethren, and Buffalo (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. He was a member of the Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind.

Eberly was born in North Manchester Oct. 4, 1926, to John H. and Ollie (Heaston) Eberly, and married Eloise Whitehead in 1946. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Manchester College in 1948, he taught music and science in public schools for five years. He received his master's degree and Ph.D. from Indiana University and in 1955 joined the faculty of Manchester

College as a professor in the biology department. In 1963 he was invited as a visiting scientist to the Institute of Limnology at the University of Uppsala in Sweden.

Eberly served as past president of Indiana Academy of Sciences. He started the Environmental Studies program at Manchester College in 1972 and served as its director until his retirement in 1992. He served on the Indiana Pesticide Review Board representing limnologists of the State of Indiana and received the Sagamore of the Wabash Award from Gov. Robert Orr in 1983 for his strong advocacy for environmental concerns. He is also a former

instructor in church history for Bethany Seminary. His passion for genealogy, history, and research led him to author and edit many books, most recently *The Story of the Natural Sciences at Manchester College*.

Active in his community, he was immediate past president of the North Manchester Historical Society, where he played a significant role in developing and expanding the Center for History on Main Street.

A memorial service was held Aug. 14 at at Manchester Church of the Breth-

ren. Memorial contributions may be made to the Dr. William R. Eberly Scholarship Fund at Manchester College, the Center for History in North Manchester, Heifer International, or Timbercrest Senior Living Community Charitable Assistance Fund.

Joyce Snyder McFadden passed away Sept. 21 in North Manchester, Ind. She and her husband, Wilbur, served as missionaries in Indonesia 1961-1965 and 1968-1969, as well as a one-year stint in Puerto Rico while awaiting visas. Seconded by the Church of the Brethren to the Indonesian Council of Churches, they served the church in Minehasa, in northern Sulawesi.

A graduate of Manchester College and the University of St. Francis, Joyce worked as a schoolteacher and later as a counselor in the Addiction Care Center in Wabash, Ind., which she and Wilbur helped found. In the late 1980s she was involved in developing the addictions ministry for the Brethren Health and Welfare Association. She helped to de-stigmatize addiction by telling her story to the 1990 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.

A memorial service is planned for Oct. 23 at the Manchester Church of the Brethren. Memorial gifts may be sent to Manchester College or Timbercrest Retirement Home.



William Robert Eberly

Increasing our circle of love

The theme of this year's Annual Conference was "Gifted With Promise: Extended Jesus' Table." Most sermons, calls to worship, hymns, songs, anthems, and prayers included direct or implied invitations to everyone to join the circle. Yet our behavior was often out of synch with that theme, which I found both puzzling and worrisome.

I am a "multiple-minority" in the Church of the



BARBARA DATÉ

Brethren. (I am, however, in the majority in two ways: I am right-handed and I am heterosexual.) But I am a multiple-minority because I am a Japanese-American woman, I am a church leader without an M.Div. or a Brethren-sounding last name (although I am one of the few Brethren who speak German), and I live in the western US (far from the Brethren heartland). As such, I am particularly sensitive to minority needs, concerns, and pain. Sister

Teresa, of Winnipeg, Canada, has observed that human pain most often comes from not being seen, heard, trusted, or recognized, and from not feeling safe. I know how that feels.

That was the essence of a message I shared at a microphone during a Conference business session. When I sat down, a Brethren leader (whom I had not met before, and

the release of the most recent Common English Bible translation, we are reminded that translations into English are varied and don't always convey the exact meaning of the original language. Studying the Bible as it applies to us today—testing our understanding within our faith community—is at the heart of our Brethren tradition.

Recently, I asked a Quaker friend about her church's history. I learned that, from the earliest days in Philadelphia, they were frequently "not of one mind." When they came to such impasses, they separated. They left one another and simply began another church or denomination. Ending relationships is one clear and decisive alternative.

We may not be of one mind at the moment, but in my opinion, the unique work of the Church of the Brethren is not finished. However, we seem to be finishing ourselves off as a body of Christ. Perhaps the pain is so pervasive that dividing now is the wisest path. My own personal journey is so profoundly influenced by the theology and work of that cloud of witnesses who went before us (and still surround us) that I pray for light to see clearly. One thing I know is that I'm a Dunker. I invite us to ponder anew what our work as the Church of the Brethren is. If we want a healthy faith community, our children and youth—and, in fact our entire denomination—require that we increase our circle of love.

Thankfully, one option we each have in every moment is to show our love by listening with compassionate hearts to

ONE OPTION WE EACH HAVE IN EVERY MOMENT IS TO SHOW OUR LOVE BY LISTENING WITH COMPASSIONATE HEARTS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND OTHERS WHO ARE SHARING FROM THEIR HEARTS.

who is a lesbian) came over and sat beside me. She reached out and touched my arm and told me how much it meant to her that I had spoken up as an ally.

One of my roles in life is providing support for those who ask for relationship nurture. I've listened to thousands of Brethren who are frustrated and experiencing some form of pain. Some who were at Conference have braved tragic conflicts and seen war first-hand, and they shared through tears that *this* conflict in the church is more painful than any of the warfare they witnessed and lived through.

I keep reflecting on our Biblical Authority paper, which states that we are not of one mind as we seek the mind of Christ. I continue to be inspired by how we have handled those difference and that, despite them, most of us have stayed within the fold.

Perhaps a key to our ability to stay together is a willingness to explore what scriptures say to us today. With

better understand others who are sharing from their hearts. I'm committed to reaching across borders and initiating long-term conversations with at least two members who hold different views. I want to hear their theology and stories, and I want to share mine with them. I wonder if others might wish to join me in this challenge.

Jesus invites us to follow him. He told us the path would not be easy, and it isn't. Hope, hard work, and the Holy Spirit may help us restore our beloved community someday. Until then, I hope to see you on the path. 

Barbara Daté lives in Springfield, Ore., and attends the Springfield (Ore.) Church of the Brethren. She has worked in 17 Church of the Brethren districts teaching workshops in building healthy relationships. She taught the Interpersonal Peacemaking in Daily Life course at Bethany Theological Seminary, and was the Esau Distinguished Visiting Professor in Conflict Resolution Studies at Menno Simons College/The University of Winnipeg for two years. She is on the board of directors for the Oregon Fellowship of Reconciliation.

QUOTE WORTHY

“I have everything, but I want what they have.”

—Maya Davis, member of the La Verne (Calif.) youth group, following a workcamp in Caimito, Puerto Rico, in which she was touched by the spirit of community there.

“What if those who are uncivil claim to be fellow Christians? Their incivility can be the greatest disappointment of all, because we expect the best from our brothers and sisters.”

—Leith Anderson, president of the National Association of Evangelicals

“The Bible is regarded by many contemporary Christians ‘as a sacred object (but many are) without much knowledge of its contents— which is a very dangerous combination.’”

—Michael Kinnamon, general secretary of the National Council of Churches

“What is it that, when we sing together, binds us together in Christ?”

—C. Michael Hawn, who led the keynote session on “Singing with the Saints: Songs of the World Christian Church,” at the Church of the Brethren National Older Adult Conference in September

“Heaven is important, but it’s not the end of the world.”

—New Testament scholar N. T. Wright

“God is already with our neighbors. God is already at work around us. . . . God is with us in those we serve, just as he is in our serving them. Because there is no place in the world where God is not present.”

—Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canturbury, addressing residents of Kibera, one of Africa’s largest slums

“It feels sometimes, in the world, that God is away on business, and he’s not coming back.”

—Tom Waits, commenting on his song “God’s Away on Business”

“To be a Christian means to find the decisive revelation of God in Jesus. To be Muslim means to find the decisive revelation of God in the Koran. To be Jewish means to find the decisive revelation of God in the Torah, and so forth.”

—Marcus Borg, from the website zedekiahlist.com

CULTURE REVIEW

➔ **Nearly 46.2 million Americans now live in poverty** according to data released recently by the US Census Bureau. This represents an increase of 2.6 million people since 2009, and the highest figures on record. The poverty rate for children under 18 increased to 22 percent (over 16.4 million children) in 2010. Among children under 5, the poverty rate increased to 25.9 percent (over 5.4 million children).

➔ **Representatives of small island states** took to the podium at the United Nations General Assembly Sept. 24 to exhort the world to pay greater attention to their vulnerability to climate change. From the Caribbean to the Pacific to the Atlantic, the small island countries said the world was not moving quickly enough to either mitigate the effects of climate change or support the poorest countries as they tried to adapt to them. “The very existence of small islands

states like those in the Caribbean and the Pacific could be imperiled if current trends are not reversed or altered,” the Prime Minister of Barbados, Freundel Stuart, told the Assembly.

➔ **Global deaths from malaria** have fallen by a fifth over the past decade, reflecting an influx of funds to fight the disease with better drugs and mosquito nets, according to the Geneva-based organization Roll Back Malaria. Mortality from malaria in 2009 was 781,000, compared with 984,000 in 2000, agency said in a report. Three nations—Morocco, Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates—have been certified by the UN’s World Health Organization (WHO) as malaria-free, it added. It attributed the improvement to a surge in funding, which rose from \$100 million in 2003 to \$1.5 billion in 2010.



JUST FOR FUN: WORD FIND

ALL IN THE FAMILY October brings World Communion Sunday, when many Christians around the world share in the Eucharist. In the puzzle below, find the names of these 10 Christian faith traditions. Words can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, backwards, or forwards.

BAPTIST MENNONITE PRESBYTERIAN CATHOLIC METHODIST
LUTHERAN EPISCOPAL WESLEYAN UCC REFORMED

P	P	R	A	I	W	S	E	C	R	E	A
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Building community in

Massait

story and photos by Wendy McFadden

Visitors tour the 100th home built by BDM, which is next door to the new guesthouse in Croix des Bouquets. Each house has the same floor plan and an outdoor latrine and shower.

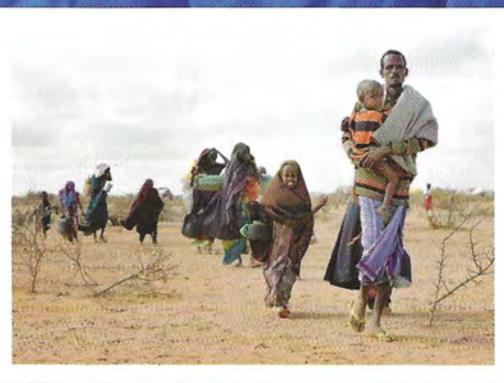


I was **hungry** and
you gave Me food,
I was **thirsty** and
you gave Me drink.

Matthew 25:35

A devastating drought in East Africa is causing the worst food crisis in a generation. Famine has taken hold in parts of southern Somalia. Tens of thousands have died, and thousands more are fleeing every week to refugee camps along the border with Kenya. Food shortages have put 11 million people throughout the region at risk of severe malnutrition.

The Church of the Brethren's **Emergency Disaster Fund** is supporting lifesaving relief efforts that include emergency food packages, nutritional supplements for children, water, shelter, and sanitation in the border camps and other areas of Kenya and Ethiopia.



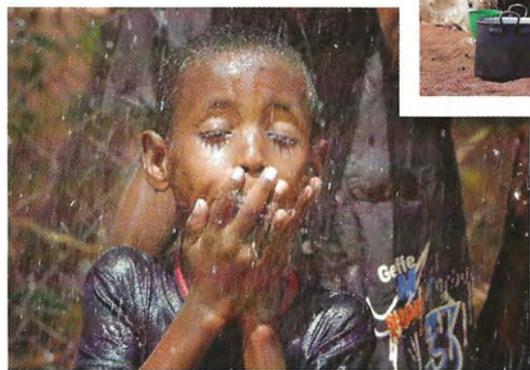
All photos by Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance.

To support the East Africa drought and
famine response, send your gift to:

Emergency Disaster Fund
Church of the Brethren
1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120

Give online at
www.brethren.org/africafamine

800-451-4407





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T

he pick-up truck was loaded—four people in the cab and six in the back.

With the road ahead flooded, our leaders had decided to fill the one vehicle with a chance of making it through and have the rest of the group turn back.

Klebert Exceus, who was driving, had no problem churning through the stream at the bottom of the hill and then climbing the muddy road on the other side. But when we got to the top, it looked as if the trip was suddenly over. A United Nations truck leaned precariously across the entire road, and a number of men were busy shoveling mud away from the tire that was stuck.



But they motioned us through an impossibly narrow space to the left of the truck, and somehow we squeezed through—only to find ourselves trapped again. This time there were two vehicles mired in the mud, one of them a World Food Programme truck. A World Vision truck waited behind them.

Our driver downshifted, we held our breath, and then he snaked his way through with surely no more than a centimeter to spare. All in a day's work for the unflappable Klebert, it seemed.

There's no question that Haiti is poor and beleaguered. And there's no question that Haiti is the focus of lots of



- ✝ Church
- ✝ Cell church
- 🏫 School
- 👤 Brethren Disaster Ministry houses
- 🌾 Global Food Crisis Fund project
- 🏠 Ministry Center/Guesthouse





international aid, not all of it effective. In a country where part of Highway 3, the road connecting the capital with the second-largest city, is a quagmire, how does one make a difference?

For the Church of the Brethren in the US, the answer is to work shoulder to shoulder with the young Church of the Brethren in Haiti. The result is a cadre of Haitian



Half a dozen boys from the Morne Boulage community accompany visitors on their hike back to the main road.

Haiti holds fifth theological training event

by Jeff Boshart

During the week of August 8-12, approximately 100 leaders of Brethren churches and preaching points from across Haiti gathered at a camp near the seaside community of Montrouis for the fifth annual Theological Training Seminar. This event is jointly sponsored and funded by the denomination's Global Mission Partnerships office and Brethren World Mission in Pennsylvania.

This year's main presenters included Galen Hackman from Ephrata, Pa., along with Michaela and Illexene Alphonse from Miami, Fla. A book on Brethren history written by Hackman for theological training programs in Nigeria was translated into Haitian Kreyol by Brethren in the Dominican Republic and was made available to each participant in the seminar. Hackman's second book—on Brethren beliefs and practices—has also been translated into Kreyol, but

was not yet available for this event.

Michaela shared from her experience working with youth and children's ministries and Illexene gave a class on how the Church of the Brethren calls out members for the set-apart ministry. Yvonne and Daniel Cabrol from Lancaster, Pa., provided translation and evaluation work for the seminar. Yvonne is Galen Hackman's daughter.

Other presenters included members of the National Committee

leaders, a growing number of preaching points, the completion of a number of church buildings and more than 100 homes, and the building of a guesthouse that supports the disaster response and the emerging church.

A June celebration of the 100th home and the new guesthouse was an opportunity to take stock of the accomplishments of the last few years. The gathering was held at the guesthouse, located in Croix des Bouquets, just outside Port-au-Prince.

"It's amazing what has been done in eight years by the Church of the Brethren. It's an eternal thing," said Ludovic St. Fleur, pastor of the Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren and the moving force behind planting the Church of the Brethren in Haiti. "We know our God is a God of words and action. God sent his spirit to show action."

The action is epitomized by Klebert Exceus, the organizer of the building projects. A Baptist leader who grew up in the same community as St. Fleur, he has



"It's amazing what has been done in eight years by the Church of the Brethren. It's an eternal thing."

—Ludovic St. Fleur, pastor of the Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren

dedicated enormous energy to the Brethren work in Haiti. Pastors speaking at the celebration expressed particular thanks for his contributions.

"The words to thank him I just can't find. God can thank you," said pastor Eriner Joseph of First Church of the Brethren in Port-au-Prince. He also thanked St. Fleur, "who had the thought to one day plant the Church of the Brethren," Roy Winter and Brethren Disaster

The recently built church at Fond Cheval.



of Eglise des Freres, and a one-day presentation on trauma and resilience was shared by Haitian staff who are coordinating the work of Eastern Mennonite University's STAR program in the country. This program is being funded by Brethren Disaster Ministries and various other denominations in Haiti.

The final day of the week was reserved for the first Annual Conference of Eglise des Freres. Under the guidance of volunteer

mission coordinator Ludovic St. Fleur, the National Committee and individual churches gave reports of activities and membership numbers. The 19 churches or preaching points represented reported that they now count over 2,000 "faithful" in regular attendance across Haiti. Actual

membership numbers are lower, as many of the newer preaching points have yet to establish membership classes and policies.

Jeff Boshart, of Fort Atkinson, Wis., is consultant for the Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti. He and his wife, Peggy, have extensive experience in both Haiti and the Dominican Republic.



“I want to thank God for the occasion to gather in this building.... We give God the glory.”

—Klebert Exceus, onsite director for the Haiti response

Ministries “for his will and his love to come to the churches in Haiti,” and Jeff Boshart, “who has worked hard to understand Haitians so we could all work together.”

At the celebration, which was attended by members of the two closest congregations plus a delegation of visitors from the Church of the Brethren in the US, Klebert Exceus reflected on the opportunity to gather in the new building: “This guesthouse is the beginning. We hope to have an office and a place for a congregation. This inauguration has a dual purpose. It’s an inauguration, but it’s also for families affected by the earthquake who are receiving homes in Delmas.”

Jean Bily Telfort, general secretary of Eglise des Freres, summed up the accomplishments of the last year and a half: “Two days after the earthquake we sat to reflect. [Now] so many of our requests have been met. There were people who were in tears, but today there is joy.”

He added: “We want to thank all the volunteers and supporters. We thank God for you.”

When the January 2010 earthquake hit, the Brethren were already deeply involved in responding to the hurricanes of 2008. Those efforts were quickly expanded

after consultation with Haitian church leaders. Now Brethren Disaster Ministries is working at long-term sustainability. Current work includes continued home repair and building, safe drinking water, agriculture projects, health care, and emotional and spiritual recovery from the trauma of disasters.

The Church of the Brethren has been involved in Haiti since 2003, in a strong partnership that brings together Brethren Disaster Ministries, Global Mission Partnerships, Haitian Brethren in the US, and the church leaders in Haiti. The mission there has been coordinated by Ludovic St. Fleur, assisted by a Haiti Advisory Group in the US. There are now about 19 preaching points and congregations. The Haitian church is led by an eight-member National Committee that travels from church to church for events such as baptisms, child dedications, and communion, and to train local leaders.

“What’s being developed here in Haiti is a network, which is then being connected to our network in the US,” explains Jeff Boshart, who serves as consultant. Unlike many other efforts in Haiti, he says, it’s not individual Americans finding “our man” in Haiti. Rather, the emphasis on community

General secretaries Jean Bily Telfort and Stan Noffsinger in June during the celebration of the 100th home.

The group visiting from the US included general secretary Stan Noffsinger; Jay Wittmeyer, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships; Roy Winter, executive director of Brethren Disaster Ministries; Andy Hamilton, a member of the Mission and Ministry Board; Joe Detrick, district executive in Southern Pennsylvania; Larry Wittig of Bridgewater, Va., and Jim Benedict, of Union Bridge, Md., representing disaster auctions; Ludovic St. Fleur, Jonathan Cadette, Merle Crouse, and Wayne Sutton from the Haiti Advisory Group; and Jeff Boshart, who coordinated the trip.





provides strength and accountability.

The church in the US provides annual theological training seminars and the licensing of Haitian ministers. On the last day of this year's event, held in August, the National Committee led a day of church business that was essentially the Haiti church's first Annual Conference. The committee reported on its activities and finances, and each congregation could give a report and share concerns.

The role of US Brethren is evolving as the Haiti church matures, growing pains and all. How will those changes be negotiated? Perhaps Boshart's instructions to workcampers apply on a larger scale. He cautions them to set aside their American fix-it mentalities and to look for a "different logic." You may not see it right away, he says, but it's there.

Connecting the networks in Haiti and the US has a way of strengthening both. "You are changing the Church of the Brethren in the US," noted Roy Winter at the June celebration. "Your commitment to the gospel inspires us."

In a similar vein was the message brought to the congregation at Delmas by Andy Hamilton, a member of the Mission and Ministry Board and one of those who have provided theological training to Haitian leaders. "We have traveled here from the US to celebrate the many accomplishments God is doing here among you in Haiti. Every time I hear the stories I am encouraged. Your faith has an effect on my small congregation in Akron, Ohio." ❧



(top) A woman in Morne Boulage shows visitors her home, which Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilt after major rainstorms damaged houses built with mud mortar. Built on the footprint of the previous house, the new one is built of local stone and cement mortar. (above) The Church of the Brethren guesthouse, located in Croix des Bouquet, housed its first visitors in early June.



Behind the scenes the Brethren role in DOV

Story and photos by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

[The Decade to Overcome Violence officially came to a close with the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation held in Kingston, Jamaica May 18-24. MESSENGER published a major report on the conference in the July-August issue. Although we included as much as possible in that issue, space limitations forced us to omit some things, such as a little of the back story on the Brethren involvement in the creation of DOV. Prior to the conference in Jamaica, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren, spoke with Brethren professor Don Miller, without whose involvement the Decade to Overcome Violence may never have come to be. —Ed.]

When Donald Miller talks about the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010), it is a story about the miraculous—how God has made the seemingly impossible become a real possibility. And, when he tells it, the story is about how the three Historic Peace Church traditions—Brethren, Mennonites, and Friends (Quakers)—have worked together to influence the World Council of Churches to move in the direction of “just peace.”

For the past decade, Miller has thought of the Decade to Overcome Violence as his calling. He retired in 1996 from a decade of service as general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, and is professor emeritus at Bethany Theological Seminary. When the Decade was adopted by the World Council of Churches, the WCC invited the Historic Peace Churches to contribute to it, and he quickly became involved in organizing and leading the series of continental peace church gatherings that took place over the course of those 10 years.

Leaders from the three peace churches played key roles in the process that led to the Decade to Overcome Violence. Miller recalls three specific actions that helped set the Decade in motion: “In Uppsala it was a Quaker who made the motion. In South Africa it was a Brethren who made the motion. In Zimbabwe it was a Mennonite who made the motion.”

Uppsala, Sweden, was the city that hosted the WCC world assembly in 1968, at which Martin Luther King Jr. had been slated to speak. Following his assassination, the assembly adopted a motion, made by Quaker representative Wilmer Cooper, that there be a program created in his memory. That program led to the WCC’s Program to Combat Racism.

South Africa hosted the 1994 meeting of the WCC Central Committee, which is the decision-making body in between the WCC world assemblies that are held every seven years. At that meeting, it was Miller himself who made the initial motion for a Program to Overcome Violence.

Zimbabwe hosted the 1998 WCC assembly, where Mennonite representative Fernando Enns made the motion for a Decade to Overcome Violence.

At each step along the way, Miller has seen seemingly insurmountable obstacles fall. He quickly acknowledges this is in part because the groundwork was laid by peacemaking giants of the past: Brethren leaders like M.R. Zigler, Raymond Peters, Ralph Smeltzer, alongside names like that of Mennonite theologian John Howard Yoder, Richard Deats of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, and many more.

A vivid experience of overcoming bureaucratic obstacles occurred during Miller’s participation in the



Don Miller (right) was a key promoter and organizer for the series of conferences that took place on all five continents as part of the Decade to Overcome Violence.

Central Committee meeting of 1994. There to represent the Brethren, he was sitting in the congregation for worship when South African Methodist Bishop Stanley Mogoba preached. The bishop noted the significance of the WCC Program to Combat Racism in the anti-apartheid struggle, and suggested that at this historic moment another initiative was needed—a program to overcome violence.

“He said it in passing, it was just a sentence or so,” Miller recalls. “When I heard that I could hear M.R. Zigler’s voice speaking to me. He said, Don, that’s why you’re here.”

Miller went to WCC leaders with the proposal for a Program to Overcome Violence. They told him it was not possible. “That’s what I was told constantly.” Finally, he took someone’s advice to talk to a Quaker woman on the WCC staff. “She said, sure it’s possible.” She told him to make a motion for a program to overcome violence at a meeting of the WCC commission of which he was a member.

So Miller presented the motion to his commission. “Nobody on the commission said anything, but the staff members were really upset about it.

They said, ‘We can’t afford it, we’re already doing what you’re talking about.’ WCC staff members were concerned about duplication of efforts, as a number of other programs had a very specific focus on a variety of related issues. When the commission took the vote, Miller’s hand was the only one raised in favor. “I thought, ‘This is done. Forget this!’”

But he did talk with the chair after the meeting, expressing disappointment that only staff spoke to the motion and that the commission did not discuss it. The chair suggested he express his concerns to WCC general secretary Konrad Raiser, who had a simple solution: bundle all the related WCC programs together under the title of overcoming violence. When Raiser brought the idea back to the commission, the vote in favor was unanimous, and was accepted by the Central Committee.

A member of the Church of the Brethren staff, H. Lamar Gibble, moderated the initial consultation in Corrymeela, Ireland, that gave shape to the Program to Overcome Violence. The program was further refined at follow-up meetings. Violence in

“THIS IS THE TRUE CALLING OF THE BRETHREN IN THE 21ST CENTURY—TO ‘EXPAND THE CIRCLE OF PEACE.’ THAT’S OUR GIFT TO THE WORLD, BUT WE CAN’T CALL IT OURS. IT’S THE NEW TESTAMENT VISION.”

Don Miller (left) at the Historic Peace Churches gathering of Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers that took place in Latin America last year.



the cities became a main focus, with 12 cities around the world chosen for emphasis because they were experiencing violence and churches were working effectively against it.

Another bureaucratic barrier fell at the 1998 assembly in Zimbabwe. Many of those in attendance wanted the Program to Overcome Violence to continue, and there were motions made in several groups to that effect. However, motions had to pass the rules committee for the assembly, and none got through.

The last day of the assembly arrived. "There was to be no business. It was simply a celebrative day," Miller remembers. Fernando Enns got up to the microphone and was given permission to speak. He explained that many participants

"IF THE JUST PEACE DOCUMENT IS SERIOUSLY CONSIDERED, IT IS AN ENORMOUS CHANGE IN HOW CHURCHES THINK ABOUT WAR AND VIOLENCE. HONESTLY, I COULDN'T HAVE EXPECTED MUCH MORE."

wanted to extend the Program to Overcome Violence, but they had not been given a chance to vote. He made a motion for a Decade to Overcome Violence to parallel the United Nation's Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for Children of the World (2001-2010).

The moderator was "buffaloed," as Miller describes it. Enns' motion was clearly out of order. The moderator asked the parliamentarian what he should do. The parliamentarian, who happened to be Raiser, told him to allow the vote. The vote was

"completely overwhelming" in favor, Miller says.

Once the Historic Peace Churches began to plan the continental gatherings to contribute to the Decade, more impossibles became possible. "With each one of these conferences, and then the creating and publishing of the books, it was always an impossible task," Miller says, "but it happened."

For a time, for example, holding a peace church gathering in Africa in 2004 seemed an impossible task. Originally it was to be held at a technical college in Nairobi, Kenya. Then the planning group learned the campus was being used for an African Union meeting with Somali warlords, and that group needed more time. The college said it could move the African Union meeting into tents on the lawn, and then move them back into the buildings once the peace church meeting was over. "We couldn't imagine a conference with Somali warlords waiting outside," Miller remembers, with a laugh.

To add to the trouble, it seemed like the Nigerian Brethren delegation would not be able to make it to Kenya.

With two weeks to go, the local logistics director, a Quaker, miraculously found another site at a Southern Baptist facility. The group that had it reserved failed to put down a deposit, so there was an opening for the exact time of the peace

church meeting. And because the Africa Union had just paid for their meeting, the technical college immediately returned the peace church deposit and they had the money to reserve the new location.

The group from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) made it to Kenya after all. Previously EYN leaders had not been clear about their denomination's position with regard to peace, Miller says. But after the Nairobi conference, "EYN went away saying they were a peace church."

Today, at the close of the Decade, Miller is "enormously encouraged" about its outcome. "If the just peace document is seriously considered, it is an enormous change in how churches think about war and violence. Honestly, I couldn't have expected much more."

He explains "just peace" as actively working for peace instead of "waiting for a crisis and deciding if it justifies war." The books published from the continental gatherings of the peace churches are a great resource to help Christians work on just peace, Miller says. Three volumes of presentations have been published so far, from the Europe (2001), Africa (2004), and Asia (2007) conferences.

However, Miller cautions that "we'll have to wait to see" if the churches, including the Church of the Brethren, really study and take up the idea of just peace. "I'm just hoping that our own people will see this as a wonderful opportunity and will deepen our commitment as a peace church."

From his point of view, this is the true calling of the Brethren in the 21st century—to "expand the circle of peace," he says, quoting from the late Brethren historian Donald Durnbaugh.

"That's our gift to the world," he says. "But we can't call it ours. It's the New Testament vision." 

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren.

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Sabbath musings

**Living as a follower of Jesus:
Norah Jones vs. Hall Johnson**

by Becky Ullom

As far as I can tell, we Brethren don't have a strong tradition of taking pilgrimages or honoring Sabbath time. We are the worker bees, the Marthas, the "hearers and doers of the Word."

As a young person, I remember being captivated by the McPherson College choir's rendition of Hall Johnson's spiritual "Ain't got time to die."

"Lord, I keep so busy praisin' my Jesus, keep so busy praisin' my Jesus, keep so busy praisin' my Jesus, ain't got time to die. 'Cause when I'm helpin' the sick (I'm praisin' my Jesus), when I'm helpin' the sick (I'm praisin' my Jesus), when I'm helpin' the sick (I'm praisin' my Jesus), ain't got time to die. 'Cause it takes all of my time (it takes all of my time, it takes it all), all of my time (to praise him. If I don't praise him the rocks are gonna cry out, glory and honor, glory and honor, ain't got time to die."

Those expressive, action-inspiring words danced through my soul for days when I first heard this song. Do you resonate with it? The idea that I (and you) must keep "praising Jesus" through our lives and work is a succinct, Tweet-length description of what I understand our work as Christians to be. But it only goes so far.

What's missing from this hymn (and too often from our lives) can be better understood by listening to jazz singer Norah Jones croon the phrase "come away with me" in her similarly titled song and album.

Jones sings of love for another. But during my recent "sabbath rest," the invitation kept singing itself to me

when I wondered how to articulate the need for silence and stillness in a relationship with the Holy Spirit. Like any relationship, if you don't spend time on it, it will wither. "Come away with me. . . ."

I arrived at the retreat center on a Sunday afternoon to enter a week of voluntary "silent retreat." At The Hermitage, "silent" means choosing to spend most of one's communication energy "talking" to God rather than other humans. However, I've learned the term "silent retreat" is a misnomer. Even though one doesn't do much talking, in the traditional sense, silence is still elusive. I spent the first day and a half of a five-day retreat quieting my talk-talk-talking thoughts. It took a day of fasting from consuming or producing words to reach the still waters of the soul where God promises to lead us.

When my mouth and brain stopped fidgeting, my awareness of God increased. Because I had no schedule, I took time.

I went to the community's morning prayer. I walked in the woods and on the prairie. I slept. I prayed. I sat in a lawn chair in the shade on a hilltop and watched the meadow grasses play in the breeze. I watched cardinals flit around the trees in blasts of color. I watched evenings progress into sunset. Sometimes the low places filled with mist and sometimes the mosquitoes were really annoying.

After my time of silence, I returned to words: reading and journaling. I ate slowly, really tasting the food. I took time simply to "be" with God. Sabbath rest. Pilgrimage. Peace, O God, where can we find it?

Where do you go (literally or figuratively) to find rest



JESUS TOOK TIME AWAY TO PRAY AND BE WITH GOD, AND HE WAS ONE BUSY GUY. WHAT DOES GOD THINK WHEN WE ARE “TOO BUSY” TO SPEND A LITTLE ALONE TIME WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT ONCE IN A WHILE?

and to be with God? Although I mentioned that Brethren don't have a strong tradition of pilgrimage or sabbath rest, let me revise: We Brethren adults don't do a good job of honoring these Biblical spiritual practices. We send our young people on pilgrimages; we just don't call them that. How many of our souls first caught fire with God's love at church camp? How can we measure the lives touched by faith-formation pilgrimages we call “workcamps” or “National Youth Conference”? Why do we teach young people about the value of “going away with God” in the presence of a faith community and then stop doing it ourselves?

Jesus took time away to pray and be with God, and he was one busy guy. What does God think when we are “too busy” to spend a little alone time with the Holy Spirit once in a while? I am as guilty as anyone. I don't make time during the week to do this, and my Sundays are regularly more packed than restful.

I recovered a sense of God's abiding peace on retreat, and I did pretty well staying connected to that sense until I got home and saw the jungle which had replaced my lawn. Trying to be positive, I went to the garage, only to discover

the mower was wedged behind a table and chairs that I should have put away long ago. The sticky August humidity made me miserable, and darkness prevented completion of the task. Hot, annoyed, and not particularly aware of God's presence, I couldn't help wondering: What does God have to do with lawn mowing, anyway?

Honestly, God probably doesn't have a lot to do with lawn mowing. Yet God does have a lot to do with each of us—as individuals and as a body. We are challenged to turn our thoughts away from selfishness as much as possible. We are challenged to return our thoughts to God as much as we are able. Our challenge is to take sabbath rest in small and large doses. Our challenge is to consider the meaning and role of “pilgrimage” in our walk with God. If we don't find time to heed God's call to “come away,” I am afraid our souls will begin to die, whether we (and our ministry, our service in Jesus' name) have time for it or not. ❗

Becky Ullom is director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Church of the Brethren. She lives and works in Elgin, Ill. Besides getting used to the maintenance requirements of being a homeowner, Becky enjoys spending time on her bike in the summer and cooking in the winter.



Left: Pam Lergner volunteers for Children's Disaster Services following Hurricane Irene. CDS set up a disaster child care center at this shelter near where many families had lost homes.

Right: Residents of upstate New York clean up after Hurricane Irene.

Brethren assist Hurricane Irene clean-up

The Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) has made a grant of \$20,000 in response to a CWS appeal following the devastation caused by Hurricane Irene. The money will support the work of CWS in providing clean-up buckets, hygiene kits, baby kits, school kits, and blankets in communities affected by the disaster, and will support the work of CWS to assist communities in long-term recovery development.

An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports the work of Children's Disaster Services (CDS) volunteers serving in upstate

New York following flooding caused by Hurricane Irene. Seven volunteers have been working in the Binghamton Shelter on the State University of New York campus, reports associate director Judy Bezon. "Word is that the shelter population will decline more slowly than usual, as one major low-cost housing area in an inner city neighborhood is almost destroyed, and a number of the residents are in the shelter," she said.

Staff of the church's Material Resource program, which warehouses and ships disaster relief materials out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., have been busy with shipments in response to Hurricane Irene. Clean-up buckets, hygiene kits, school kits, and baby kits went to Waterbury, Vt., Manchester, N.H., Ludlow, Vt., Brattleboro, Vt., Greenville, N.C., Hillside, N.J., and Baltimore, Md. A total of 3,150 clean-up buckets were included in these shipments.

For more about the Church of the Brethren's disaster relief programs go to www.brethren.org.



A home in Prattville, N.Y., damaged in the flooding caused by Hurricane Irene.

Brethren affected by flooding in Pennsylvania

Brethren Disaster Ministries staff members have been in communication with Brethren districts and churches in Pennsylvania following the flooding caused by Tropical Storm Lee. The BDM office is urging individuals who are affected to apply for Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assistance in the Pennsylvania counties where they are eligible.

"We have been continuing to communicate and work with Southern

Pennsylvania and Atlantic Northeast districts," reported Zach Wolgemuth, associate director of Brethren Disaster Ministries. "A few churches are responding to local needs or are planning a response in the near future. In Atlantic Northeast, White Oak Church of the Brethren has already helped one of its members gut their home in Manheim, Pa., and in Pine Grove, Pa., the Schuylkill Church of the Brethren has assem-

bled clean-up buckets for local use."

In Lebanon County, Annville Church of the Brethren put together a work day to help clean up flooding that happened in their church building. In York County, in Southern Pennsylvania District, the York Council of Churches put out a request for volunteers to help do clean-up work, and York First Church of the Brethren is planning to respond to the request.

Congregations encouraged to engage in anti-hunger action this fall

The general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, Stan Noffsinger, has sent a letter to each congregation in the denomination encouraging each to engage in some new and specific hunger action during this harvest season.



Church World Service

The new effort is sponsored by the church's Global Food Crisis Fund and the advocacy and peace witness office in Washington, D.C.

"For people of faith, harvest season has been a foremost and festive occasion for celebrating the providence of God," said the letter. "Through its mission and service ministries, the Church of the Brethren has long been a creative force in feeding the hungry.

"From now 'til Thanksgiving, the themes of harvest and hunger will resound on many fronts. During this season I encourage each Church of the Brethren congregation to engage in at least one new action that addresses the mounting hunger in our nation and

world," the letter continued.

The letter listed a number of options for action against hunger that a congregation may consider, such as a special offering on World Food Day on Sunday, Oct. 16, to the Global Food Crisis Fund designated for drought victims in the Horn of Africa; or speaking publicly on federal, state, and local budgets that impact the hungry, forming a "circle of protection" around the most vulnerable; or taking the Food Stamp Challenge of eating on just \$4.50 a day, and applying the savings to causes that strengthen food security. Find out more about the effort and link to resources at www.brethren.org/hunger.

Brueggemann to preach at 2012 Annual Conference

Preachers, worship leaders, and music leadership for the daily worship services at the 2012 Annual Conference have been announced by the Conference Office. The 2012 Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren takes place in St. Louis, Mo., July 7-11 next year.

Renowned Lutheran scholar, preacher, and writer Walter Brueggemann will speak for the opening worship service of the Conference on Saturday evening, July 7. Manchester College campus minister and former MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek will be worship leader for the service.

Brueggemann is a leading interpreter of the Old Testament, and is currently the William Marcellus McPheeters Professor of Old Testament Emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary. Among his numerous books are *Journey to the Common Good*, *The Prophetic Imagination*, and *Disruptive Grace: Reflections on God, Scripture, and the Church*.

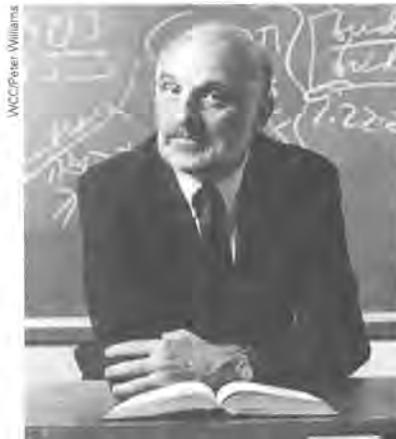
Annual Conference moderator Timothy P. Harvey, pastor of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., will preach on Sunday morning July 8, with moderator-elect Bob Krouse as worship leader.

Becky Ball-Miller, an ordained minister and businesswoman from Goshen, Ind., and a member of the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board, preaches Monday evening, July 9. David A. Steele, district executive minister of Middle Pennsylvania District, will lead worship that evening.

On Tuesday evening, July 10, Jennifer Leath of New Haven, Conn., will preach. Katie and Parker Shaw Thompson of Richmond, Ind., will lead worship. Leath is an ordained minister in the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the USA and an ecumenical leader in the field of ethics. Earlier this year she was one of the speakers at a World Council of Churches Central

Committee meeting where she shared a strong testimony on issues related to youth and the ecumenical movement.

The closing worship of the Conference on Wednesday morning, July 11, will hear a message from Daniel D'Oleo, a



Renowned scholar, preacher, and writer Walter Brueggemann will speak at the opening worship of the 2012 Annual Conference.

leader in the Renacer movement that is planting Spanish-speaking congregations of Brethren in the Virginia area. Angie Lahman Yoder of Peoria, Ariz., will lead worship for the closing service.

Music leadership for the Conference will be provided by music coordinator Dean Sensenig of Ephrata, Pa., along with Conference choir director Raechel Sittig-Esser of Waterloo, Iowa, and organist Loren Rhodes and pianist

Donna Rhodes of Huntingdon, Pa. A children's choir director is yet to be named.

In other Annual Conference news, the Program and Arrangements Committee has voted to increase by \$10 the registration fee for delegates and non-delegates for the 2012 Conference. Districts are mailing the information to their congregations. For more about the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference go to www.brethren.org/ac.

Church staff reduced to balance 2012 budget and implement new MIMB strategic plan

Nine positions on the Church of the Brethren denominational staff have been cut as part of balancing the 2012 budget. The layoffs follow a new management structure for staff (see www.brethren.org/orgchart) announced in August by general secretary Stan Noffsinger.

The need to reduce next year's budget was anticipated for some time by staff and board doing financial planning. For two years the Mission and Ministry Board has chosen to use reserves to balance the Core Ministries budget, wanting time to complete a strategic plan before making changes in staffing structure.

In early July, the board approved a 2012 budget parameter that requires reductions of \$638,000 to achieve a balanced budget in the Core Ministries Fund. Contributing factors to the budget gap include the economic recession, declining contributions from congregations and individuals, and increasing costs for health insurance and other expenses.

Voluntary retirements and resignations announced a month earlier also are considered part of the staffing cuts that will help accomplish the budget reduction.

Departing employees are receiving a severance package of three months' full salary and benefits and access to funds for job search and counseling services. The relatively generous severance package is provided because the former church employees are not eligible for unemployment benefits from the state.

Those laid off Sept. 28 include:

Judy Keyser, treasurer and associate general secretary of Operations, who also served as chief financial officer and treasurer of the Annual Conference and as a corporate officer of the Church of the Brethren. She has worked for the denomination for 25 years, since 1986 when she was appointed director of Financial Operations. She became CFO in 1995. She has worked closely with Annual Conference officers and the Mission and Ministry Board in doing financial planning and setting budget priorities for the denomination.

Ken Neher, director of Stewardship and Donor Development. He began in 1994 as a part-time officer for Planned Giving in the far west. His work has included stewardship education, fundraising mailings and newsletters, visits with donors and congregations, ecumenical stewardship activities, and helping to launch online gift solicitation. He worked out of a home office in Wenatchee, Wash.

Joy Willrett, program assistant for Congregational Life Ministries. She began in 1998 as a customer service and resourcing specialist for Brethren Press. In Congregational Life, she provided support the executive director and for other staff.

Pierre Covington, mail room supervisor at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., since 2000. As part of Buildings and Grounds, he assisted with tasks such as maintenance, audio-visual equipment, and logistical details for meetings.

Brenda Hayward, receptionist for the General Offices, who has served in the position since 2005. She provided a welcoming presence on the telephone switchboard, received

visitors to the building, and carried out other tasks for the Buildings and Grounds department.

Karin Krog, who began as director of Human Resources in 2006. Her position ends Dec. 31. She has overseen human resource at the General Offices and Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

Tim Stauffer, technical support for the Information Services department, who started as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker in 2006 and became an employee in 2008. He assisted with PC maintenance and problem-solving, and with maintenance of the network servers.

Linda Newman, assistant to the director of Buildings and Grounds at the General Offices since 2008. Her work included a wide range of projects and tasks, including purchasing of supplies, logistics for meetings, and relationships with vendors.

Katherine Boeger-Knight, coordinator of recruitment and service advocate for Brethren Volunteer Service and Global Mission Partnerships. In her short tenure since February, she visited all major conferences in the denomination and a number of smaller events, speaking about BVS and interpreting the latest information on conscientious objection.

The three retirements and two resignations include:

Mariana Barriga, administrative assistant in the Youth and Young Adult Ministry office. She began in 1990 as bilingual secretary in the Latin America/Caribbean office of the World Ministries Commission. Her work was characterized by a heart for young people, an ability to navigate cross-culturally, and detailed organizational skills.

Ray Glick, coordinator of Donor Visitation and Planned Gifts. He began as half-time Planned Giving Officer and truck driver in 1992, after a 30-year career as a public school teacher. Glick has traveled widely to assist donors, supervise volunteer visitors, lead seminars, provide counsel in matters of financial stewardship, and secure deferred gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

Kathleen Campanella, director of Partner and Public Relations at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. She began in 1993 as public information coordinator, responsible for media relations, event planning, and community outreach. She represented the Church of the Brethren on the Heifer International board of directors for the past 10 years.

Ruben Deoleo, director of Intercultural Ministries. On staff since 2007, he has supported the growth of new churches, worked with the Intercultural Advisory Committee to hold the denomination accountable to the 2007 Annual Conference statement "Becoming a Multi-Ethnic Church," and linked the growing number of multi-ethnic congregations.

Jeanne Davies, coordinator of Youth and Young Adult Workcamp Ministry. Since beginning in 2008, she has overseen up to 36 workcamps each summer involving hundreds of junior and senior high students, young adults, and inter-generational participants.

As staff responsibilities are rearranged and aligned with the strategic plan, some new positions will be created.

Justice and peace on WCC global agenda

The theme of peace and justice is on the global church agenda with new energy at a time when more and more societies are experiencing conflict, intense poverty, drought, and injustice, says the World Council of Churches general secretary, Olav Fykse Tveit.

In a release from the WCC, he cites recent world ecumenical events including the choice of the theme "God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace" for the Tenth WCC Assembly in 2013 in Korea; and the nearly 1,000 church leaders and peace activists who gathered in May for the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.

His remarks were given to the WCC Executive Committee during September meetings in Ethiopia. "Let me, as I report to you, share how I see that we are already on our way towards a deeper reflection and a stronger commitment to justice and peace," said Tveit. "We now have a new momentum given through the moment we had together in Jamaica."

Tveit spoke at length about an emerging discussion on the role and commitment of the churches in peace and justice. He also reported on the ongoing work of the WCC and his visits and interactions with member churches around the world over the past six months.

According to Tveit, the WCC is moving in a definite direction with member churches around the world calling for Just Peace. "And that movement is more than a slogan, it is a real move toward changing how the church interacts with the world and addresses issues of justice and peace."

Member churches' voices come from the Pacific region, the Middle East, North and East Africa, South and East Asia, the Americas, and

even Tveit's home country, Norway, which experienced a deadly terrorist attack in July. "As churches, our focus should be not on legitimizing actions of war, but on how non-violent actions can replace the use of military force, how we can build peace from below and from within, and how we can give politi-



WCC general secretary Olav Fykse Tveit plans to emphasize the theme of peace and justice.

cal leaders moral support and standards to protect their own citizens without using violence," Tveit said.

"But we also need to work, to act, and to create Just Peace in all places as we go on with our reflections and discussion, and also give the reflections realistic and constructive inputs and direction."

Tveit acknowledged that the ecumenical movement has been debating the role of the church in peace and justice for decades. "It is an unfinished debate which will not lead to easy answers disconnected from the day-to-day realities in which many churches wrestle with their Christian calling to justice and peace." The full text of the report is at www.oikoumene.org/index.

Development aid competing with military spending

"Few know that in the 2012 federal budget, development assistance has to compete with military spending," said Global Food Crisis Fund manager Howard Royer, highlighting an urgent request from partner organization Bread for the World. The organization is asking concerned citizens to contact their representatives in Congress to support fiscal year 2012 funding for poverty-focused development assistance. Bread president David Beckmann reported that "Congress passed a debt deal in August that enabled our country to avoid defaulting on its bills. Under the deal, development assistance that is focused on alleviating poverty—such as aid to small farmers so they can feed their families, and nutrition programs for mothers and children in poor countries—will now have to compete with military spending for federal dollars in the fiscal year 2012 budget. Poverty-focused development assistance could bear the brunt of the budget cuts under the new spending plan, set to start Oct. 1." For more information, go to www.bread.org/hunger/budget.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Oct. 7-8 Children's Disaster Services Workshop, Central United Methodist Church, Sedro-Woolley, Wash.

Oct. 9 Global Mission Offering Emphasis

Oct. 15-17 Mission and Ministry Board Meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Oct. 16-24 Peace and Justice Week

Oct. 21-22 CDS Volunteer Workshop, First United Methodist Church, Victor, N.Y.

Oct. 22 Deacon Training, Quakertown Church of the Brethren, Quakertown, Pa.

Oct. 28-30 Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees Meeting, Richmond, Ind.

Nov. 4 Fall Campus Visit Day, Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

Nov. 4-5 CDS Volunteer Workshop, Bethany Christian Church, Tulsa, Okla.

Nov. 6 National Junior High Sunday

Nov. 11-12 CDS Volunteer Workshop, Somerset Church of the Brethren, Somerset, Pa.

Nov. 13 Stewardship Sunday

Nov. 18-19 Brethren Benefit Trust Meeting

Nov. 27 First Sunday of Advent

Dec. 1 AIDS Awareness Day

Soul Surfer inspires

The phrase “soul surfer” is well known to surfers. It is defined as “a surfer who surfs for the love of the sport.” Bethany Hamilton (Anna Sophia Robb) is such a person, and this is her story.

The movie opens on 13-year-old Bethany enjoying the waters off of Hawaii. She is in the water near dawn most days. She takes a midday break for her home-schooling lessons, and then it's back to the waves until near dark. Her mother Cheri (Helen Hunt) is happy to teach her so that she can spend more time developing her skills and thus achieve her dream of being a champion surfer.



KEITH A. NONEMAKER

On this particular morning, Bethany suddenly realizes that she is running late. This is Sunday and she must hurry to get to church.

Youth group leader Sarah Hill (Carrie Underwood) shows the youth some strange pictures and asks what they are. They are extreme close-ups of a walnut and a fly's eye. She

makes the point that sometimes the only way to understand something is to step back and take a wider view. Sarah is taking the youth on a mission trip to Mexico. Bethany must stay home and practice for an upcoming tournament.

Catastrophe strikes. While Bethany floats casually on her surfboard, a shark bites her left arm off nearly to the shoulder. Quick-thinking friends get her to a hospital where her life is saved. Still, her only concern is whether she will ever again be able to surf competitively.

Bethany is back in the water in a month. She quickly masters the art of one-armed surfing, but that's only part of the problem. In competitive surfing, you must paddle out to meet a wave and then rise to your feet—often more difficult than surfing itself.

Eventually, Bethany gives in to the frustration that she feels. She pours her heart out to Sarah. She cannot understand why God allowed this terrible thing to happen. Sarah consoles her, saying: “I don't know why terrible things happen to us sometimes; but I have to believe that

something good is going to come out of this.”

The youth go on another mission trip. This time Bethany goes along. In tsunami-ravaged Thailand, they encounter a young child, apparently an orphan. No one has been able to get through to him, but he is fascinated by Bethany's missing arm. They find an emotional connection as Bethany teaches him to surf. Upon her return, she finds a mountain of mail from around the world. Many are from handicapped children who have found in Bethany's story the inspiration to go on.

She begins to understand how, if you step back a bit, a picture can look very different. Bethany decides that she has to give it another try. Her dad gives her a bit of advice: Don't take a good wave. Wait for a great one. He knows that Bethany has a “sixth sense” and can tell when the great one is coming.

Surfing competitions allow you to make as many rides as you can within a certain time frame. You keep your two best scores. As the time ticks away, every surfer tries to catch one last wave. But Bethany lets a good wave pass, sensing that a great wave is coming, and she's right. She catches the wave and puts in an unbelievable ride. She seems a certain winner, but the judges rule that she was not yet on her feet until after the time limit had run out. Everyone is disappointed that Bethany has lost. Bethany knows better. She has overcome the odds and knows that she is capable of world-class surfing.

This movie from Tri-Star has done well in the theaters. And well it should. The story is inspiring and uplifting. Anna Sophia Robb delivers an Oscar-worthy performance. She actually learned to surf in preparation for the movie. Kudos also go to the film editors who admirably manage to sustain the illusion that the actress really does have only one arm.

Soul Surfer is rated PG for some pretty intense scenes. Nevertheless, this is a great family film—a great discussion-starter. **M**

Keith Nonemaker is an ordained minister and avid genealogist who lives with his wife, Beth, in Camp Hill, Pa.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Soul Surfer*. **Theatrical release:** April 8, 2011. **Running time:** 106 minutes. **Director:** Sean McNamara. **Produced by** David Tice, David Zelon, Dominic Ianno. **Studio:** Sony Pictures. **DVD release:** August 2, 2011. According to film critic Roger Ebert (rogerebert.com), “One of the best sequences in the film involves a trip that her church group makes to Thailand to bring aid and supplies to the survivors of a tsunami. This episode looks so realistic, it's uncanny. *Soul Surfer* is a wholesome movie, intended as inspirational. Whether it will cheer viewers who are not as capable as Bethany is an excellent question. AnnaSophia Robb is a convincing, cheerful heroine. Dennis Quaid and Helen Hunt, as Bethany's parents, are stalwart and supportive, although the script indeed leaves them with no other choice.”



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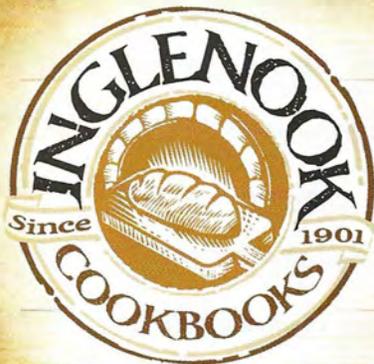
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ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Bridgewater College has hired Lisa Hauck of Fargo, N.D., as director of international education. Hauck will develop study abroad opportunities, provide support to faculty, and provide assistance to international students on campus. Hauck has worked and taught at the Asia and World Institute in Taiwan, the Beijing Language Institute in Beijing, China, and the Sydney Institute of Language and Commerce in Shanghai, China.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

On Nov. 9, Elizabethtown College Alumni Peace Fellowship will host its 2011 Peace Fellow, John Dernbach, distinguished professor of law at Widener University Law School in Harrisburg, Pa., and editor of the book *Agenda for a Sustainable America*. Dernbach's topic will be "Sustainability and Peace." Dernbach leads the Sustaining America project, which reviews sustainable development efforts in the United States, and makes recommendations for future action.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

The Juniata College board of trustees has added eight new members. The new trustees, who will serve through August 2014, are Henry Siedzikowski, of Blue Bell, Pa.; Glenn O'Donnell (church trustee), of Royersford, Pa.; Carole Calhoun (alumni trustee), of Rehoboth Beach, Del.; Carol Ellis, of Vienna, Va.; Bruce Moyer, of Takoma Park, Md.; Robert McMinn (church trustee), of Huntingdon, Pa.; Todd Kulp, of Houston, Texas; and Patrick Chang-Lo, of San Rafael, Calif.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The University of La Verne has moved up 57 spots on the most recent Forbes list of America's Best Colleges, to 264, placing it ahead of such nationally noted institutions as Brigham Young, Baylor, Texas Christian, Purdue, Michigan State, Alabama, and Auburn. La Verne's traditional undergraduate enrollment this fall exceeds 2,150—highest in the university's history.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester College has surpassed its strategic enrollment goal, starting classes this fall with more than 1,300 students, up 27 percent since fall 2007. This is its largest enrollment in 40 years. The college is riding a three-year momentum of large incoming class sizes, as well as an increase in transfer students and retention of students into their sophomore year.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson College has received a grant aimed at fostering peer mentoring for freshman students. The grant provides funding for 12 student mentors to receive a stipend of up to \$1,500 for the 300 hours expected from them annually, as well as a scholarship award of nearly \$1,200. Each mentor will be matched with four freshmen, allowing 48 students to benefit.

Juniata junior receives EPA-GRO fellowship

Kelsey Morgan, a junior from Media, Pa., studying anthropology at Juniata College, has been awarded an EPA-GRO Fellowship from the Environmental Protection Agency that provides \$10,000 a year for tuition for two years, and offers a paid internship at the EPA facility of her choice.

EPA's Office of Research and Development supports several fellowship programs in order to develop scientists and researchers interested in pursuing careers in environmental science. EPA's GRO fellowship program helps build environmental studies programs at universities with limited funding for research and development. In 2010, just over two dozen students nationwide received the award.

The purpose of the program is to encourage promising students to obtain advanced degrees and pursue careers in environmental fields. Eligible students will receive support for their junior and senior years of undergraduate study, and for an internship at an EPA facility during the summer between their junior and senior years. Since the fellowship program began in 1995, EPA has awarded more than 2,200 fellowships to students in almost every state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico. All applications for EPA's fellowship programs are rigorously peer reviewed.

Before taking advantage of her internship, Morgan will spend the entire upcoming academic year studying abroad at the University of Veracruz in Xalapa, Mexico. She also received Juniata's Nyce Scholarship for Study in Latin America this year to offset her expenses for the study-abroad experience.

Morgan served as secretary of Juniata's Anthropology Club during the 2010-2011 academic year. She will begin her paid internship in the summer of 2012, before the start of her senior year at Juniata.



Kelsey Morgan received an EPA-GRO fellowship



Over 400 junior high and senior high youth participated in workcamps this past summer. Pictured here are junior high workcampers working at the historic John Kline Homestead in Broadway, Va.

Carol Fike

Nakedly anti-democratic

It is with sadness and astonishment that I read the letters and columns in the September MESSENGER. There are seven letters and two editorials that are nakedly anti-democratic. One side in an issue doesn't win and so complains, in some instances threatening to take their ball and go home, or in the words of one letter-writer: "skip the kiss of

peace and just go." Do we have a democratic process that decides upon Church of the Brethren business or not? If we do, we must respect those decisions even if we disagree with them. Moreover, why are we choosing sides at all in this discussion? Why was Annual Conference filled with rainbow and black-and-white scarves like the badges of so many soldiers?

We are all on Jesus' side. We can

pierce it further or work together to heal the world. Unity in Christ doesn't mean "if you agree with me." It means we love God and love his children equally, irrespective of what behaviors we do or do not approve.

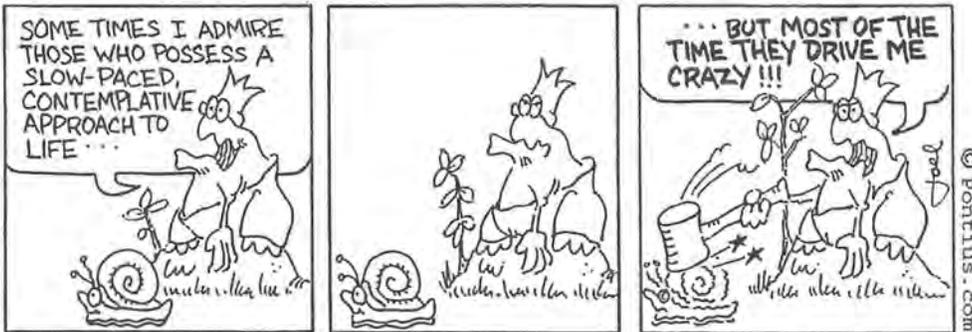
Michael Palmer
Jacksonville, Fla.

A matter of justice and love

Thank you for your excellent editorial in MESSENGER's most recent issue. There is indeed an elephant in the room and it won't go away. You are quite accurate when you say that acceptance of glbts is a matter of justice and of love. Our denomination should accept all who want to come to the Table and who have God-given talents that will strengthen the body of Christ. Everyone deserves to have their gifts recognized and utilized. The Spirit is trying to shed new light, although some people refuse to let it. How long will the elephant be patient?

Carol Kussart
Cerro Gordo, Ill.

Pontius' Puddle





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Conversation without rancor

In the July/August issue of the MESSENGER, Tom Warner mentions Marcus Borg and N.T. Wright in his comments on Bill Kidwell's reflection, "I Don't Know...But I Believe," in the May issue of the MESSENGER. Borg and Wright have coauthored a book entitled *The Meaning of Jesus* in which they model how progressives and conservatives can be in conversation without rancor. There is much for the church to learn from Wright and Borg's relationship. Although they have differing views, they are willing to dialogue freely and consider one another's ideas. In the introduction to the book, Wright and Borg state, "It might be that one of us is closer to the truth in some areas and the other in others; and that by our dialogue we may see more clearly things that the other has grasped more accurately. We are both prepared for that eventuality."

Borg and Wright do an excellent job of modeling to the church how we can be in conversation without putting one another down. It is my suggestion as a young person in the church that we begin to observe the ways in which

SO HERE WE ARE IN THE 21ST CENTURY. WE ARE STRAINED BY THE CONTRADICTIONS INHERENT IN THESE TWO IMAGES THAT SO POWERFULLY SPEAK TO US... IT IS A DEFINING PICTURE. WHAT DOES IT PORTEND?

Wright and Borg have handled their discussions of Christianity, and that we then begin to practice this.

Andrea Keller
Greenville, Ohio

Brethren politics parallel national politics

I read moderator-elect Robert Krouse's article "Why I said Yes" (September MESSENGER). I wish he could have read articles like Wendy McFadden's "On Hold: Female Leadership in the Church of the Brethren," and also "A Watershed moment" by the two female nominees for moderator-elect before saying yes. I do not question Krouse's ability and commitment in accepting the nomination. What I question is his wisdom in doing so. With two highly qualified nominees, and the anger and division that already existed at Annual Conference, this move by both him and Hardenbrook only made the division greater. Other men wise enough to understand this chose not to have their names placed on the ballot.

I find it sad that Brethren politics is moving so parallel to national politics. It seems like we are using the Holy Spirit as our justification for the power struggle that is going on to establish leadership. Look at who was the first person at the microphone when the amendment on homosexuality was passed. The only thing we seem to be better at than our government is our ability to exclude those who don't fit our mold.

I also find it startling how well the photo on the cover of the September MESSENGER depicts the atmosphere of the 2011 Annual Conference. One face appears angry and the other sad.

Denzel Short
Livonia, Mich.

Have we rejected the law?

Joshua addressed the congregation of ancient Israel and told them to choose the god they would serve. Their options were the God who had saved them from bondage or the gods of the people who had enslaved them. Joshua set the example by making it clear that he and his family would serve the God who had saved them. When Jesus saves, he delivers. The drunk drinks no more. The rebel honors authority. The killer kills no more. The pervert views pornography no more. The thief steals no more. The liar lies no more. The greedy become generous. Jesus makes the difference. Jesus didn't come to redeem us from the cursed law. He came to redeem us from the curse of the law because we haven't obeyed all of it.

After reading the September MESSENGER letters to the editor, a reader could conclude that many in our denomination have chosen to follow the god of this world instead of the God of heaven. Woe to us if we reject the law of God and Yeshua, our Savior.

Benjamin Haldeman
Greencastle Pa.

Avoiding the issues

I laughed with sarcasm as I picked up the September issue of MESSENGER with its heading, "Grappling with Issues." "Avoiding issues" would be more accurate. How sadly ironic that the voices who said they were tired of discussing these heavy issues chose to sidestep discussion with the response, "Let's start over again where we were in 1983."

Standing Committee presented a wonderfully balanced ballot at Annual Conference this year, and it was

ignored. But I trust the older adults will be adequate in their duties.

This was my co-delegate's first Annual Conference and he was ready to make it his last. There are hurting people in our widely diverse church family who need caring people to keep standing with them. We can also roll up the sleeves and continue to support Standing Committee with nominations reflecting our diversity.

Tim Speicher
Reading Pa.

Worth a thousand words

The cover picture on the latest MESSENGER spoke volumes about our current denomination's situation. A young woman with a Bible in her hand is speaking with great intensity to the delegates and those in the audience. She represents the promise of our church's future. She has known only instant communication, a multi-cultural society, and great confusion about what is really true. One of the significant threads guiding her journey is whatever she has learned from the matriarchal side of the Brethren tradition. It is this side that likely points toward the solutions of our impasse. It is the unconditional agape love that seeks communion and fellowship through our differences.

Behind her is an older male. He represents the immediate past of our denomination. He is a little younger than I. He represents an agrarian denomination that was influenced by memories of what his father understood. Though there were sometimes allusions to other Brethren in Africa, India, China, and Central America, this man's identity was established by lineage from the original Pennsylvania families or related kin. The church was larger and more influential

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in their lives. It was much more patriarchal, at least on the surface. Even though Brethren were beginning to move to the cities to find work, the themes of simplicity, honesty, and the guidance of the New Testament were predominant. They were able to balance, though precariously, the admonition to be "in the world but not of the world."

So here we are in the 21st century. We are strained by the contradictions inherent in these two images that so powerfully speak to us. As a 74-year-old man with a Brethren history deriving from family tradition and study, I must confess my own chagrin at being unable to explain what it means to be "Brethren." It would be easier to explain "Anabaptist" or "Christian."

It is a defining picture. What does it portend? How do we reconcile what is future tending with the paradigms of the past? Who are our prophets that speak the truth today?

William Kinzie
Midlothian, Va.

Saving trees instead of souls

After going through the September edition of MESSENGER, I find myself shaking my head. There are several things in the issue that cause me to have such a reaction. One of these concerns the singular perspective found in the "letters" section. All but one of the letter writers spoke about their unhappiness regarding the decision at Conference to have the 1983 statement on human sexuality remain our official position, and over the election of Robert Krouse as moderator-elect, or in support of homosexuality. (The one exception did not mention any of these issues.) One would assume that all of the letters that came in carried these views, since no counter view was published.

Since that one view was so widely popularized in the last issue, I would like to submit some of the hurt and sadness of the other side. While this is my personal view, I know that there are others within the Brotherhood who

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share my perspective.

I am hurt and deeply troubled at seeing people place emotions or psychology as a greater authority than scripture. It grieves my heart to see the denomination treat holiness as if it is of little importance. I find myself dismayed that we spend more time debating what God has clearly said, focusing instead on "saving trees" instead of saving souls and being obedient to the Great Commission. I pray continually for a revival in this denomination where God places his word again as the church's sole authority and the focus would be on him and not on ourselves.

P. V. Lee Smith
Mount Pleasant, Pa.

Calling our church to lead on justice issues

The Church of the Brethren Womaen's Caucus celebrated a 40th anniversary during the 2011 Annual Conference. We honored three women as Mothers of Caucus: Mary Blocher Smeltzer, Betty Jo Buckingham, and Mary Cline Detrick. Their efforts have resulted in the provision of child care at Annual Conference, women's leadership in many areas of denominational life, recovery of Brethren women's history, and broad acceptance of women in ministry. Many strides have been made to address gender inequity in the church since the passage of "Equality for Women in the Church of the Brethren" (1977) and so we were profoundly taken aback by the sexism we witnessed in our midst in Grand Rapids.

Our desire as a denomination to address social injustice and inequity even in our midst, has led us to affirm the "Call to Accountability for Equality of Representation on Annual Conference Ballots" which provides ongoing analysis of leadership composition with regard to gender, race, age, and geography, and gives guidance to Standing Committee to structure the ballot to maximize leadership diversity. Nominations from the floor can broaden the pool of candidates while still honoring our commitment to diversity in leadership. Had another woman been nominated this year, we would have another woman moderator-elect, a position in which women have served admirably

in the past. The nomination and election of a man with far fewer denominational credentials rather than the two highly qualified, fully vetted and Standing Committee-supported women, clearly undermines our will to have diverse leadership. The women and men of Caucus who have supported equity for women in leadership, pastoral placement, and higher education were disheartened by behavior that undercuts the progress made over the past 40 years.

We also noted that while the paper we reaffirmed, "Human Sexuality from a Christian Perspective," calls us as a church to "challenge openly the widespread fear, hatred, and harassment of homosexual persons," and to "engage in open, forthright conversations with homosexuals," hurtful and hateful language continues to be directed at our non-heterosexual brothers and sisters. (And in part, the airing of such violent language leads to violent action, which we clearly saw directed at a sister in leadership.)

We challenge our church to embrace this paper's counsel to welcome into fellowship all persons (regardless of sexual orientation) who confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

We call our church to lead on justice issues, not be the very last in line to recognize the gifts and talents of all God's children. We covenant to continue advocacy for equity and fairness and invite all those interested in the same to join us.

Daisy Schmidt,
convener, Womaen's Caucus

Extending the table?

What a privilege and honor it was to be a part of the Michigan district and host Annual Conference in Grand Rapids. I hope that all attendees were welcomed and blessed to be in Michigan.

However, there were several times that I found myself questioning how the table was going to be extended, with many speeches on the conference floor that were filled with hurtful and poorly chosen words. And how embarrassed and ashamed I was when it was announced that a death threat had been issued. And this in a "peace" church, one that believes "all war is sin."

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NOW THAT CONFERENCE IS OVER, I FEEL WE MUST WORK ON PUTTING THE "SPLINTERS" BACK ON THE TABLE AND SECURING THEM WITH THE LOVE THAT JESUS TAUGHT.

Now that conference is over, I feel we must work on putting the "splinters" back on the table and securing them with the love that Jesus taught. Then, and only then, will we be able to extend the table to *all* God's children.

I do not want, nor do I think, there will be a split in our church. Some may leave because they are tired and feel unwelcome, but at this time I feel I must stay and help with the healing and restoration of myself and many friends.

The controversial issues facing us will not be the end of the Church of the Brethren. But unless we start supporting the denomination with prayers and *money*, we will not survive. If any of you studied the budget for next year, you will see that there will be many ministries cut because there will be no money for them. And, yes, this will mean loss of personnel also. I do not like that or want that.

Daniel J. McRoberts
Freeport, Mich.

Even-handed moderator

Robert Alley proved to be an able and even-handed moderator at Annual Conference this year. His combination of pastoral care and school-teacher-like firmness served him well. No one can say he was trying to "pull strings" in order to get things to go a certain way. As a result, the delegates were able to make a clear and decisive decision which will be difficult to misinterpret. Thank you, Brother Bob.

James F. Myer
Lititz, Pa.

The elephant as bully, sporting a rainbow scarf

Regarding the editorial in the July/August 2011 MESSENGER, many of us in the Church of the Brethren have paid attention to the elephant lumbering around in the our living room (church). We agree that LGBTs should be compassionately respected, and are committed to living out Jesus' command to love one another. As for justice, LGBTs are being granted rights left and right by the world.

Indeed, the elephant in the living room has been exposed, revealing his/her true identity. The elephant in the living room represents not downtrodden people seeking justice, rather a rainbow scarf-waving group whose goal is to coerce the rest of the Church of the Brethren brothers and sisters to accept and affirm behavior contrary to the Word of God and Christian practice.

Much prayer preceded and enveloped the delegates to Annual Conference. As a result, an overwhelming majority stood and faced down the elephant lumbering around in our living room. He or she or he/she is actually a big bully sporting a long rainbow scarf.

I, too, do not want our denomination to split. However, it may be advisable for those who strongly disagree with the tenets of the Church of the Brethren to leave rather than persist in their strident dissension.

But, if the elephant refuses to leave the living room, let's respectfully shut the door and follow Jesus,

speaking (and living) the truth in love to all who are of the household of faith.

Lois Duple
New Windsor, Md.

Kudos and criticism

Thank you, Mary Cline Detrick and Carol Spicher Waggy, for the graciousness and honesty you showed in your "Watershed Moment" letter to MESSENGER readers (September). Thank you, Wendy McFadden, for your clearly articulated historical review of female leadership, now "on hold" in our denomination. You also offered helpful suggestions toward correction.

As for Jim Hardenbrook and Robert Krouse, your actions of nomination and acceptance of nomination were misguided, shameful, dishonorable, and appalling, in my view. As others have already stated, "you should have known better." It would be appropriate for another MESSENGER article to appear soon, entitled "Why I will resign as moderator-elect."

Accolades—to all women who are willing to place their names on an Annual Conference ballot, when the odds of being elected are slim; to the particular men who declined to be nominated from the floor in Grand Rapids; to the Standing Committee for following its own guidelines regarding ballots; to individuals and groups, past and present, who are genuinely working to be inclusive of all people and their gifts for denominational leadership.

Jean Hendricks
Abilene, Kan

CLASSIFIED ADS

PASTORS NEEDED. Congregations in many of the denomination's 23 districts are in need of strong, trained Christian leaders who are dedicated to Church of the Brethren beliefs and practices to serve as pastor. The available placements are both full-time and part-time and include some associate/second staff positions. The congregations vary widely in size and program. A full listing of openings can be found at www.brethren.org/congregationalvacancies. Contact the appropriate district executive or call the Ministry Office at 800-323-8039.

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

Anncville, Pa.: Rebecca Sue Hitz Hearsey, Todd Davis Hearsey, Brenda Jean Miller Hackman, Ashlyn Marie Wolfe, Suzanne Renee Giuliano Wentling, Chris Straka, Darcy Straka, Ed Weaver, Jr., Linda Sue Snavely Weaver, Aaron Weaver

Bedford, Pa.: Pat Anderson, Chris Clark, Greg Hays, Shelly Hays, Linda Hays, Michael Morgart, Laurel Morgart

Bermudian, East Berlin, Pa.: Geri Emig, Sadie Glatfelter, Troy Grim, Brenda Grim, Melvin Lehr, Pat Lehr, Megan Miller, Joel Miller, Joanne Miller, Rick Shearer, Kim Shearer, Jacob Shearer, Jack Stape, Nancy Stape

Brownsville, Md.: Madysen Barrett, Michele Metz, Kari Carbaugh, Pam Mullendore, John Wheeler, Roger Smith, Linda Smith, Curtis Smith, Sarah Smith, Retta Fralin, Tom Fralin, Taylor Tritapoe, Wendy Tritapoe, Angelique White, Steven White, William Heavner, Maurice Payne, Erika Clary, Lucinda Crowl, Abigail Dillow, Hannah Smith

Chiques, Manheim, Pa.: Caden Horning

Conestoga, Leola, Pa.: Michael Miller

Grottoes, Va.: Debbie Munson, Tim Munson, Lucille Caricofe

Happy Corner, Clayton, Ohio: Ian Blouch, Clara Brown, McKinzie Johnson, Peyton Miller, Nathan Ruemping

Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.: Laura Myer, Connor Lutter, Sarah Fisher, Elizabeth Rannels, Kensey Rice

Lancaster, Pa.: Carmen Segura, Carmina Seguar, Diana Wiker, Doug Wiker

Lewiston, Maine: Elaine Horning, Glenn Horning, Victoria Derosier, Theresa Derosier, Jean-Paul Derosier

Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.: Shirley Whitehead, Debra Neifield, Josh Flory Bashore-Steury, Jonathon Bicksler, Tiffany Bicksler

Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md.: Connie Barnard,

Richard Barnard, Jr., Sarah E. Barnes, Barbara L. Sier, Benjamin G. Dodson, Jacob L. Dodson, Kassidy S. Ferris, Charles Rippeon, Jr., Richard Ecker, William Fritz, Kasey R. Carns, Bryan Barnes, Charles C. Ecker, Lisa J. Puckett

Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.: Brandon Claycomb, Christy Claycomb, Tom Grosik, Laurie Grosik, Ryan Grosik, Jacob Grosik, Cathy McDonald

North Webster, Ind.: Rhonda Ousley, Troy Ousley, Dexter Shepherd, Logan Mast, Dora Lee Kennedy, Kendra Kemp, Trevor Tampir, Charlie Tom

Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va.: Rick Edwards, Pat Edwards

Snake Spring, Everett, Pa.: Megan Allison, John Crawford, V. Carey Crawford, Aaron Imler, Blake Jesk, Nickolas Shaffer, Josh Weicht

Somerset, Pa.: Bernice Saylor, Hazel Airesman

Wedding Anniversaries

Batz, James and Barbara, Myerstown, Pa., 50

Betz, Edward and Ernestine, Glendale, Ariz., 50

Clapper, Paul and Gladys, Hollidaysburg, Pa., 72

Dodson, Bobby and Bonnie, Mount Airy, Md., 55

Dotterer, Don and Lorraine, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Falls, Clifton and Ida, Walbridge, Ohio, 60

Frantz, Richard and Beatrice, Bethel, Pa., 50

Funkhouser, Galen and Ruth, Strasburg, Va., 60

Garman, Leroy and Dolly, Kaysville, Utah, 60

Heffley, Ralph and Ruth, Manheim, Pa., 60

Heistand, John and Phyllis, Elizabethtown, Pa., 50

Horst, Harold and Miriam, Ephrata, Pa., 50

Kessler, Phillip and Maralea, League City, Texas, 60

Shenk, Laysar and Elizabeth, Manheim, Pa., 71

Shultz, Glenn and Ruth, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Stokes, Edgar and Norma, Lorida, Fla., 50

Stupp, Neal and Adele, Bethel, Pa., 50

Swartz, Jim and Wilda, Glendale, Ariz., 50

Teets, Hancell and Mildred, Egton, W.Va., 70

Turner, John and Barbara, New Windsor, Md., 50

Weaver, Mark and Thelma, Lancaster, Pa., 71

Wright, Herbert and Pauline, Sykesville, Md., 65

Deaths

Aguilar, Minerva Ontiveros, 82, Perrysburg, Ohio, July 20

Batzell, Lillian E., 101, Bedford, Pa., May 10

Bennett, Emma Bashore, 90, Bethel, Pa., March 5

Bennett, Orrin Steven, 60, Prairie City, Iowa, June 10

Bowser, Elnora L., 88, Brookville, Ohio, Oct. 10, 2010

Buck, Rickey A., 51, Lebanon, Pa., July 15

Crabb, James David, 81, Lawrence, Kan., July 24

Dourte, Anna M., 92, Lebanon, Pa., June 11

Dull, Joy Ann, 78, Brookville, Ohio, July 11

Eberly, William Robert, 84, North Manchester, Ind., July 28

Emmart, Helen Christine, 85, Keyser, W.Va., Aug. 1

Erb, Beulah N., 105, Denver, Pa., April 5

Evans, Clarence Edward, 89, Sheldon, Iowa, June 18

Fink, Dorrie, 89, Ephrata, Pa., May 8

Foust, Carl E., Sr., 78, Johnstown, Pa., June 22

Frantz, Dean Leslie, 92, Fort Wayne, Ind., Aug. 2

Glover, Clara C., 72, New Carlisle, Ohio, July 15

Good, George, 80, New Holland, Pa., Feb. 15

Gordon, Freda E., 91, Williamsburg, Pa., May 22

Gregory, Mary, 85, Newport News, Va., Aug. 8

Grimes, Gary Lee, 64, Everett, Pa., June 24

Hamilton, James David, 103, Virden, Ill., July 20

Hanson, Marvin E., 90, Madrid, Iowa, July 8

Hershey, Ella Elizabeth, 78, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 25

Hockaday, Raeford R., Sr., 84, Hampton, Va., Aug. 2

Hood, Carl R., 76, Mount Airy, Md., Aug. 3, 2010

Huffman, Violetta, 92, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 21

Jones, Betty Louise Arkwood, 80, Columbiana, Ohio, July 3

Kachel, Miriam Z., 104, Ephrata, Pa., Feb. 1

Keener, Patrick Wayne, 41, New Market, Md., July 16

Keeney, Janel E., 25, Rehrersburg, Pa., May 26

Keppeler, Leota E., 90, Edgerton, Ohio, July 21

Kutz, Elizabeth M., 84, Lebanon, Pa., July 11

Leinberger, Eva, 89, Brookville, Ohio, Feb. 25

Mantz, Elmo Van, 73, Fort Valley, Va., July 14

Matthews, Virginia Malin, 88, Lititz, Pa., April 23

May, Twila, 70, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 5

McGraw, Leonard E., 72, Brookville, Ohio, June 23

Musselman, Clay Lee, 69, Ephrata, Pa., July 2

Nair, Michael Stanley, 52, Aurora, W.Va., June 27

Neher, Betty Y., 80, Bridgewater, Va., July 20

Nifong, Fern O., 89, Argos, Ind., July 26

Raynes, Janet L., 90, Grottoes, Va., June 27

Rippeon, John W., Sr., 84, Frederick, Md., Jan. 21

Rotruck, Grace Lee, 96, Keyser, W.Va., July 17

Schlotterbeck, Douglas Lee, 79, Mount Airy, Md., Dec. 20

Schlotterbeck, Letitia Belle, 79, Mount Airy, Md., July 22

Schwartz, Helen, 92, Brookville, Ohio, Oct. 3, 2010

Smith, James D., 67, Bedford, Pa., June 3

Snader, Charles Leo, 87, Lancaster, Pa., April 6

Snavely, Gerald L., 69, Lititz, Pa., July 17

Stauffer, Gail E., 90, McPherson, Kan., July 8

Steck, Elsie M., 95, Brookville, Ohio, Dec. 29

Stover, Randy Lee, 55, Sabetha, Kan., July 23

Stradling, Janice E., 62, Ephrata, Pa., March 31

Teets, Ellis H., 91, Egton, W.Va., June 7

Trenary, Alda Christine, 92, Bridgewater, Va., July 26

Trenary, Morris Henry, 95, Bridgewater, Va., July 13

Ulrich, Claire M., 80, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 13

Wagenschein, Norman Oscar, 93, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 19

Welch, Helen, 96, Lombard, Ill., July 27

Wingenroth, Deloris L., 75, Ephrata, Pa., March 1

Witt, Virginia L., 92, Johnstown, Pa., July 8

Wright, Minnie Emma, 87, Utica, Minn., July 6

Yerger, Frances Jones, 99, Harleysville, Pa., July 18

Licensings

Bass, Kent D., W. Pa. Dist. (Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.), Aug. 7

Bolinger, Brian, N. Ohio Dist. (North Bend, Danville, Ohio), July 24

Bolinger, Lori, N. Ohio Dist. (North Bend, Danville, Ohio), July 24

Fox, Ken, Shen. Dist. (Mount Zion, Linville, Va.), July 31

Hilliard, Shawn, N. Ohio Dist. (Chippewa, Creston, Ohio), June 12

McKeever, Michael, Ill./Wis. Dist. (Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.), July 24

Thomas, Scott R., W. Pa. Dist. (Tire Hill, Pa.), Aug. 14

Thompson, Katie Shaw, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.), Aug. 21

Thompson, Parker, Mid. Pa.

Dist. (Stone, Huntingdon, Pa.), Aug. 21

Ordinations

Battle, Michael G., Virgina Dist. (Burks Fork, Willis, Va.), July 31

Beach, Martha R., Atl. S.E. Dist. (Saint Petersburg, Fla.), July 17

Neff, Karen S., Atl. S.E. Dist. (New Covenant, Gotha, Fla.), June 5

Placements

Elder, Dan, pastor, Saint Joseph, Mo., June 12

Elsea, Janet W., associate pastor, Mount Pleasant, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 31

Friedell, Valerie Jean, from interim to pastor, Huntington, Ind., June 26

Gandy, Craig, team pastor, Spring Run, McVeytown, Pa., July 1

Gandy, Kate, from youth minister, Mexico, Ind., to team pastor, Spring Run, McVeytown, Pa., July 1

Heishman-Litten, Stephanie, associate pastor, Antioch, Woodstock, Va., June 1

Hilliard, Shawn, pastor, Chippewa, Creston, Ohio, June 12

House, Daniel S., from pastor, Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md., to pastor, Chambersburg, Pa., Aug. 1

Kelley, Bradley, pastor, East Chippewa, Orrville, Ohio, June 19

Kelsey, Betty Krady, team pastor, Creekside, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 9

McFadden, Rosanna Eller, team pastor, Creekside, Elkhart, Ind., Jan. 9

Miller, Ralph L., minister of Christian life, Madison Avenue, York, Pa., June 5

Pfeiffer, Carol M., chaplain, Timbercrest Senior Living Community, North Manchester, Ind., July 1

Prater, Jonathan, from interim to pastor, Mount Zion, Linville, Va., June 1

Ronk, Patricia Ann, associate pastor, Central, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 1

Smith, P. Lee, Jr., pastor, Mount Joy, Mount Pleasant, Pa., July 1

Steele, Dorothy L., older adult ministries coordinator, Roaring Spring, Pa., June 1

Taylor, Kari, team pastor, Warrensburg, Mo., Sept. 19, 2010

Teets, LaDeana M., associate pastor, Elkins, W.Va., Aug. 1

Teets, Mark, pastor, Elkins, W.Va., Aug. 1

Zintak, Kevin, associate pastor, Midway, Lebanon, Pa., June 1

Could Jesus be a Christian?

Could Jesus be a Christian?
No.

Of course, in light of some of the things being done in the name of Christianity today, he may not wish to be. (Groucho Marx's comment comes to mind: "Please accept my resignation. I don't want to belong to any club that will accept people like me as a member.") Still, I was caught off guard when I heard a friend of mine say this some years back.



RANDY MILLER
Interim MESSENGER Editor

This happened in, of all places, Schwarzenau, Germany—birthplace of the Church of the Brethren—when I was traipsing around Europe on a student rail pass in those carefree days between college and Brethren Volunteer Service. It was one of those late-evening discussions that occur on trips such as these. You get to musing about things theological and philosophical.

So my friend and I were talking about wine. We had not actually consumed any. We were just talking about it. Brethren, as is commonly known, frown on the consumption of alcohol. Even at communion—never mind what Jesus and the disciples may have done at the last supper with the bread and the cup. And my friend was a dyed-in-the-wool Brethren. Given that fact, my friend asserted, one could not be Brethren—and probably not even a Christian—and drink wine.

Wait a minute, I thought. Jesus turned water into wine at the wedding at Cana. Really good wine, so the story goes. I

On a recent flight from Dallas to Chicago, the woman seated next to me asked about my work. I happened to have a copy of MESSENGER with me, so I gave it to her. After perusing it, she began peppering me with questions about who the Brethren were and what they believed. She wondered where we stood on certain theological matters. I explained that the Church of the Brethren takes no creed but the New Testament. Yes, she persisted, but do they believe in the Trinity? She was fishing for something concrete, and wasn't satisfied with the "New Testament as creed" explanation. It seemed far too vague.

Right away, the six blind men describing an elephant story came to mind. Ask someone in Pennsylvania who the Brethren are and you get one answer; ask someone in Oregon who they are and you may hear something completely different. Or ask either one today and then again next year, and you may hear two different explanations. It depends on how the wind of the Holy Spirit is blowing through those gathered in Christ's name as they work together to discern God's will at that time. Therein lies the beauty of it! The door is open to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Yes, some may say, but certain things are written clearly—in the King's English. (Take a look at the May MESSENGER for an explanation of how even the revered King James Version of the Bible evolved, and you may come away with a new understanding of how various translations have affected our interpretations of what was originally written.)

It is rather presumptuous of us to assume that God is finished speaking to us. Our understandings, based upon what we knew centuries or even decades ago, may have been

I FIGURED IT WAS FACETIOUS TO ASK, BUT I DID ANYWAY. SINCE JESUS TURNED WATER INTO WINE AT THAT WEDDING, COULD HE BE A CHRISTIAN? THERE WAS A PAUSE. THEN, "NO."

figured it was facetious to ask, but I did anyway. Since Jesus turned water into wine at that wedding, could he be a Christian? There was a pause. Then, "No."

I was floored. Jesus could not be a Christian.

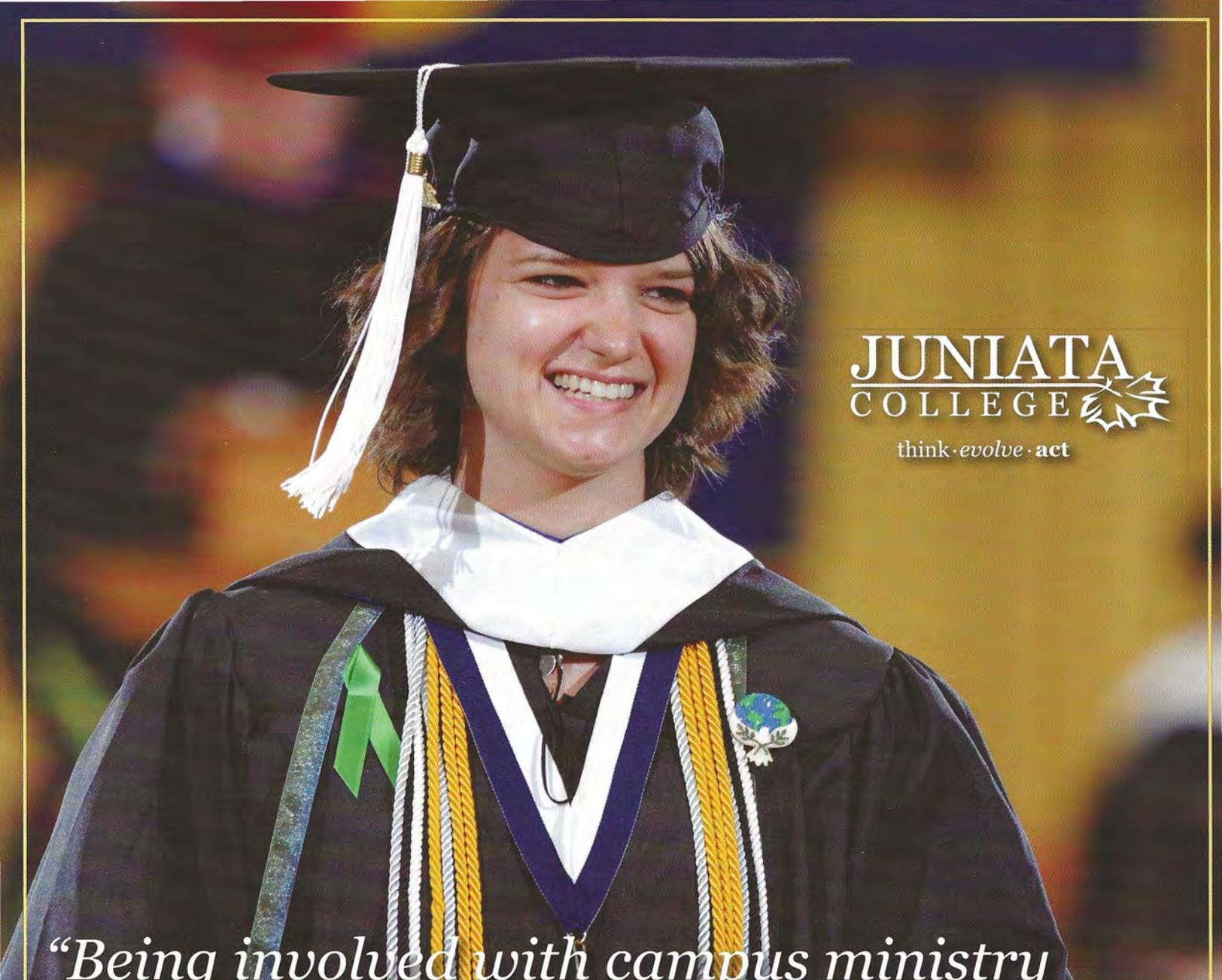
Actually, it may not be so surprising after all. In the years since the movement that Jesus began morphed into a religion, his followers have adopted all kinds of strictures and dogmas to which "true believers" must adhere. Evangelicals and Christian fundamentalists have their four spiritual laws. Catholics and orthodox Christians have their doctrines. Creeds abound.

valid then. But why ignore new insights and revelations? Why muzzle the Holy Spirit?

Alexander Mack and the other founders of the Church of the Brethren were onto something when they claimed no creed but the New Testament. They left the door open for the wind of the Holy Spirit to blow among us, breathing new insights and understandings of God's will. Who are we to shut that door?

Who knows, if the wind blows just right, there may even be room at the table for Jesus—should he wish to become a Christian. 

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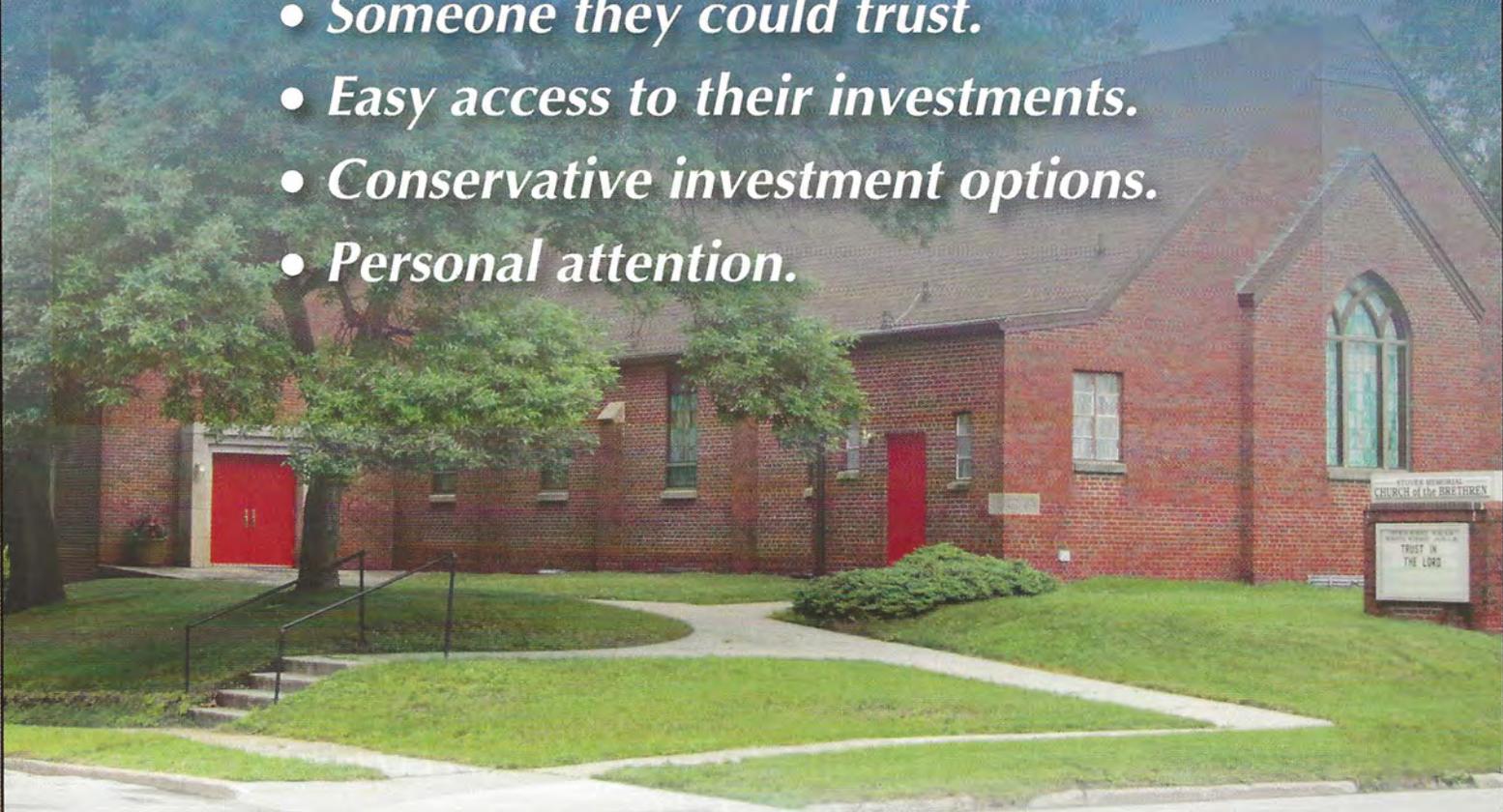
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