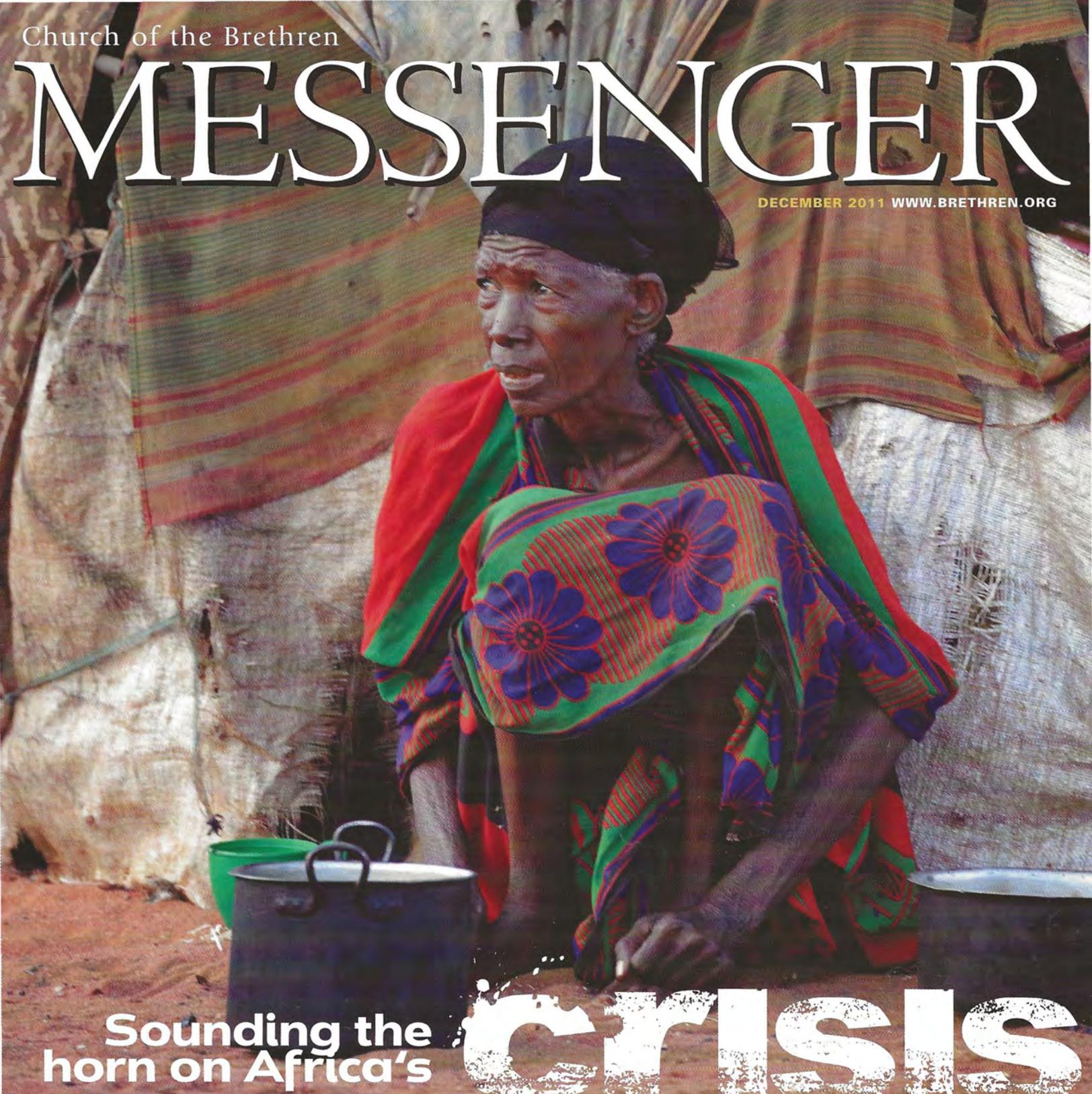


Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

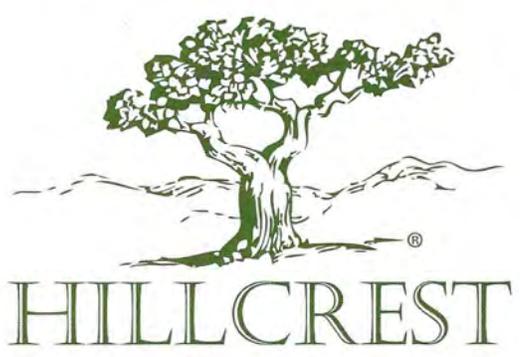
DECEMBER 2011 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Sounding the
horn on Africa's

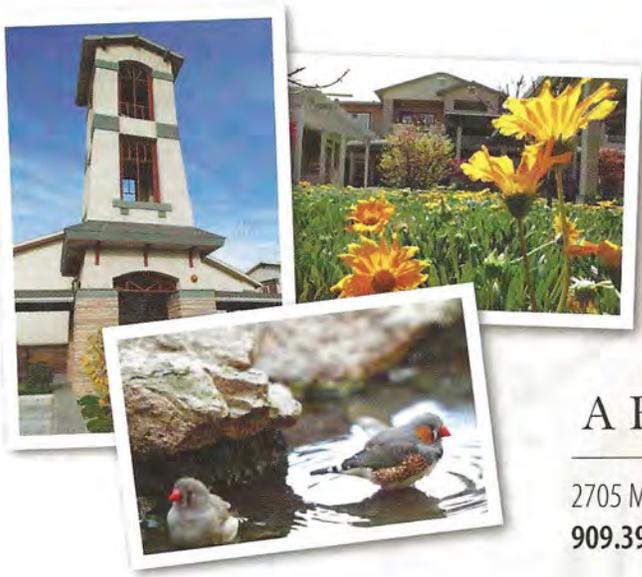
crisis

Love Your Life



A Remarkable Brethren Community

- In following our Brethren roots of Peacefully, Simply, Together
- On-site full-time Chaplain, vesper services
- Three Brethren churches within 5 miles of Hillcrest
- University of La Verne is walking distance from Hillcrest and offers senior audit programs
- The Interfaith Festival, Doctor's Symphony and shuttles to cultural art activities
- Community Gardens
- Great location, campus and weather
- Hillcrest offers all levels of care. You will be welcomed with open arms and enjoy the love and comfort of lifelong friends!



Remarkable Residents



{ Residents Jerry & Berkley Davis }
 Jerry and Berkley Davis are very involved at Hillcrest, participating in several aspects of campus life. Jerry heads up Channel 3, the community's in-house television station, while Berkley serves on the management team of the Hillcrest gift shop and assists with the production of "Hillcrest Happenings," the community's resident newsletter. "There is more to do and learn here than one can imagine," says Jerry. "I think we made a good choice in Hillcrest!"



{ Resident Shantilal Bhagat }
 "Hillcrest, a model community for retirement: orderly not chaotic, unambiguously secure living with caring residents, friendly responsive associates and staff, top-rated physical facilities for swimming, exercising, dining, nursing and healthcare. You are in experienced hands at Hillcrest, why go anywhere else?"



{ Chaplain Tom Hostetler }
 "Hillcrest... what a great place to live and work! As chaplain, I am privileged to participate in the spiritual life of many of the residents and the community as a whole. Opportunities abound for worship at all levels of care; bible studies, phone devotions, sharing and inspiration to meet a variety of needs and expectations. The care for neighbors, the interaction and activity of residents, the desire to learn and grow, and the beautiful facilities and surroundings all work together to make Hillcrest a remarkable place. Come and see!"

A Remarkable Retirement Community®

2705 Mountain View Dr., La Verne, CA 91750
 909.392.4375 | www.LivingatHillcrest.org



DSS #191501662
 Certificate of Authority #069

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

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

Editor: Randy Miller Publisher: Wendy McFadden News: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: The Concept Mill

8 Being good is not good enough

Riding bikes, recycling, composting, going solar—they're all good things. But they're not enough, says David Radcliff. Not if we wish to truly make a difference in combating climate change and making our planet more habitable for ourselves and future generations. "Our particular challenge as Christians is to inspire others to care about creating a better future, and then take steps to make that a reality," Radcliff says.

12 Sounding the horn on Africa's crisis

While the media seem to have more important matters to cover, the first true famine of the 21st century has been ravaging southern Somalia, due in part to the worst drought to hit northeast Africa in 60 years. And precious few of us are even aware of it. Will it take another "We Are the World" to arouse interest? While Brethren Disaster Ministries and other agencies are providing some assistance, much more is needed.

16 Getting our money's worth

Have we begun to view church less as family and more as a business arrangement in which we expect certain things for our financial investment? Families don't operate that way and neither should we, contends Andrew Hamilton.

18 Footwashing is not just about service

It's usually the first thing that comes to mind when we think of footwashing: a ritual meant to remind us of the importance of service in our Christian walk. It is that, certainly, but there's more to it, claims Joshua Brockway.

DEPARTMENTS

2	From the Publisher
3	In Touch
6	Reflections
7	The Buzz
20	Special Report
21	News
23	Youth Life
24	Media Review
26	2011 Index
29	Letters
31	Turning Points
32	Editorial

George Arende/CWS



ONTHECOVER The Horn of Africa is once again caught in the grip of drought and famine. The crisis has resulted in the deaths of some 30,000 children in recent months, and 700,000 Somalis have been made refugees. Lack of water has killed crops and livestock across much of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Boreholes and underground aquifers are drying up, forcing people and animals to make longer and longer treks to water and pasture.

In an earlier era, the MESSENGER staff used to include a volunteer intern who served a year through Brethren Volunteer Service. That was long enough ago that I was surprised—and gratified—to notice that there were three former MESSENGER interns in the room at the fall Mission and Ministry Board meeting: news director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, MESSENGER editor Randy Miller, and board member Don Fitzkee.

This was just a serendipitous snapshot, of course, as internships aren't the typical trackage for communication staff or board members. But it's fair to say that opportunities like this are a great way for young people to learn and grow, and to gain a wider understanding of the church. Other MESSENGER interns have gone on to use their gifts in areas such as education, publishing, communication, and pastoral ministry.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

MESSENGER no longer has a regular internship, but there are plenty of other BVSers serving one-year positions alongside denominational staff—in Elgin, New Windsor, Washington, and sometimes in places where natural disaster strikes. One can't help but notice that quite a few of these volunteers end up at Bethany Theological Seminary—which makes these positions sort of like 12-month versions of Ministry Summer Service.

In the decades since his youthful stint as volunteer editorial assistant, Randy Miller has spent his working life in the world of journalism. He served many years with World Vision International as a journalist and editor and, more recently, has been teaching journalism at his alma mater, the University of La Verne.

He returned to the magazine in March 2010, agreeing to serve an extended assignment as interim editor. I'm pleased to announce that he is continuing in the role, now without the "interim."

Like all MESSENGER editors before him, Randy has received mail from a wide range of readers. We are grateful for all who take the time to write in. In fact, we're thankful for every one of our subscribers. We know that you who choose to be MESSENGER readers are engaged this way because you care about the Church of the Brethren. (If you'd like to use MESSENGER for small-group discussion, download the free study guide available at www.brethren.org/messenger.)

Not everyone can spend a year as an intern, but God invites every one of us into lifelong learning. Whatever our stage in life, we are all ministers exploring our call. Thanks for the privilege of exploring that together.

Wendy McFadden

HOW TO REACH US

MESSENGER
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:
dstroyeck@brethren.org
Phone: 847-742-5100 ext. 247
Fax: 847-742-6103

Advertising:
messengerads@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039
Fax: 847-742-1407

Editorial:
messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039
Fax: 847-742-6103

Subscription rates:
\$17.50 individual rate
- \$32 for 2 years
\$14.50 gift rate
\$14.50 church club rate
- \$27 for 2 years
\$ 1.25 student (per month)

If you move, clip address label and send with new address to MESSENGER Subscriptions, at the above address. Allow at least five weeks for address change.

Connect electronically: For a free subscription to Newsline, the Church of the Brethren e-mail news report, write cobnews@brethren.org.

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.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © December 2011, Church of the Brethren.

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 10 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694.



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

Where the sun shines outside and inside

Members of the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren gathered at dusk Sept. 20 for a meeting in their social hall as overhead lights illuminated the room. Nothing seemed out of the ordinary until the speaker announced, "As of this evening, we are 100 percent solar! These lights are powered by the sun."

Members had been aware that such a moment would soon be upon them, as workers had been installing solar panels on the roof of the fellowship hall and education wing. Still, those in the room felt a sense of pride and accomplishment knowing that the light they were enjoying at that moment had been generated by the sun.

Responsible stewardship of the environment has long been a core value of the La Verne Church. Several years ago, members met to discuss converting from electricity supplied by Southern California Edison to solar power. At that time, the costs of conversion were prohibitive, but the vision continued. Last year, a property commission subcommittee began reexamining the possibility.

The committee discovered that the cost of solar power systems had come down dramatically. Also, the efficiency of the panels themselves had improved; each new panel now yielded more electricity than the former models. It became apparent that the solar system would pay for itself in energy savings.

On June 14 all of the solar panels, stacked on pallets, were loaded onto the education building roof. The installation was completed on June 30. Throughout the summer, the final adjustments and connections were made, moving the church toward full connection to energy provided by the sun.

The church will remain connected to Edison for those rare cloudy days in southern California which necessitate the use of external power. On days when the sun is out, the system will generate more electricity than the church can use, and that electricity will go back to Edison for their use. The church's meter will run backwards during those times. At the end of the year, the church will only pay for the net amount of power used, in addition to a small connection fee.

The La Verne church's new solar power system reduces climate warming emissions equivalent to taking 12 cars permanently off of the road.

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



Susan Boyer



Tracy Taylor

With the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains in the background, workers put the last solar panels in place on the roof of the La Verne Church of the Brethren.



YOU SAID IT

"God has blessed us with an abundance we often take for granted."

—Beth Sollenberger, South/Central district executive, in the district's November newsletter

BY THE NUMBERS

200

Number in billions of dollars lost annually around the world as a result of climate change, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change

A gathering place in Bethel

[On Oct. 15, the Reading Eagle newspaper, of Reading, Pa., published the following article about Little Swatara (Pa.) Church of the Brethren's unique ministry called The Gathering Place Cafe, in Bethel, Pa. Brethren love to eat, especially when sticky buns are involved. But, apparently, so does everyone else. And so this little cafe has evolved into something that's not quite a church, not quite a restaurant, but perhaps something that embodies the best of both. As it happens, our denominational moderator-elect, Bob Krouse, is pastor of Little Swatara. Take a moment to get to know a little more about Bob and others from Little Swatara via this insightful piece from the Reading Eagle. With permission from the editors of the Reading Eagle, we are reprinting the article in full here. —Ed.]

The Rev. Bob Krouse, 63, of Little Swatara Church of the Brethren, Tulpehocken Township, is the type of minister who believes, "Christianity is not a religion, it's a lifestyle of those who follow Jesus."

And, surprisingly perhaps, he maintains that one of the best ways to practice that lifestyle is not always in a church.

Rather, he embraces the tenets of Christianity in a village cafe, with the enticing smells of omelets, spinach quiche, egg and cheese sandwiches, baked oatmeal, bagels, homemade biscuits, wheat bread, muffins, sticky buns and fair-trade coffee, all breakfasts prepared and served by an often smiling, welcoming, all-volunteer staff affiliated with Little Swatara.

On the square in Bethel, The Gathering Place Cafe, with its counter, tables, chairs and cozy couches, proves such a place doesn't just exist in an nostalgic imagination, but just off Interstate 78.

Since May, the cafe has been drawing up to 60 villagers, churchgoers, farmers

and truckers daily in search of a friendly slice of community.

"Our success has far surpassed our expectations," said Krouse, noting that 25 church volunteers staff the cafe.

The cafe, which costs a couple of thousand dollars a month to operate, is breaking even financially, Krouse said.

With Krouse there most days, over-the-counter counseling just seems natural and easily accessible. In addition, significant dividends accrue when it comes to creating a greater community sense of camaraderie.

A rural cafe may seem a perfect venue for spiritual renewal with the Church of the Brethren tradition of "warm pietism and a strong social action component," Krouse said.

Krouse was coordinator of the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria for four years and also served as a drug and alcohol therapist with the Pennsylvania Counseling Service. He is also moderator-elect, a national post with the roughly 160,000-member Church of the Brethren in the United States.

"When I was growing up, every Podunk had a place like this (a cafe meeting place) where people could share local news, laugh, engage in discussions or just share in an experience that serves the community," Krouse said.

While the 350-member Little Swatara was prepared to financially support the cafe for 12 months, it hasn't been necessary to the extent originally anticipated, Krouse said. The heart and backbone of the place are the volunteers.

"The people (the customers) who come want to pay their way; they want to invest something into it," he said. "Over the years, a half-dozen places (other businesses) have been here, but they just haven't made it."

The cafe is the brainchild of Krouse, who believes it is a wise religious investment, even in a mostly rural region. Krouse estimated there are about 25,000 people in a 10-mile radius of Little Swatara Church who may be drawn to The Gathering Place Cafe.

"The cafe provides a sense of community," Krouse said. "Sometimes, it feels more like the church than the



Tim Leedy

church itself."

Word of mouth must be at the root of its success. The church has not advertised. There are no signs for the place along the interstate.

"A friend of one of our church members whose husband happens to be a trucker stopped somewhere in Wisconsin or Minnesota and ran into another trucker not from our area who knew of our place," Krouse said. "He said, 'Yeah, there's a great coffee shop in Bethel.'"

"About one-third of our regular customers are from the church, another third come off the interstate and the final third is a mix, a little hard to identify. But overall, the place is really about embracing people where they are and trying to meet their needs."

Cases in point:

Tracy Oswald,, 17, a Tulpehocken High School senior, is volunteering in the cafe for her senior project, learning about merchandising, sales, food preparation, business management.

"I come here nine hours a week, but I'm going to college to major in cultural studies," Oswald said, praising the cafe's relaxed environment and the ease in which people can develop relationships.

Two church members, Hershey and Anna Mary Myer, who live near Host and just celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary, volunteer to help keep the cafe tidy.

And Debbie Seigfried of Tulpehocken Township comes into the cafe to volunteer on Mondays. She and her husband,



Tim Leedy

From left, Debbie Siegfried, Morgan Oswald, a volunteer, and the Rev. Bob Krouse of Little Swatara Church of the Brethren at The Gathering Place Cafe in Bethel, which is operated by volunteers from Little Swatara.



Tim Leedy

Buddy, have a restaurant equipment business and have been instrumental in helping to guide and back the church project.

And a couple, writers of educational textbooks from the Netherlands in search of the Appalachia experience, stopped at the cafe and wound up being Krouse's houseguests for four days in his nearby log cabin home before moving on.

"All church work is mission work," Krouse said. "It's important to understand the needs of the culture where you're at."

And, to some extent, that explains why young people, often interested in developing more intentional personal relationships rather than following accepted religious doctrines or traditions, come to the cafe.

But longtime Berks County farmers come there, too. They apparently gravitate to the idea of buying equal-exchange, fair-trade coffee from Central American co-op farmers, Krouse said.

"They appreciate the idea that there are fewer middlemen involved in the system, allowing the farmer (usually growing organic coffee) to get more money for his own hard work and coffee," he said.

Brotherhood, as Krouse and others believe, comes with understanding. It can happen over a cup of coffee in a cafe.

—Bruce Posten, *Reading Eagle*



NYAC 2012
Humble, yet Bold
 Being the Church

National Young Adult Conference 2012
 June 18–22, 2012 University of Tennessee, Knoxville

For more information and to register go to:
www.brethren.org/yac
 Registration opens January 6, 2012 at 8pm central time.


 Church of the Brethren



*a learning community grounded in
 the Incarnation of God's love*

equipping spiritual
 and intellectual
 leaders to minister,
 proclaim, live out
**God's shalom
 & Christ's
 peace**

BETHANY
Theological Seminary

Master of divinity and master of arts, local and distance tracks www.bethanyseminary.edu

evangelists • peace makers • visionaries • servant leaders • pastors • teachers • ethicists

Please dare to hope with me

“You are the hope of the church.” I have heard this before. But never has it held more power for me than at Annual Conference in Grand Rapids this summer.

With my mind reeling from the struggles from the Annual Conference floor, I strolled through the conference center. Little was clear to me at that time except the recognition of a clear disconnect. The church I had come to love



KAY GUYER

was not the church in the conference hall. Growing up in the Church of the Brethren, I had been charged with inspiration (National Youth Conference), common joy (Outdoor Ministries Association), service (Workcamps), change for our world (Christian Citizenship Seminar), reconciliation (On Earth Peace), and active peacemaking (Youth Peace Travel Team). These experiences challenged me and called me to strive for something greater. But

where were these elements now? I wondered. In a space where women and our lgbt family are further marginalized,

can come too, a place where he feels loved and uplifted as part of our lgbt family. I hope for a community committed to living Jesus' teachings in real ways.

I hope our church will become unafraid. Being a peculiar people is not easy when it comes to facing powers of supreme nationalism, poverty, violence, racism, consumerism, and sexism. I hope to be part of a church that is unafraid to transform these powers, offering a creative way forward to God's kingdom on earth. I want to be part of a church united in common joy, unafraid to sing when the spirit says sing and start a movement when the spirit says move!

These hopes do not lie in an institution, but in the actions of small groups of committed individuals. Strengthened by a common joy and conviction in faith, these communities reach beyond themselves. They form cooperatives and strive to build peaceful communities. These groups are our churches, intentional communities, spirituality circles, faith-based initiatives, and community organizations.

In an age of hate crimes, tears, and searching, our church desperately needs a gentle revolution of dreamers taking action. Jesus was one of these dreamers, living a life so closely aligned with God's that true love was made known to the world. This love is meant to be lived as it was

IF THE CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN IS SERIOUS ABOUT FOLLOWING JESUS' CALL, YOU MUST REALIZE THAT YOU ARE THE HOPE OF THE CHURCH. I MEAN IT.

where do I go? In a space where many feel hurt and alone, where do I find hope?

If youth and young adults are the hope of the church, it is time to begin understanding our hope for the church. We hold a unique perspective, formed from the multicultural, globally connected world in which we have grown. We are passionate, in search of honest dialogue, and ready to share.

For a moment, please dare to hope with me.

The Church of the Brethren has a unique calling. Since our beginnings, we have held the courage to pursue Jesus' radical way—a way of nonviolence, justice, and love of all people. The hope of the church rests in our ability to fill that calling now.

I hope our church will become a Beloved Community.* In this community, we learn from young people, engage old people, and support all people. I hope it will become a community where women are empowered and supported to speak boldly in ministry. I hope for a church where my friend

offered: creatively, courageously, and now.

I am not ready to outgrow my church at the age of 20. I am ready to breathe the church I have come to love into being. Acting on Jesus' call to love courageously has rocked the Church of the Brethren over the decades, but I know far too many brilliant brothers and sisters spanning the generations to believe we cannot live this call together.

If the Church of the Brethren is serious about following Jesus' call, you must realize that you are the hope of the church. I mean it. The hope of our church cannot rest in me, or even all my young friends, but in our capacity to see hope in one another.

The time has come to live Jesus' gentle revolution. The time has come to breathe the church we love into being—you and me together. **AMEN**

Kay Guyer attends Manchester College, focusing on peace studies and art, and is currently studying in the Gambia through Brethren Colleges Abroad.

*The Beloved Community is a term used by Martin Luther King Jr. to describe a society of justice, peace, and harmony achieved through nonviolence.

“We’re called, in times of anxiety, to remember that God will take care of us.”

—Johncy Itty, bishop in the Episcopal Church, and chair of the Church World Service board of directors, speaking Oct. 19 at chapel at the Church of the Brethren General Offices.

“Nature was one of the key forces that brought me back to God, for I wanted to know the Artist responsible for beauty such as I saw on grand scale in photos from space telescopes or on minute scale such as in the intricate designs on a butterfly wing.”

—Philip Yancey, author of *What’s so Amazing about Grace?* and *The Jesus I Never Knew*, from his blog at philipyancey.com

“I am not afraid of the disagreements we have in the church. This is just who we are. What bothers me is the amount of contempt I’ve seen. When we get to that point, it gets hard for us to see each other as brothers and sisters in Christ. And we end up looking not much different from the rest of the world.”

—Annual Conference moderator Tim Harvey, speaking to attendees at the Pacific Southwest District Conference Nov. 13

“Any church whose goal is the exclusion of others is bound to fail. . . .”

—Philip Gulley, 2011 Annual Conference dinner speaker and author, from his book *If the Church were Christian*

“The fear that unless ‘In God We Trust’ is displayed throughout the government, Americans will somehow have lost their faith in God, is a dim view of the profound religious convictions many citizens have.”

—US Rep. Justin Amash, R-Mich., writing on his Facebook page after he was the only House Republican to vote against a resolution affirming “In God We Trust” as the national motto

“Our churches should seize this movement as a new Great Awakening and once again preach a social gospel that lifts up the common good of all.”

—United Church of Christ minister Chuck Curry in “Occupy America—A New Great Awakening,” *The Huffington Post*, Oct. 17

Correction: The attribution for the top quote in the ‘Quoteworthy’ column of the November MESSENGER should read: —Jacqueline Kennedy, commenting on her husband, John F. Kennedy, in *Jacqueline Kennedy: Historic Conversations of Life with John F. Kennedy*

➔ **Churches around Manhattan** opened their doors to Occupy Wall Street protesters who were left without a place to sleep after police cleared out Zuccotti Park mid-November. Among those taking in the protesters, who first established a camp in Lower Manhattan on Sept. 17, was Middle Collegiate Church in the East Village, which said it could accommodate about 75 protesters. “This is what we do,” said Jacqui Lewis, senior minister at the East 7th Street house of worship. “It’s not new to us.”

➔ **The most religious Americans** also have the highest rates of well-being, according to a new Gallup survey. The finding is based on a survey of more than 550,000 people about their physical and emotional health and their work environment. Overall, the very religious received a score on Gallup’s well-being index of 68.7 percent, while both the moderately religious and the nonreligious received a score of 64.2 percent. The very religious

were defined as those who said religion is an important part of their daily lives and they attend worship services at least every week or almost every week.

➔ **“Increasing numbers of children and civilians** are being caught in attacks and crossfire across the south and center of Somalia” said UNICEF’s representative to Somalia, Sikander Khan. “Over the last several weeks, we have seen a very worrying rise in killings and serious injuries of children.” According to the UN’s monitoring and reporting mechanism for grave violations of children’s rights, 24 children were killed in the conflict in October, nearly double the number of child killings confirmed in every other month this year. Another 58 sustained serious injuries in October. To date in 2011, nearly 300 children have been seriously injured and more than 100 children killed in the ongoing conflict.



JUST FOR FUN: MATCHING

MERRY CHRISTMAS! Greetings of the Christmas season go out around much of the world this month. Match the version of “Merry Christmas” on the left with the language it’s written in on the right. Answers are printed below.

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Joyeux Noel | a. Portuguese |
| 2. Feliz Navidad | b. Icelandic |
| 3. Jwaye Nowel | c. Polish |
| 4. Linksmu Kaledu | d. French |
| 5. Zalig Kerstfeast | e. Mandarin Chinese |
| 6. Feliz Natal | f. Lithuanian |
| 7. Gledileg Jol | g. Hawaiian |
| 8. Fröhliche Weihnachten | h. Haitian Creole |
| 9. Boze Narodzenie | i. German |
| 10. M ng Chúa Giáng Sinh | j. Indonesian |
| 11. Shèng dàn kuài lè | k. Spanish |
| 12. Mele Kalikimaka | l. Vietnamese |
| 13. Selamat Hari Natal | m. Dutch |

Answers: 1-d; 2-b; 3-h; 4-f; 5-m; 6-g; 7-c; 8-a; 9-i; 10-j; 11-k; 12-l; 13-j. (Note: In some languages there can be several variations of the Christmas greeting.)

Being good is not **good** **enough**

Photos and text by David Radcliff

We are some of the nicest people we know. We are well-behaved, service-oriented—and friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent—to round out the Scout credo. If our job was to earn merit badges, we'd be leaders of the pack.

Unfortunately—because it would be a lot easier—this isn't our goal. Not that these aren't admirable traits. Indeed, if more folks lived this way, human society would be advanced considerably. It wouldn't, however, solve our problems. As Terry Joyce of Wood's Hole Oceanographic Institute said of the ability of God's earth to continue to sustain us in the face of our over-consuming and over-polluting ways: "I can't tell exactly how all this will end up, but I can see which way we're headed—we're walking toward a cliff."

Some things are already over the edge. We were hiking in Cedar Breaks National Monument in Utah last summer and lucked into a ranger going our way. First we passed through a spruce forest—or is it a forest if all the trees are dead? It was more like a ghost forest, a result of insect infestations spurred by climate change, he told us. Then he reminisced about the American Pika. Seems they used to have the small furry mammal in the park, but due to an internal thermostat and that thick fur (if the temperature gets above 78 degrees, the little critters tends to s'plode—it can't be pretty), the pika had to move out of the park and up nearby mountains seeking cooler climes. At some point you run out of mountains to climb.

And it's hard to imagine anything but a cliff up ahead when

look around our world of now 7 billion people and a \$62 trillion global economy, yet see that a billion people still don't have clean water and twice that many do without "sanitation"—a hole in the ground away from their water supply.

So what's needed is more than good people doing good things—even cheerfully. We need a profound change in the way we're doing things—not just individually, but as a human community. This has been brought home to me lately by things I've been reading by authors who seem to know what they're talking about. Several have openly admired bike-riding, meat-eschewing, solar cooking, dumpster-diving simple-livers, but in the next breath say it doesn't make any difference in the larger scheme of things. In fact, there may even be an element of harm, as we think we're making a difference that we really aren't.

These writers, and perhaps our own intuition, tell us that unless we are willing to get beyond our ethic of personal virtue to challenge the guiding principles (short-term self-centered gain above all else) of our society, we don't stand much of a chance of averting the precipice that looms ahead. Each of these authors has his or her prescription—from bringing down "the system" to making us pay for our bad behavior (steep fees for fossil fuel use, for instance) to finding a thus-far elusive techno-fix for looming environmental crises.

I'm not in disagreement with their analysis and many of their prescriptions. To me it's not a question of what needs to be done, but how we get there—and especially how we motivate society to even begin looking for another



Millions of acres of trees from Alaska to the Southwest—like these at Cedar Breaks National Monument in Utah—have been killed by bark beetles, whose populations and range are expanding due to warmer temperatures. Another victim may be the American Pika; a non-migratory species, the only way they have to go is up, and many have already moved 500 feet higher over the past 90 years.



path. After all, underlying corporate greed and misguided economics is a society that tolerates and occasionally marginally benefits from both, and for the most part it's served many of us in our society pretty well over recent generations. We're already seeing, however, that coming generations—both human and the rest of creation—very likely won't be able to say the same thing.

So, along with finding ways to rein in the rich and powerful, our particular challenge as Christians is to inspire

them to his generation's "laziness" in spending so much time gaming.) Maybe it's the constant drumbeat of Me/More/Now by the marketers. (Have you noticed the way charities and corporate do-gooders even tie help for others into goodies for oneself, whether a pair of shoes or a new credit card purchase?) Or is it the lack of any real leadership? When was the last time a politician suggested something as simple as driving less as a way of combating climate change, or a Christian leader named our wealth in the face

WHAT'S NEEDED IS MORE THAN GOOD PEOPLE DOING GOOD THINGS—EVEN CHEERFULLY. WE NEED A PROFOUND CHANGE IN THE WAY WE'RE DOING THINGS—NOT JUST INDIVIDUALLY, BUT AS A HUMAN COMMUNITY.

others to care about creating a better future, and then take steps to make this a reality. This won't be easy, as those who benefit from the current arrangement—be they the wealthy class or the politicians at their behest—won't go quietly into the night.

But perhaps more daunting is the general apathy of those around us (and even we ourselves?)—our inattention to, or even acknowledgement of, the problems we face. Perhaps we're just distracted, given the five hours or so we devote to electronic games and media every day. (I was surprised to hear a youth at a church camp this summer con-

of global poverty as a sin against God and neighbor?

For those of us in the church, even when we manage to buck some of these trends, we still like to be liked. So to challenge the deeply ingrained precepts of our society can quickly put us in the uncomfortable position of being a rebel (albeit with a cause), and that can go against the way we want to be seen by those around us.

All I can say is thank God for Jesus. There's a guy who wasn't rattled by stiff opposition or cowed by the opinion of those around him—even friends and family. He was so deeply centered in his relationship with God that not even

Girls like 15 year-old Brenda from Alegria, El Salvador, are cannon fodder for the global economy. From a poor family in a poor mountainside community, one of the few options she has is to go to the capital to work in the sweatshops for clothing companies. Average pay: 70 cents an hour, while the CEO of one US corporation doing business in El Salvador earns 10,000 times that much. The women work at a harrowing pace; suffer dehydration for fear of having to take a restroom break; are let go in their early 30s. Our Lord wouldn't have cared for this system. How about us?

offers of stones-to-bread on an empty stomach could turn him aside. And he was so fully committed to fairness for others that nothing—not gender, not race, not Sabbath laws, not threat of death—could dissuade him from doing the thing that the moment required.

I was speaking at a Brethren college chapel last year and in my quest for a catchy title for my sermon on Jesus, the word “provocateur” came to mind. It fit nicely into the string of “p” words that included poet and prophet. Trouble was, I didn’t really know exactly what the word meant, so thought I’d better look it up before preaching on it. Turns out it refers to someone willing to act in such a way as to stir controversy or spark discussion—very much our Lord!

Healing when he wasn’t supposed to; hanging out with folks he shouldn’t have been; welcoming kids, women, and foreigners when no one else did; challenging prevailing attitudes on wealth, violence, social status; disconnecting religion, race, or gender from power and privilege.

Stir a little controversy—did it ever! He may not have done things in order to provoke, but he had to know that his irreverence for the status quo in the name of reverence for things-higher-than-this would repel as well as invite. Men—and religious men in particular—had a lot to lose as this young rabbi befriended women and made religious laws secondary to the well-being of God’s children. The wealthy of his day were astounded that he didn’t speak of their gains as godly, but rather as signs of enslavement for themselves and injustice toward others. Nationalists must have cringed at his sympathy for Samaritans and talk of loving one’s enemies. His own family had to have been put off by his redefinition of kinship as beyond bloodlines.

In these and other ways he challenged deeply entrenched systems in a public and prophetic manner. In some instances it brought anger and resentment—and even plots against his life.

But that wasn’t all it brought. Our Lord’s provocations invited as well as incited. Especially after a confrontation with the authorities, crowds surged around him, eager to hear and see more of someone willing to cause a stir for a higher good. And they came not just for healing and feeding; throngs gathered to hear him speak of the kingdom—the values and loyalties of the new community he sought to create “on earth, as it is in heaven.”

Jesus’ actions weren’t “demonstrations” in the way that we think of them today—high on symbolism and attentive to media exposure. What he said and did flowed naturally from who he was and what he valued. Yet they inevitably put his principles out there in a publicly de-



monstrative way, clearly and often provocatively, eliciting delight in some and ire from others.

Of course, in one sense, following someone who does these things and evokes these responses isn’t an easy thing to do, for reasons mentioned above. In another sense, however, gaining this kind of notoriety is a lot easier than we may think. That’s because so many people are on the train heading toward the cliff that anyone on the track heading the other direction will immediately be noticed.

Individually, opportunities for calling attention to the kingdom cause are plentiful.

■ After a Learning Tour to Central America, a Brethren woman wanted to show her solidarity with the poor but gracious people she had met there. She decided to fast every day from breakfast until supper, and donate the money she would have spent on lunch to programs to assist these neighbors. Her co-workers noticed—and so did a young salesperson visiting her office one day at lunchtime. He inquired, she explained, he wept—for what she was doing and for what he wasn’t.

■ On his Walk Across America, Brethren hiker Don Vermilyea’s message of living more peacefully and simply wasn’t universally accepted, but it was hard not to respect someone who had walked 5,000 miles to see you.

■ On the appointed day not long into the Iraq War, a Brethren teacher couldn’t bring herself to wear the patriotic t-shirt given to all teachers; she wore black instead. Think she turned some heads?

▪ The weekend after a retreat on living like Christians in our world, a Brethren teenager mystified her field hockey teammates on a road trip by rising to the defense of poor people (who the other girls were running down) and then refusing to use throw-away utensils at mealtime (now they *really* thought she was crazy). She wasn't finished—for her upcoming 16th birthday, instead of asking for presents for herself, she requested donations be made for scholarships for Sudanese school girls. Her goal: \$1600. She met it. People respond to people with a passion for something beyond themselves.

▪ Jordan Blevins, advocacy officer and ecumenical peace coordinator for the Church of the Brethren and National Council of Churches, was doing what comes naturally—praying for justice for the poor in the current budget

advertise their event in the community and at the local university, and make it a point to plan some parts of the program at “non-church” times. Visitors regularly take part—some become members.

▪ Papula Paper is a women-led Christian cooperative in Uganda providing work for disabled folks, single mothers, and AIDS victims—in a country that recently considered making homosexuality a capital offense. That made us want to be their partner, and people want to buy their products.

The problems facing our world are many and deep. We might say the same about our church, as we struggle with declining numbers and the lack of a concerted and clear Christ-like witness in the world around us. Following Jesus'



WHAT JESUS SAID AND DID FLOWED NATURALLY FROM WHO HE WAS AND WHAT HE VALUED. YET THEY INEVITABLY PUT HIS PRINCIPLES OUT THERE IN A PUBLICLY DEMONSTRATIVE WAY, CLEARLY AND OFTEN PROVOCATIVELY, ELICITING DELIGHT IN SOME AND IRE FROM OTHERS.

discussions. It's just that he was doing it in the Capitol Rotunda with other leaders of faith communities. What better place to be in prayer—or to get the attention of legislators—and the Capitol police.

Along with our personal provocations, our faith communities can attract interest and draw others to the cause of Christ by pushing the boundaries of what it means to be “church.”

▪ New Community Project's Sustainable Living Center in Harrisonburg, Va., receives a regular stream of visitors and interns, along with media attention and grant money, thanks to an unconventional yet spiritually grounded combination of sustainable agriculture, outreach to the marginalized, and creative approaches to combating climate change. (Arranging a trip by Harrisonburg officials to bicycle mecca Davis, Calif., led to a 200 percent increase in bike lanes in the Harrisonburg's future transportation planning.)

▪ Every fall a Missouri congregation features a guest speaker on Christian peacemaking or creation care issues, along with a holiday bazaar offering fair trade products. They

lead in our provocative engagement of our communities would go a long way toward dealing with both of these concerns.

The first thing to do is ask ourselves: Where are the boundaries that need to be pushed in our community or among my circle of relationships? What issues or groups of people need our prayer—and also our solidarity and presence?

As the life of our Lord makes clear, pushing the boundaries of justice and inclusion serves to aggravate those we might expect: the ones who stand to lose if things change. But what aggravates some inspires others to learn about a person or a group that cares more about the wellbeing of their world than their own good standing in the eyes of others.

So it looks like we might just be able to take care of the proverbial two birds with one stone—advancing the work of our Lord, and our own prospects as well. And that's good enough. **W**

David Radcliff is director of New Community Project and a member of the Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz.



Paul Jeffrey/ACT Alliance

A Somali refugee woman waits for help at a camp in Dadaab, Kenya.

Sounding the horn on Africa's crisis

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

"A crisis this big should be on the front pages of our newspapers. We must not ignore it!"—From a Thanksgiving letter to congregations calling for Brethren response to the Horn of Africa

"FWD: Famine War Drought." That's the name of a new USAID campaign calling attention to the Horn of Africa—shorthand for a situation that has left more than 13.3 million people without enough to eat.

Other words used to talk about what is happening: Grim. Severe. Tragic.

It is the first true famine of the 21st century, occurring in southern Somalia, caused by the worst drought to hit

northeast Africa in 60 years. Also affected by severe drought are areas of Ethiopia, Kenya, Djibouti, and Eritrea.

Not all countries affected by the drought are experiencing famine. Famine is defined by several measures of the severity of lack of food, such as more than 3 in 10 children acutely malnourished, more than 2 of every 10,000 people dying in a day, 1 in 5 people unable to access basic foods. On July 20 the United Nations declared Somalia to be suffering famine. Since then, famine conditions have spread into six areas of southern Somalia.

There are differing accounts of when the drought began: USAID says the drought began with lower than expected rainfall in the fall of 2010; Church World Service says the area has had two years of failed rains. In any

case, by early November the situation had become so critical that the White House hosted a conference call on the 50th anniversary of USAID to communicate concerns to religious and nonprofit aid groups.

The situation is so grim that people are dying daily of starvation. More than 30,000 children have died in the last few months alone. The general malnutrition rate exceeds 30 percent in areas affected by the drought. Lack of water has killed crops and livestock across much of Somalia, Ethiopia, and Kenya. Boreholes and underground aquifers were drying up, forcing people and animals to make longer and longer treks to water and pasture.

Nearly 700,000 Somalis have become refugees in search of food and water, making enormous towns out of already existing refugee camps on the country's borders with Ethiopia and Kenya. In September alone, 25,000 refugees fled to camps around Dadaab, Kenya, where almost a half million people now live. Refugees may walk more than 100 miles to get to a camp, and nearly half of the children arrive acutely malnourished. Many children simply don't make it. Refugee women are arriving alone, forced to leave behind children who could not make the trip or who died along the way. Some carry dead infants in their arms.

There's more to this tragedy than loss of rainfall. The Horn of Africa is complicated by war and civil war, ethnic and tribal conflicts, weapons trafficking, raiding by renegade groups, terrorism, and religious extremism. Somalia has been plagued by civil war and lack of central government for 20 years. Outside aid is not welcome in areas of southern Somalia controlled by militant groups, some of which observe extreme forms of Islam. Incursions of Kenyan troops into Somalia have increased the threats facing refugees trying to get out of the country. The incursions by Kenya are being justified politically as a measure against weapons trafficking and terrorism, but their effects on the most vulnerable people are of great concern to humanitarian aid groups.

To further complicate matters, the crisis has bloomed during a time when the US government's ability to continue international humanitarian aid has been put in doubt by political squabbling over



Photo courtesy of CWS

Paulina Napitau is pictured in front of her home near Kalapata, in the Turkana region of Kenya. Food shortages are causing people to starve in her community. She told Church World Service that she estimated 20 of her neighbors have died of hunger in the last year. One neighbor was weakened by hunger to the point that he was unable to walk.

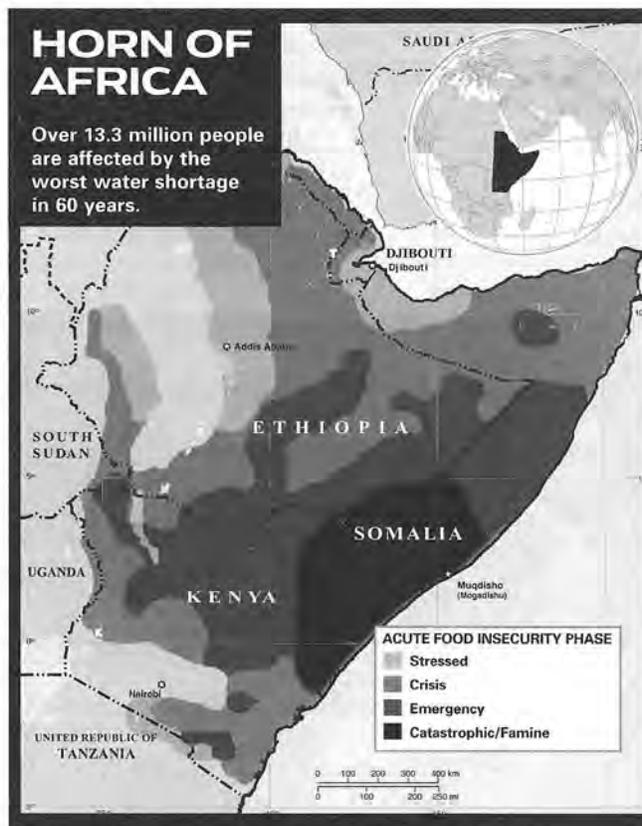
budget priorities. In Somalia, 750,000 deaths will result if the US eliminates foreign aid from its budget, Josh DuBois, director of the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships, said on the USAID conference call.

On top of that, aid groups bemoan a general ignorance of the crisis. CWS has had a very poor response from US churches to its funding appeals for the African famine. For its part USAID said the numbers of Americans responding compares very unfavorably with the millions who actively gave to Haiti earthquake relief just last year.

"The lack of public awareness is startling," said Zeenat Rahman, acting director of the USAID Center for Faith-Based and Community Initiatives. As of early November, she said, 54 percent of Americans had not heard of the crisis in the Horn of Africa.

SIGNS OF HOPE

There is hope in the midst of these grim realities—but also a massive amount of work facing aid groups, and what



MORE RESOURCES

Excellent video resources on the famine in the Horn of Africa are provided by Church World Service. One video showcases the sand dams being built in Kenya. Another features a message from Amy Gopp of the CWS Board of Directors, recorded after her visit to the region in October. Go to www.churchworldservice.org.

The website for the USAID "FWD: Famine War Drought" campaign gives details about the drought and maps of its progress, a map of the populations in crisis, locations and sizes of refugees camps, and figures on the US government response and its partner organizations, among much more information. Go to <http://action.usaid.gov/crisis.php>.

Women carry home a sack of corn, or maize, from a food distribution by Church World Service and its partners in Kibauni, Kenya. The corn sacks weighed 40 kilograms each.



THERE IS HOPE IN THE MIDST OF THESE GRIM REALITIES—BUT ALSO A MASSIVE AMOUNT OF WORK FACING AID GROUPS, AND WHAT AMOUNTS TO A CRISIS OF CONSCIENCE FOR CHRISTIANS WHO CARE ABOUT GOD’S PEOPLE IN THE HORN OF AFRICA.

amounts to a crisis of conscience for Christians who care about God’s people in the Horn of Africa.

USAID indicates that the famine in southern Somalia may well worsen. The good news is that drought in other countries will not necessarily lead to famine. More than average amounts of rain already have begun to fall in the rainy season that lasts from October through December. USAID also emphasized good results if outside aid continues to reach the area.

Aid efforts are having success. For example, according to Roy Winter of Brethren Disaster Ministries, despite the continuing civil war humanitarian workers are reaching people in Somalia, and are helping Somalis in refugee camps.

Church World Service and the ACT Alliance (Action by Churches Together) are the main Church of the Brethren partners in international relief. Both are doing effective work in refugee camps in Ethiopia and Kenya, providing water, food, supplies, and more.

In Somalia, CWS-supported efforts focus on contributing to the work of fellow ACT Alliance members Lutheran World Federation and Norwegian Church Aid. These groups have been distributing emergency food, non-food items like shelter, clothing, and hygiene materials, as well as water and sanitation at three border camps.

In Ethiopia, CWS has been supporting the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, which is providing food aid to tens of thousands of people. The food has been in the form of monthly rations of wheat, beans, and cooking oil, and a supplementary food for children under five and for pregnant or lactating women.

CWS also is working in other areas affected by the drought but not yet at famine stage. It is working with

Kenyan churches to deliver emergency food aid to thousands of families, and to distribute drought-resistant seed. In Kenya the agency has a long-standing “Water for Life” program to dig shallow wells, and help local communities build sand dams. These simple constructions of rock and sand help prevent loss of existing water resources to drought.

Also hailed by USAID as signs of hope are the response to the crisis from within Africa itself, as well as the US administration’s stated willingness to work with Muslim organizations in order to provide help to people in areas of Somalia.

According to US Ambassador Michael Battle, who was a presenter in the USAID call, the African countries took an unprecedented step at an African Union Pledging Conference, where they pledged \$350 million to assist with the drought. Battle is ambassador to the African Union and the UN Economic Commission for Africa. He reported that Kenyans alone have raised almost \$10 million, and he praised the nations of Kenya and Ethiopia for taking in Somali refugees.

“African people decided it was time for this continent to be perceived . . . as a participant in making itself whole,” Battle said. “We should take great pride” in the African initiative.

Photo courtesy of CWS



There is hope in the midst of the drought. Some places of hope are thanks to the work of ecumenical partners like Church World Service and grants from member denominations like the Church of the Brethren. Here, people fill water containers at a bore-hole well near the village of Simallele in Kenya. CWS and the Anglican Church of Kenya helped the community build the well in 2008. The CWS “Water for Life” program is ongoing, now helping to alleviate the more recent effects of severe drought.



Workers unload sacks of corn, or maize, for a food distribution by Church World Service (CWS) and its partners in Kibauni, Kenya. (below) A worker displays the red beans that were part of the food distribution in Mwingi, Kenya, in August through CWS and the Anglican Church of Kenya.



WHAT BRETHREN ARE DOING

Two Church of the Brethren funds—the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) and the Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF)—are allocating money to the Horn of Africa. Both funds are directing their grants through Church World Service, working in cooperation with the ACT Alliance. These longterm ecumenical partners emphasize the value of doing international aid work through local churches and organizations, in order to make sure relief gets to the people most in need.

EDF grants toward the crisis total \$40,000 as of early November, with another large grant anticipated before the end of the year. The Emergency Disaster Fund provides immediate aid following disasters, and gives money to meet acute needs.

As of November, GFCF grants toward the crisis totaled \$50,000. The Global Food Crisis Fund develops sustainable solutions for food and water security.

Through a joint letter and bulletin insert, Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Global Food Crisis office invited congregations to make the Horn of Africa a focus in the Thanksgiving season. In addition, the Horn of Africa is one of six projects highlighted in an alternative holiday gift “catalogue” at www.brethren.org/gfcfgive. With \$67, donors may honor family or friends, and provide a three-month allotment of maize, plus beans, oil, salt, and Unimix supplementary porridge for a famine-affected family with children under five.

The need in northeast Africa already has touched a chord among Brethren, says GFCF manager Howard

Royer. In November, one small Pennsylvania congregation sent \$20,000 from an endowment fund, plus an offering of \$1,185, all designated for the uprooted people of Somalia. A Virginia couple designated \$10,000 for hunger and disaster in general. An Ohio couple sent \$1,000 earmarked “aid to Somalia.”

The Thanksgiving letter to congregations, signed jointly by Winter and Royer, pleaded for Brethren to be more involved in the Horn of Africa, through prayer and through advocacy. “Please speak out about the need for continued US humanitarian assistance in the Horn of Africa. Aid that saves a life or creates a more secure future for children is not wasteful spending,” their letter said.

“Finally, pray for those who are hungry in the Horn of Africa and around the world,” it concluded. “In our places of worship and at our dinner tables, let us remember those in need as we give thanks to God for the abundance we have received.”

HOW TO GIVE

Give online at www.brethren.org/africafamine or send a check by mail to the Emergency Disaster Fund or the Global Food Crisis Fund

care of the Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Find the Africa famine as one of six GFCF projects highlighted for alternative holiday giving at www.brethren.org/gfcfgive. 

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

George Arende/CWS



Women carry stones to build a sand dam in Kibauni, Kenya. Church World Service and its partners are helping drought-stricken communities build sand dams, simple constructions of stone and sand that hold water in the beds of seasonal streams.



Getting our money's worth

by Andrew Hamilton

SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE WE HAVE DECIDED TO LET OUR POCKETBOOKS DO OUR VOTING SO THAT IF WE DON'T LIKE THE PRODUCT WE ARE RECEIVING, WE CAN RETURN IT FOR A FULL REFUND

For quite some time, I have railed against the destructive effects of consumerism upon Western culture in general, and the church specifically. Recent events have driven this home for me again.

It seems that the (d)evolution of this culture has imbued itself into the life of the church to the extent that even traditions that have long resisted these influences are now essentially shaped by them. Think about the story that consumerism tells, and you soon see a community riddled by dysfunctional and self-centered behavior.

I am reminded of an episode of *3rd Rock from the Sun* in which the main character, Dick Solomon (John Lithgow), was sitting at a table in a restaurant with a pile of money stacked in front of him. When the server came to wait on him he pointed to the stack and said something to the effect that this was the potential tip that the server might receive. The unspoken message was that any mistake would reduce the pile. I must admit that I laughed and still laugh when I think of this scene. What is most brilliant about it is the profound cultural criticism that takes place through this satirical moment.

While the satire is aimed at our culture in general, it is, unfortunately, also relevant to the life of our church. This has become most evident over the past few years as the

Church of the Brethren has made its way through an emotional debate about human sexuality. In response to perceived opinions (whether correct or not), some have threatened to withhold their giving to the denomination. In a real sense, much like Lithgow's character, they are reducing (even removing) the pile because they are not getting the experience they paid for. What is most notable about this is that the effects of consumerism have affected both ends of the proverbial spectrum.

Even with all this occurring (regardless of baptismal vows), the effects have not been limited to the larger church. These effects also are felt—and perhaps more so—in local congregations. Somewhere along the line we have decided to let our pocketbooks do our voting (as if our faith is nothing more than an expression of democratic consumerism) so that if we don't like the product we are receiving, we can return it for a full refund (or simply stop giving altogether). This is simply a description of behavior that signifies how our relationships have (d)evolved in the church.

This has led me to wonder when the church stopped seeing itself as God's family. When did we begin seeing each other more in terms of patrons and clients than brothers and sisters? I know this is nothing really new. In fact I believe the change began in the early

20th century when the church began hiring servants (pastors) to do the work they didn't have time to do. (I struggle with the reality of even having to write this sentence.) It was this occurrence that began this wayward journey. Instead of people being called according to spiritual giftedness, suddenly the church became an employer. The essential nature of these significant relationships changed. It is what could be described as the "gateway drug" to consumerism. Within this new paradigm of relationship, power is suddenly wielded through money and influence. Ministry is shaped through the lens of "customer relations." Evangelism is applied by sales. Corporate leadership is practiced by CEOs and major shareholders (stakeholders?). All the while, the church forgets what it means to be God's household.

To be fair, I think that many in the church still wish to cling to the values of being God's family. Unfortunately, we have learned through our experience in this culture that it is much easier to be in consumer relationship than real family relationship. In consumer relationships it's not personal, "it's only business." In this type of relationship we make the decisions that save us money, make us money, or purchase a product we desire. Anything outside of those choices we can easily sever. On the other hand, with family, we are stuck with each other. That weird uncle who pops up with his strange sense of humor at the most inopportune times is still our uncle. That older sister who is always bossing us around is still our sister at the end of the day. That younger brother who seems spoiled and gets all the attention is still our little brother.

In the life of the church (at least in the Church of the Brethren), when someone is baptized, the congregation and the candidate take specific vows of commitment. I've often compared this event with a marriage. What these vows symbolize is that both parties are entering into a covenant relationship. Specifically, baptism signifies the candidate's entrance into God's family. And as we all know, family relationships are messy endeavors.

I wonder if we still have it in us to go against the stream, taking the path of most resistance in order to be God's family. Certainly, the path of least resistance hasn't worked so well. ❧

Andrew Hamilton is pastor of the Springfield Church of the Brethren in Akron, Ohio, and an adjunct professor at Ashland Theological Seminary. He also is a member of the Mission and Ministry Board executive committee. This article was originally published on his "Things of Faith" blog on Sept. 29.

ASK SOMEONE WHO HAS TRAVELED WITH US!

2012 TOURS

AN ANTARCTIC EXPERIENCE (January 2-15)
 JAMAICA – ITS PEOPLE, NATURAL BEAUTY and FRUITS (January 20-29)
 VISIT MEXICO and ITS COPPER CANYON (March 9-18)
 EXPLORE SOUTH AMERICA (March 18-31)
 ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR STEVE LANDIS (April 25-May 4)
 EUROPEAN HERITAGE with PAUL ZEHR (May 3-16)
 HESSTON COLLEGE TOUR to EUROPE (May 25-June 7)
 GLORY of RUSSIA: MOSCOW and ST. PETERSBURG (July 3-13)
 EUROPEAN HERITAGE with JOHN RUTH (July 10-23)
 LANDS of the BIBLE: JORDAN and ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR TYLER HARTFORD (July 19-28)
 ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (August 23-September 3)
 TOUR of LITHUANIA (in partnership with Lithuania Christian College International University) (September 12-19)
 MENNONITE STORY in POLAND and UKRAINE (September 18-29)
 MEDA TOUR to ETHIOPIA and TANZANIA (October 12-24)
 SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR JAMIE GERBER (October 13-22)
 ISRAEL/PALESTINE with PASTOR KEITH BLANK (November 7-16)
 VIETNAM and SINGAPORE (November 12-26)
 DANUBE CHRISTMAS MARKETS RIVER CRUISE (December 1-9)

2013 TOURS

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 1-21)
 CHURCHES and SAFARIS in KENYA and TANZANIA (February 8-20)
 PANAMA CANAL CRUISE (February 26-March 8)
 MYSTERY TOUR (April 17-26)
 EXPLORE the WORLD of PAUL with TOM YODER NEUFELD (May 1-17)
 GREAT TREK TOUR with JOHN SHARP (May 7-18)
 ICELAND ECO TOUR (June 10-19)
 COLUMBIA BIBLE COLLEGE ANABAPTIST HERITAGE TOUR (July 2-15)
 FOLLOWING the STEPS of MOSES with PASTOR NELSON KRAYBILL (July 22-31)
 THE BRITISH ISLES with DAVID and JOYCE ESHLEMAN (September 13-25)
 MEDA in MOROCCO (October 11-22)
 BEHIND the VEIL - EXPERIENCING EGYPT (October 17-28)



"Building bridges among Mennonites and other Christians and faiths around the world through custom-designed travel."

CALL 1-800-565-0451 FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR TOUR
 E-MAIL: office@tourmagination.com WEB: www.tourmagination.com

9 Willow Street
 Waterloo, ON N2J 1V6 Canada

Reg. #50014322

2308 Wood Street
 Lancaster, PA 17603 USA

Church of the Brethren YEARBOOK

2011 Directory • 2010 Statistics

Essential information in an easy-to-use format.

The CD yearbook is portable, accessible, easy to navigate, and makes searching for information a snap.

Order yours today from Brethren Press

www.brethrenpress.com
 800.441.3712



Feetwashing

It's not just about service

by Joshua Brockway

There are a few passages of scripture that have shaped our tradition in the Church of the Brethren the way John 13:1-20 has. Granted, other verses may be more memorable: "Where two or three are gathered I am in the midst of them" (Matthew 18); "What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8); "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God" (Matthew 5:9).

John's words, however, are in our DNA: "So if I, your Lord and teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you" (John 13:14-15).

To contemporary Brethren, this text and the rite of washing feet have come to signify a call to service. Often, this has emerged from two sources. First, as the Brethren entered the 20th century, the value of mutual aid shifted to service. This might seem like semantics, but the difference of emphasis is striking. As the Brethren began to leave behind rigid sectarian ideals, the need to engage the wider culture increased. Rather than continue to serve just sisters and brothers in Christ, the emphasis shifted to a posture of serving everyone as an end in and of itself. Second, and closely connected to this shift, was the turn toward the historicizing of biblical texts. When John 13 is read in this light, the first century culture reveals that Jesus' act was the job of a house servant. Jesus became the example par excellence of self-giving service to others.

The text of John 13 itself has another emphasis. When Jesus reaches the feet of Peter, an interesting exchange occurs. Peter, astonished at this social faux pas Jesus is making, responds indignantly: "You will never wash my feet." In the exchange that follows, Jesus recalls the image of washing as a cleansing act, clearly pointing to baptism. "One who has bathed," he says, "need not wash except for the feet" (John 13:8 and 10). Just as those who have taken a bath get their feet dirty walking around all day, so the follower of Christ who has been baptized gets dirty living day to day in the world.

When the whole passage is read, the idea of selfless service does not stand out as much as we Brethren would

like. Instead, the text directs us to consider the need for cleansing and purification. Brethren theologian and author Dale Brown has stated this eloquently in his book *Another Way of Believing*: "The washing of feet becomes a continuation of cleansing without which believers, like Peter and Judas, would have no part of Jesus. A new forgiveness, a new purification, a new sanctification is always needed" (129).

The service motif of the ordinance, however, is not to be lost. It is just to be tempered with this reminder of purification. When we narrow the practice to just service, we soon find it really uncomfortable to be washed. Many Brethren today comment that the stooping to wash another person's feet is not disconcerting, but when someone else is doing the work for us it is a whole other story. By limiting the story to selfless giving, we have forgotten that we must also be ready to let others care for us.

When we look at the way we as Brethren do feetwashing alongside other traditions that have maintained the practice, it is clear that ours is a full expression of the priesthood of all believers. Today, we Brethren often understand our practice of washing feet as a direct following of the scripture. Yet other traditions completely reenact the moment. The highest member of the clergy gathers 12 individuals—sometimes members of the congregation, sometimes deacons—and washes their feet. The rest of the congregation observes as if it were a scene in a Passion play. In some traditions, the very text of John 13 is read as members of the clergy embody the words. If we were to attend a Roman Catholic basilica on Maundy Thursday today, the bishop would be the only one to kneel and wash feet. This act reinforces the theology of the bishop, which describes his ministry as acting "in the place of Christ."

Hierarchical theology aside, it is clear that Brethren do not follow the letter of John's story. The pastor does not wash everyone's feet as if he or she were substituting for Christ, and the community is not called on to represent the 12 disciples. Even more poignant, the Brethren get everyone involved in both washing and being washed. Just as the actions of a Catholic bishop make explicit a particular



Jesus Washing Peter's Feet (1852-56), oil painting, by Ford Maddox Brown

WHEN WE STOOP TO WASH THE FEET OF OUR SISTER OR BROTHER, WE OFFER THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST'S GRACE-FILLED PURIFICATION. AT THE SAME TIME, WHEN OUR FEET ARE WASHED BY OUR SISTER OR BROTHER, IT IS CLEAR THAT WE NEED TO BE CLEANSED BY THAT SAME GRACE.

theology of the priesthood, our own way of washing feet reveals our conviction that all believers are priests to one another. All of us share in the continued purification needed as a result of living in the world.

It has not always been that way among the spiritual descendants of Alexander Mack. It was not far into our 300-year history when questions arose as to the appropriate practice of the ordinance. Some practiced the so-called single mode, wherein each person washes and dries the feet of the person next to them at the love feast table. Others, however, took to the double mode, where two elders would proceed around the table, one washing and another drying. The effect of this form was that only the elders took part in the washing, leaving out the rest of the congregation. Of course, the question soon came to the Annual Meeting: Which is the correct mode of washing feet?

As we see now by our current practice of the ordinance, the Brethren came down on the side of the single mode—that of each one washing and being washed. This form, despite our language about service, makes evident the mutuality of the priesthood of all believers. When we stoop

to wash the feet of our sister or brother, we offer the ministry of Christ's grace-filled purification. At the same time, when our feet are washed by our sister or brother, it is clear that we need to be cleansed by that same grace. The ordinance leaves no one in the comfortable posture of serving, but asks us all to mutually care and be cared for.

When we collapse the practice of washing feet into the rubric of service, we do ourselves a disservice. Fortunately, the ordinance, in this mode of mutuality, undermines our upper-class altruism, which ignores the grace of people meeting the physical and spiritual needs of each other. In other words, we are not given the opportunity to think highly of ourselves as servants. Instead, the mutuality of our practice gives us a window into the mutuality of the incarnation of Christ: God coming in human form to lift up humanity beyond its faults, restoring us to our created goodness. In the rite of footwashing, we take part in this amazing, gracious act. As the song says, we are "as Christ" to one another. **AM**

Josh Brockway is director of spiritual life and discipleship for the Church of the Brethren.

New Windsor Conference Center

A brief retrospective

[The New Windsor Conference Center on the campus of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., will cease operations in 2012 following a decision by the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board. MESSENGER offers this retrospective of the center's history and work. —Ed.]

The New Windsor Conference Center is one of many ministries that have grown up at the Brethren Service Center over its 67 years. The Conference Center grew out of ministries that flourished there in the past: refugee resettlement, onsite training of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) units, and more.

Two of the Conference Center buildings—Old Main and Windsor Hall—were purchased along with the rest of the former Blue Ridge College by the Brethren

Main, built around 1850, was condemned in the 1970s, remodeled, and then reopened. It has a meeting room, 37 guest rooms accommodating up to 69 people, and efficiency apartments on a top floor.

Beginning in the late 1960s, the conference facilities mainly hosted BVS volunteer training and temporary housing for refugee families. (Refugees were housed in Windsor Hall up through the 1990s.)

Brethren activity at the center began to decrease over the years, and conference facilities were increasingly opened to other church groups to help cover expenses. The decision to take BVS orientation “on the road” in 1971 was a critical change. Currently only two or three orientations are at the Brethren Service Center, out of the five units regularly scheduled by BVS each year.

In 1997, as part of a denominational redesign, the Conference Center was designated as self-funded, expected to produce a break-even budget outcome each year. Since then, in some good years it has been able to add to financial reserves, such as 1999-2002 when close to \$150,000 was added. Difficult years in 2003-2004 quickly depleted that buffer, when reserves were reduced by about the same amount.

For many years, the Conference Center has struggled to gain enough income to meet basic expenses, which have increased steadily. For example, expenses increased by 33 percent over the five years from 2000 to 2005. Additional costs like reimbursement to the overall campus fund for use of buildings and utilities also weigh heavily. And, of course, the economic downturn that began in 2008 has hit hard. The last four years have seen annual financial losses reflecting a continuing fall in number of meals eaten and nights of occupancy at the Conference Center.

Still, finances in the red and a projected closing date next June do not negate the significance of the ministry of the Conference Center. BVSers have gone out from there to change the world. Refugee families have gained hope for their future. Ecumenical groups have received a quiet but warm welcome. Brethren have renewed our understanding what service means in Jesus' name. **W**



Above: A small group visiting the Conference Center holds its meeting outdoors on the lawn. In the background are two of the main Conference Center buildings: Old Main in the center, and Windsor Hall on the right. Right: A youth group arrives at Zigler Hall, which houses registration and dining facilities.



Service Committee in 1944. What are now conference facilities first housed volunteers processing relief materials, conscientious objectors doing Civilian Public Service, Brethren Volunteer Service orientation, and refugees in temporary housing while they awaited resettlement to other parts of the country.

Zigler Hall, now the centerpiece of the Conference Center, was built in 1968. It provides kitchen and dining facilities and 12 guest rooms, updated in 2002. Windsor Hall, built in 1914, has a large meeting room and 22 guest rooms housing up to 62 people. Old

Beyond Our Means: How the Brethren Service Center Dared to Embrace the World by R. Jan and Roma Jo Thompson (Brethren Press, 2009) gives a full history of the church ministries at the Brethren Service Center. Order for \$18.95 plus shipping and handling from Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 or www.brethrenpress.com.

Noffsinger invited by Vatican to Assisi, Italy

Among religious leaders on the stage with Pope Benedict XVI at a World Day of Peace in Assisi, Italy, on Oct. 27 was Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren. The event was held “to discern and make a statement that peace is a human right for all people, regardless of their religious affiliation or not,” Noffsinger said. “It is a right for every human being to live without the threat of violence, war, and violent death.”



Hosted by the Vatican, the day commemorated the 25th anniversary of a historic peace event led by Pope John Paul II in Assisi in 1986. Noffsinger was one of 59 international guests seated on the stage with the Pope. Some 250 observer participants from around the world were seated at the front of the crowds that gathered in Assisi.

Noffsinger noted that the Assisi event adds impetus for the Church of the Brethren to build on

its work during the Decade to Overcome Violence, and to take seriously the call to “just peace” coming out of the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation. In 2013, the Brethren will have an opportunity to be part of worldwide Christian consideration of “just peace” at the next assembly of the World Council of Churches.

Ministerial Leadership Paper, Africa famine update among business items at MMB fall board meeting

In addition to its decision to cease operation of the New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center (reported in the November issue of MESSENGER), the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board in its Fall meeting appointed LeAnn Wine as treasurer and Ed Woolf as assistant treasurer; gave provisional approval to a revision of the denomination’s Ministerial Leadership Paper; and approved a \$300,000 grant from the Emergency Disaster Fund to continue disaster relief and rebuilding in Haiti following the earthquake of 2010. The Executive Committee of the board also named chair-elect Becky Ball-Miller as Church of the Brethren representative to a National Council of Churches delegation to Cuba this November.

The board gave provisional approval to the Ministerial Leadership Paper, which is a proposed revision of an existing polity document of the denomination. The action ensures a place for the paper on the Annual Conference business docket next year, where delegates will be asked to consider it as a study paper before it is brought back for final approval a year later.

Roy Winter of Brethren Disaster Ministries gave a 20-month report on the church’s work following the Haiti earthquake. With the \$300,000 grant approved by the board, the program will have come close to spending all of the more than \$1.3 million donations to the

Emergency Disaster Fund that were earmarked for Haiti earthquake response.

In remarks about the drought and famine in the Horn of Africa, Winter described the situation as “a real tragedy that nobody is talking about.” For example, Church World Service (CWS) has had only a meager response to its appeal for \$1.2 million toward relief in areas of northeast Africa where 20 percent of people are without food and 30 percent of children are acutely malnourished. Of the \$283,484 that CWS has received so far, the Church of the Brethren has given \$65,000 to date—the most of any US denomination, Winter said. (A feature about the crisis in the Horn of Africa begins on page 12.)



Cheryl Burnhaugh-Corford

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Dec. 1 AIDS Awareness Day

Dec. 4 Second Sunday of Advent, Advent Offering Emphasis

Dec. 10 Human Rights Day

Dec. 11 Third Sunday of Advent

Dec. 18 Fourth Sunday of Advent

Dec. 25 Christmas Day

Jan. 29-Feb. 17 Brethren Volunteer Service Winter Unit Orientation, Ithiel Camp and Retreat Center, Gotha, Fla.

On Earth Peace board releases a new statement of inclusion

During its fall meeting, the On Earth Peace board of directors issued the following statement of inclusion: "We are troubled by attitudes and actions in the church which exclude persons on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or any other aspect of human identity. We believe God calls the church to welcome all persons into full participation in the life of the faith community."

The biannual gathering of the board of directors took place Sept. 16-17 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. The statement of inclusion was specifically discussed and approved in light of events at the 2011 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.



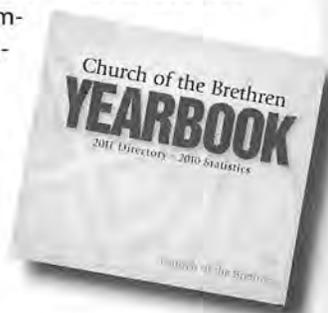
The On Earth Peace board held its fall meeting in September. Members are (back row from left) Robbie Miller, Don Mitchell, Ken Wenger, Ben Leiter, Joel Gibbel, Madalyn Metzger (chair), and Lauree Hersch Meyer; (front from left) Phil Miller, Louise Knight, Carol Mason, Doris Abdullah, and David Miller.

Yearbook now available from Brethren Press

The Church of the Brethren 2011 Yearbook, which includes the 2011 directory and the 2010 statistics, is now available from Brethren Press. The publication date was extended two months to reflect denominational staffing changes made in the fall.

Published on CD, the Yearbook contains detailed information for congregations, districts, pastors, and church agencies in a format that is searchable and easy to navigate.

The price is \$21.50 plus shipping and handling. Order at www.brethrenpress.com or by calling 800-441-3712.



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 295 completed orientation at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., on Sept. 25-Oct. 14. **Front row (from left):** Johannes Mohr of Selbitz, Germany, to Project PLASE in Baltimore, Md.; Thilo Ilg of Tuebingen, Germany, to Project PLASE; Amanda Kauffman of East Fairview Church of the Brethren in Manheim, Pa., to SERRV in New Windsor, Md.; Elizabeth Rekowski of Salem, Mo., to the Center on Conscience and War in Washington, D.C.; Sara Belt of Manassas, Va., to Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati, Ohio; Tania Monroy of Sunnyvale, Calif.

Second row: Marie Schuster of Buffalo, N.Y., to L'Arche in Tecklenburg, Germany; Gloria Oseguera of North Pole, Alaska, to Holywell Trust in Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland; Tobias Berscheminski of Schifferstadt, Germany, to Abode Services in Fremont, Calif.; Sebastian Wallenwein of Weilheim/Teck, Germany, to Camp Stevens in Julian, Calif.; Catherine Gong of University Baptist and Brethren Church in State College, Pa., to the Church of the Brethren's workcamp ministry in Elgin, Ill.

Third row: Denise Prystawik of Kronberg, Germany, to the Church of the Brethren's Youth and Young Adult Ministries in Elgin, Ill.; Rico Sattler of Fuldata, Germany, to San Antonio (Texas) Catholic Worker House; Tiffany Monarch of Goshen, Ind., to Kilcranny House in Coleraine, Northern Ireland; Hanna Stoffregen of Hamburg, Germany, to Family Abuse Center in Waco, Texas; Jonathan Stauffer of Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren to the Church of the Brethren and National Council of Churches Advocacy Office in Washington, D.C.; Rachel Witkovsky of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., to the Church of the Brethren's workcamp ministry.

Fourth row: Megan Miller of Goshen, Ind., to East Belfast Mission in Northern Ireland; Jillian Foerster of Mill Creek Church of the Brethren in Port Republic, Va., to Reconcile International in Yei, Sudan; Florian Brett of Wendlingen, Germany, to Lancaster (Pa.) Area Habitat for Humanity; Michael O'Sullivan of Potomac, Md., to Camp Mardela in Denton, Md.

Fifth row: Benedikt Eicke of Hannover, Germany, to Human Solutions in Portland, Ore.; Sean Garvey of Dublin, Ireland, to CooperRiis in Mill Spring, N.C.; Andreas Gluecker of Hoechberg, Germany, to Sisters of the Road in Portland, Ore.; Dylan Menguy of Rochester, N.Y., to the Capital Area Food Bank in Washington, D.C.

Sixth row: Markus Schmidt of Steinheim, Germany, to Project PLASE; Sarah Mayer of Open Circle Church of the Brethren in Burnsville, Minn., to Interfaith Hospitality Network in Cincinnati, Ohio; Sharon Sucec of North Winona Church of the Brethren in Warsaw, Ind., to Brethren Disaster Ministries in New Windsor, Md.; Lorenz Lowis of Bad Kreuznach, Germany, to Lancaster Area Habitat for Humanity. For more about Brethren Volunteer Service go to www.brethren.org/bvs.

Workcampers in Castaner, P.R., this summer

Plan for next year's workcamps

"Ready to Listen" (1 Samuel 3:10) is the theme for Church of the Brethren workcamps in 2012. Workcamps are short-term mission trips that connect service with Christian faith. They give people from age 12 to 100-plus a chance to have life-changing experiences while helping to change someone else's life for the better.

Registration opens online on Jan. 9, 2012, at 7 p.m. (Central time). For more information go to www.brethrenworkcamps.org or contact Catherine Gong or Rachel Witkovsky in the Workcamp office at 800-323-8039 ext. 283 or ext. 286. If you have access, check out the workcamps Facebook page periodically for updates and spotlights on certain workcamps. E-mail any questions to cobworkcamps@brethren.org. Several photo albums from this past summer's workcamps are posted for viewing at www.brethren.org/album.

E-town students go hungry for Food Stamp Challenge

Students at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College are participating in a local version of a national program—Fighting Poverty with Faith Food Stamp Challenge—to create awareness and advocate on behalf of people who receive food stamps.

Under a program offered by the chaplain's office, students can choose from one of three scenarios: eat one meal that costs essentially \$1.50 or the amount in food stamps that a recipient would have to spend for one meal; live on \$4.50 worth of food stamps for an entire day's meals; on \$31.50 worth of food stamps, or the equivalent of a week's meals. Many students have answered the question "What is it about my faith that causes me to advocate or act on behalf



Manuel Gonzalez

of the hungry?" on video, which can be viewed at www.etoyn.edu/offices/chaplain/food-stamps-challenge.aspx.

"By stepping into the shoes of someone who lives on food stamps, students experience the difficult decisions many families make every day," said Amy Shorner-Johnson, assistant chaplain at Elizabethtown College. "My hope for the Food Stamp Challenge is students go beyond simply being grateful for what they have, toward action and advocacy on behalf of the hungry."

The Food Stamp Challenge was promoted as an outreach to the Brethren-related colleges by Jordan Blevins, advocacy officer and ecumenical peace coordinator for the Church of the Brethren and the National Council of Churches.

Sign up for 2012 Youth Peace Travel Team

Applications for the 2012 Youth Peace Travel Team are due Jan. 13. College-age young adults (ages 19-22) are invited to apply. Through the summer, the team travels to camps and conferences talking about the Christian message and the church's tradition of peacemaking. The team is sponsored by the Youth and Young Adult Ministry, Brethren Volunteer Service, On Earth Peace, and Outdoor Ministries Association. For more information, go to www.brethren.org/yya/peaceteam.html.



The second annual "Powerhouse" regional youth conference took place at Manchester College Nov. 12-13, with nearly 100 senior high youth and advisors from Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Jeff Carter, pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, spoke at three worship services on the theme "Follow: If You Dare," looking at what it really means to follow Jesus. Worship themes were inspired by Shawn Kirchner's 2010 National Youth Conference theme song, "More Than Meets the Eye," which touched on various aspects of Jesus as he carried out his ministry. Carter looked at some of these aspects in his messages, emphasizing the importance of all facets in fully understanding who Jesus is and what that means for Christians. Students, staff, and others led a variety of workshops during the weekend, which also included opportunities for a campus tour, displays from Brethren programs, recreation, and a game of "Mission Impossible." The next Powerhouse is tentatively scheduled for Nov. 10-11, 2012.

A modern parable of life

The *Tree of Life* is a film of stunning ambition and originality, though few people had opportunity to see it in theaters. Granted, there's a lot of competition for moviegoers' hard-earned cash these days. Other films released this year include *Cars 2*, *Happy Feet 2*, *Hangover 2*, *Kung Fu Panda 2*, *Diary of a Wimpy Kid 2*, *Hoodwinked Too*, and *Piranha 3DD*. Let's not forget



MICHAEL MCKEEVER

Transformers 3, *Paranormal Activity 3*, *Alvin and the Chipmunks 3*, *Harold & Kumar 3D*, and *Madea's Big Happy Family 3*—not to be confused with *Big Momma's House 3*, released around the same time. These movies are competing for dollars with *Scream 4*, *Mission: Impossible 4*, *Pirates of the Caribbean 4*, *Spy Kids 4D* and *Twilight 4a*. All bets are off as to how these will fare against the fifth iterations of

X-Men and *Final Destination* or the seventh rehearsals of *The Muppets* and *The Planet of the Apes*. Given Hollywood's meager aspirations and originality quotient, it is a wonder that movies like *The Tree of Life* are ever made at all.

Audacious in its sweep and profound in its metaphysical questioning, Terrence Malick's *The Tree of Life* has been com-

ing an awe-inspiring, 20-minute slice that glides through the birth of the universe, the genesis of Earth, the age of dinosaurs, and later concludes with an epilogue in timeless eternity. In between, the film focuses on the microcosm of life for one family living in 1950s Waco, Texas, and how it becomes emblematic of the tension between nature and grace. The force of nature is embodied by Brad Pitt in a nuanced portrait of an intransigent and determined husband and father. The way of grace is personified by Jessica Chastain in a subtle performance as his wife and mother of their children. Their life together with their three sons in the Texas suburb is filtered through the memories of the eldest son, Jack, played by Sean Penn looking back as an adult.

The film begins with a quotation from the book of Job. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? . . . When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" (Job 38:4, 7). Characters in the film repeat the question at key moments, in dialogue and in prayer. "Where were you when that boy died?" "Why should I be good if you aren't?" Like Job, the film is demanding, difficult, and perplexing. It is hard to tie it in a neat bow.

The Tree of Life has a mythic dimension: a simple story that intimates universal themes. Why is life the way it is? Why is there strife between men and women, fathers and

LIKE A KINGDOM PARABLE THAT PONDERES A MUSTARD SEED OR LEAVEN, MALICK TURNS HIS LENS TOWARD THAT WHICH IS OFTEN IMPERCEPTIBLE YET FLOURISHING IN THE DAILY ROUTINES OF LIFE.

pared to Stanley Kubrick's masterpiece, *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Some say it falls short of Kubrick's magnum opus, while others suggest it surpasses it by gifting epic vision with a soul. Malick fills Kubrick's cold, cerebral universe with a missing spiritual dimension. *The Tree of Life* has been characterized as impressionistic, revelatory, elliptical, a motion picture tone poem. It's pacing is contemplative, almost like that of prayer. Indeed, *The Tree of Life*, according to Roger Ebert, is a form of prayer. "It created within me a spiritual awareness, and made me more alert to the awe of existence. . . . It functions to pull us back from the distractions of the moment, and focus us on mystery and gratitude." Not the sort of thing one might expect to find amid last summer's blockbusters.

Like *2001*, *The Tree of Life* is formidable in scope, includ-

sons? Where is God in life? In death? Malick's pluck is that he tries to capture all of this on film, in the mundane realities of life—sharing meals, attending church, weeding the garden, playing in the yard. Life apprehended on both a grand and a human scale. Like a kingdom parable that ponders a mustard seed or leaven, Malick turns his lens toward that which is often imperceptible yet flourishing in the daily routines of life. True perception is not ultimately a matter of size or scale but of discerning dynamic and infinite potential. **M**

Michael McKeever is professor of biblical studies at Judson University in Elgin, Ill., where he also directs the "Reel Conversations" film series. He is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *The Tree of Life*. **Theatrical release:** May 27, 2011. **DVD release:** Oct. 11, 2011. **Running time:** 139 minutes. **Director:** Terrence Malick. **Studio:** Fox Searchlight, 2011. *The Tree of Life* is the impressionistic story of a Texas family in the 1950s. The film follows the life journey of the eldest son, Jack, through the innocence of childhood to his disillusioned adult years as he tries to reconcile a complicated relationship with his father (Brad Pitt). Jack (played as an adult by Sean Penn) finds himself a lost soul in the modern world, seeking answers to the origins and meaning of life while questioning the existence of faith.



2012 National Workcamps

Ready to Listen

Then GOD came and stood before him exactly as before, calling out, "Samuel! Samuel!" Samuel answered, "Speak. I'm your servant, ready to listen."
1 Samuel 3:10 The Message



There are many ways in which we are all called to serve. Sometimes it's hard to hear, but if we take the time to listen, we can hear God's call to us. God calls us in our everyday lives to use our gifts to help one another. **Join us this summer and be ready to listen as we answer God's call to continue the work of Jesus.**

www.brethren.org/workcamps

Registration opens online January 9, 2012 @ 7pm CST.

2012 Workcamp Schedule

Junior High (completed Grade 6-8)

June 20-24	Harrisburg, Pennsylvania
June 27-July 1	Indianapolis, Indiana
July 11-15	Springfield, Illinois
July 18-22	Richmond, Virginia
July 25-29	Roanoke, Virginia
July 30-August 3	New Windsor, Maryland
August 1-5	Elgin, Illinois

Senior High (completed Grade 9-Age 19)

June 11-17	Innisfree—Crozet, Virginia
June 19-25	Castañer, Puerto Rico
June 24-30	Disaster Response (location TBD)
June 26-July 2	Caimito, Puerto Rico
July 11-17	Washington DC
July 16-22	Rockford, Illinois (OEP)
July 17-23	St. Croix, Virginia Islands

Senior High (continued)

July 22-28	N. Ft. Myers, Florida
July 22-28	Kyle, South Dakota
July 23-29	Puerto Rico (BRF)
July 30-August 5	Chicago/Lombard, Illinois
July 30-Aug 5	Camp Colorado, Colorado
August 6-12	Camp Eder, Pennsylvania
August 6-12	Los Angeles, California

Young Adult (ages 18-35)

May 27-June 4	Haiti
---------------	-------

Intergenerational (ages 11-100+)

June 17-25	Haiti Intergenerational (BRF)
June 24-July 1	Idaho Mountain Camp

We Are Able (ages 16-23)

July 17-20	New Windsor, Maryland
------------	-----------------------

If you have any questions, please contact Catherine Gong, Rachel Witkovsky, or Becky Ullom at 1-800-323-8039 or cobworkcamps@brethren.org.

Workcamp photos by Carol Fike, David Miller, and Donna Parcell.



Church of the Brethren

Listed on these pages are articles, editorials, columns, and opinion letters that have appeared in MESSENGER during 2011. They are classified in four groups: authors, letters to the editor, congregations, and subjects. Numbers following the listings indicate month and page number, with 1/2 and 7/8 representing the combined January/February and July/August issues.

AUTHORS

ABDULLAH, DORIS
Brethren representative attends UN conference in Germany.....11-21

BARKLEY, TERRY
Manuscript on John Kline rediscovered in library/archives.....4-23

BLEVINS, JORDAN
A daring response to violence.....9-16

BOSHART, JEFF
Haiti holds fifth theological training event.....10-10

BOWMAN, KAREN DOSS
Guided by the Spirit: a profile of AC moderator Robert Alley, 6-8

BRADLEY, KAREN A.
Who are we?.....3-8

BROCKWAY, JOSHUA
When violence is a cultural value.....9-16
Restoring relationships through accountability.....11-18
Feetwashing: It's not just about service.....12-18

BRUMBAUGH-CAYFORD, CHERYL
The Church of the Brethren walk with Sudan.....1/2-8
Moving toward just peace.....7/8-8
Invited to be faithful to the gospel.....7/8-10
Decade results in full inclusion of peace churches.....7/8-12
Annual Conference coverage... 9-8
Sounding the horn on Africa's crisis.....12-12
Behind the scenes: The Brethren role in DOV.....10-14

CASSELL, DANA
Intentional community house, Portland, Ore.....3-4

COLE, WALLACE
Is Jesus still weeping over the Holy Land?.....5-12

DATE, BARBARA
Increasing our circle of love.....10-6

DUHAI, KAREN
Peacemaking and the stories we tell.....3-7

FISCHER BACHMAN, JAN
Annual Conference coverage...9/8

FRYE, LESLIE
No silver bullets in real life.....9-24

GARCIA, MANDY
Annual Conference coverage.....9/8

GARRETT, KAREN
Annual Conference coverage.....9/8

GIBBLE, KEN
Another look at Huck Finn.....3-24
Learning to listen.....6-14

GROSS, BOB
What's next for peacemaking?.....7/8-6

GUMM, ALAN
Making peace in the music war.....7/8-14

GUYER, KAY
Please dare to hope with me.....12-6

HAMILTON, ANDREW
Getting your money's worth.....12-16

HANSELL, ALLEN
The third way to faithfulness.....1/2-18

HARO, DYLAN
Bullish optimism.....11-16

HARRISON, RYAN
Suzuki speaks.....6-24
Seeing God in The Help.....11-24

HECKERT, AMY
Annual Conference coverage.....9/8

HEISHMAN, NANCY

SOLLENBERGER
When help hurts.....4-24

HOLMES, REGINA
Annual Conference coverage.....9/8

KELLER, ELIZABETH
This we hold in common.....6-16

KESSLERLING, LESTER
Tracking down Florida's first Brethren church.....1/2-4

KIDWELL, BILL
I don't know, but I believe.....5-6

KINDY, CLIFF
A vibrant church across the waters.....4-5

KLING, DONNA
Open Roof Award presented to Oakton Church of the Brethren.....9-3

KROUSE, ROBERT
Why I said yes.....9-8

MARTIN, HAROLD S.
Cultural norms and New Testament standards.....3-16

MCFADDEN, WENDY
From the publisher.....1/2-2, 3-2, 4-2, 5-2, 6-2, 7/8-2, 9-2, 10-2, 11-2, 12-2

On hold: Female leadership in the Church of the Brethren.....9-8

A new Inglenook Cookbook in the oven.....9-20

Building community in Haiti.....10-8

McKEEVER, MICHAEL
Little town of Bethlehem.....1/2-24
A modern parable of life.....12-24

MILLER, RANDY
Editorial: Our feats of clay.....1/2-32
Editorial: Garages and the simple life.....3-32
Editorial: Reason for hope.....4-32
Editorial: They became real people.....5-32
Editorial: Agreeing to disagree.....6-32
Editorial: Why the elephant will not leave.....7/8-32
Editorial: What has become of us?.....9-32
Editorial: Could Jesus be a Christian?.....10-32
Editorial: Don't bug me.....11-32
Editorial: Fear not.....12-32

BELITA MITCHELL
Testing the process, trusting the spirit.....9-6

MUNDEY, PAUL
Is homosexuality really the issue?.....4-16

MYERS, JEAN
VBS becomes intergenerational at Little Swatara.....9-4

NONEMAKER, KEITH
Soul Surfer inspires.....10-24

NZWILI, FREDRICK
Sudan faith leader supports call to forgiveness.....3-22

OBBER, JANET
Stand by me.....4-6

PETERS, KRISTINA
Brethren leave their comfort zone to work in Honduras.....4-3

PRACHT, ADAM
Students return from Haiti with new perspective.....9-22

RADCLIFF, DAVID
Being good is not good enough.....12-8

RAMIREZ, FRANK
On the shoulders of giants: the King James turns 400.....5-8
An uncommonly easy read.....5-24
When the Bible says 'Kill!.....7/8-26
Annual Conference coverage.....9-8
Thanksgiving grace.....11-8

SOLEM, BRIAN
BBT board approves changes affecting Pension Plan retirees.....7/8-24

SOLLENBERGER, ELAINE
A circle that takes all in.....6-6

SNYDER, GRAYDON F.
Baptized as adults.....3-18
Called to discipleship.....4-18
A covenant people.....5-18
Mutual assistance yesterday and today.....6-18
Matters of conscience.....7/8-18
A circle that takes all in.....6-6
Brethren outreach as a two-way street.....9-18

STERN, MIKE
An inoculation of hope.....11-6

TITUS, MIKE
Across the miles—and generations—at Camp Myrtlewood.....4-5

TOWNSEND, FRANCES
Annual Conference coverage.....9/8

ULLOM, BECKY
Sabbath musings.....10-18

WAGNER, MICHAEL
Sudan's pivotal moment.....1/2-8

WALTERSDORFF, CHRISTY
If the church were Christian.....11-13

WAMPLER, GUY
How did the 1983 committee reach consensus?.....5-14

WESTFALL, RANDALL
Five voices.....1/2-6

WINTER, ROY
Do no harm.....3-6

WITTMAYER, JAY
Doers of the word.....4-8

YOUNG, DAVID
Jesus shows the way to Christ-centered renewal.....4-13

ZIEGLER, EARL K.
Dominican church holds 20th annual assembly.....6-20

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Beery, Leland.....9-29
Blough, Marvin.....5-29
Bowers, George.....11-30
Bowser, Harold L.....11-30
BRF Committee.....3-28
Carter, Clyde.....6-26, 11-26
Clague, Allen M.....5-27
Clem, Garry.....11-27
Cooper, Edith.....11-28
Copenhaver, John.....6-30
Custer, Joe.....6-27
Davis, Linda.....11-26
DeCoursey, Rita.....5-29, 11-29
Dell, Joe.....5-29, 7/8-28
Dellenbach, Winter.....5-28
Detrick, Mary Cline.....9-26
Dickason, Lois (Lowey).....3-26
Duble, Lois.....10-30
Eberly, Roger.....4-27

Eikenberry, Jim.....5-31
Eikenberry, Steve.....12-29
Foust, Dick.....1/2-27
Gault, Dan.....4-30
Grandison, Melissa.....3-29
Haas, Carl D.....3-28, 7/8-29
Haldeman, Benjamin.....10-27
Hendricks, Jean.....10-30
Holland, Scott.....3-27
Hollinger, Patricia Roop.....11-28
Hottle, Steve.....6-28
Huber, Edward.....5-30, 9-27
Keeling, Monty.....12-29
Keller, Andrea.....10-27
Kinzie, William.....10-28
Kurtz, Nancy.....4-26
Kussart, Carol.....10-26
Lichty, Eugene.....7/8-28
Long, Martha.....9-29
Lutz, Wilson B.....9-30
Matthis, Andrew G.....1/2-28
Matteson, Erin.....11-28
McDevitt, David R.....11-28
McRobets, Daniel.....10-30
McSherry, Walter.....12-31
Miller, David W.....1/2-27
Miller, Howard A.....9-28
Miller, Jacob L.....11-29
Monroe, Don.....6-30
Myer, James F.....4-27, 10-30
Nash, Ann Carol.....9-27
Neuman-Lee, Jeff.....4-30
Palmer, Michael.....10-26
Riley, Jobie E.....1/2-30
Ritchie, Maxine M.....5-27
Roller, Gerald W.....4-29
Schmidt, Daisy.....10-29
Scott, Jeffrey D.....4-28
Senkler, Chris.....3-27
Short, Denzel.....6-28, 10-27
Simmons, Claude.....1/2-30
Slaubaugh, Terry.....9-27
Smith, Marsha.....7/8-27
Smith, P. V. Lee.....10-29
Speicher, Tim.....10-27
Stauffer, Jack.....5-27
Stone, Karl.....6-26
Thompson, R. Jan.....1/2-28
Waggy, Carol Spicher.....9-26
Warner, Tom.....7/8-30
Waterman, Jerry.....3-26
Wheeler, Wayne.....11-30
Wright, Marcia.....12-30
Wysong, Dave.....9-27
Yoder, Ellis.....4-29

CONGREGATIONS

A Life in Christ (Cape Coral, Fla.).....9-3
Antelope Park (Lincoln, Neb.).. 4-4
Antioch (Rocky Mount, Va.).....5-3
Annville (Pa.).....4-3, 10-3, 10-20
Barren Ridge (Verona, Va.).....6-8
Bethel (Arriba, Colo.).....10-3
Bridgewater (Va.).....6-9

Brooklyn (N.Y.).....5-22
 Buckeye (Abilene, Kan.)..... 3-3
 Bush Creek (Monrovia, Md.)...4-14
 Center Hill (Pa.).....4-3
 Cincinnati (Ohio).....3-4
 Circle of Peace (Peoria, Ariz.)...6-11
 Clover Creek (Fredericksburg, Pa.).....10-5
 Community of Joy (Salisbury, Md.).....11-4
 East Chippewa (Orrville, Ohio).....6-3
 Eastwood (Akron, Ohio).....3-3
 Eaton (Ohio).....7/8-20
 Elizabethtown (Pa.).....5-5, 11-3
 Everett (Pa.).....6-9
 Fellowship Church (Martinsburg, W. Va.).....6-9
 First Church (San Diego, Calif.)9-3
 French Broad (White Pine, Tenn.).....6-3
 Goshen (Ind.).....1/2-3
 Green Tree (Oaks, Pa.)...3-3, 4-14
 Harrisonburg First (Pa.).....6-9
 Hatfield (Pa.).....4-14
 Highland Ave. (Elgin, Ill.)...3-4, 4-4
 His Way/Jesucristo El Camino (Hendersonville, N.C.).....6-22
 Ivester (Grundy Center, Iowa).....5-3
 Koinonia (Grand Junction, Colo.).....6-3
 Lancaster (Pa.).....1/2-18
 La Verne (Calif.).....3-25, 4-3, 10-3, 11-25, 12-3
 Lititz (Pa.).....11-4
 Little Swatara, (Bethel, Pa.).....9-4
 Live Oak (Calif.).....3-3
 Madison Avenue (York, Pa.)...4-5
 Manchester (Ind.).....1/2-22
 Miami (Fla.) First.....3-3
 Midland (Mich.).....3-3
 Mountain Grove (Fulks Run, Va.).....6-11
 Mount Morris (Ill.).....11-3
 Neighborhood (Montgomery, Ill.).....11-5
 Oakton (Va.).....9-3
 Olympic View (Seattle, Wash.).....1/2-3
 Peace Valley (Mo.).....6-9
 Peoria First (Ill.).....1/2/3
 Portland Peace (Ore.)...3-4, 3-12
 Richmond (Ind.).....7/8-5
 Rock Run (near Goshen, Ind.)...9-3
 Sam's Creek (New Windsor, Md.).....5-3
 Schuylkill (Pine Grove, Pa.)...10-20
 Sebring (Fla.).....1/2-4, 3-3
 South Waterloo (Iowa).....9-4
 Sunnyslope/UCC (Wenatchee, Wa.).....7/8-3
 Tonasket (Wash.).....4-4
 Walnut Grove (Damascus, Va.).....7/8-4
 Westminster (Md.).....6-9
 White Oak (Manheim, Pa.)...10-20
 Wichita (Kan.).....6-3
 Winter Park (Fla.).....4-3, 7/8-3
 York Center (Lombard, Ill.)...7/8-5
 York First (Pa.).....10-20

SUBJECTS

Baptism.....3-18
 Alley, Robert.....4-21, 6-8
 AmeriCorps funding.....7/8-22
 Annual Conference 2011.....4-20, 4-21, 6-8, 6-11, 9-6, 9-8, 9-32, 10-4, 10-6, 11-5, 12-6
 Annual Conference 2012.....10-21, 11-22
 Associated Church Press.....6-5
 Bach, Jeffrey.....4-23
 Barriga, Mariana.....10-22
 Bethany Theological Seminary.....1/2-22, 3-4, 5-23 6-5
 Bible studies
 The third way to faithfulness.....1/2-18
 Baptized as adults.....3-18
 Called to discipleship.....4-18
 A covenant people.....5-18
 Mutual assistance yesterday and today.....6-18
 Matters of conscience.....7/8-18
 Brethren outreach as a two-way street.....8-18
 Restoring relationships.....11-18
 Feetwashing: It's not just about service.....12-18
 bin Laden, Osama.....6-23
 Bittinger, Emmert F.....4-5
 Blevins, Jordan.....5-22, 7/8-8, 9-21, 12-11
 Brethren Mennonite Council.....1/2-22
 Bob, Steve.....4-22
 Boeger-Knight, Katherine.....4-22, 10-22
 Boleyn, Lester and Esther.....1/2-9
 Bowman, S. Loren.....9-5
 Bowser, Jr., D. Luke.....10-5
 Brethren advocacy office.....4-20
 Brethren Benefit Trust.....5-23, 7/8-24, 9-2311-23
 Brethren Community Television.....3-14
 Brethren Historical Committee.....4-23
 Brethren Historical Library and Archives.....4-23
 Brethren identity.....3-8
 Brethren Voices.....3-12
 Brethren Volunteer Service.....1/2-23, 3-4, 3-15, 3-20, 3-22, 4-23, 5-20, 7/8-22, 9-23, 12-20, 12-22
 Brethren Service Center.....3-22, 12-20
 Bridgewater College.....6-25
 Brock, Rita Nakashima.....4-9
 Brueggemann, Walter.....10-21
 Campanella, Kathleen.....10-22
 Camp Koinonia.....5-3
 Camp Myrtlewood.....3-15, 4-5
 Carlson, Brent.....3-12
 Catanesco, Ovidiu.....4-22
 Children's Disaster Services.....7/8-20, 10-20
 Christian Citizenship Seminar 2011.....5-22
 Christianity.....11-13

Christian Peacemaker Teams...5-12
 Church of the Brethren Credit Union.....5-23
 Church renewal.....4-13
 Church World Service.....3-22, 5-20, 7/8-20, 10-20, 12-13
 Civilian Public Service.....7/8-23, 10-4, 12-20
 Claiborne, Shane.....1/2-4
 COBYS (Church of the Brethren Youth Services).....11-5
 Common English Bible.....5-24
 Conscientious objection to war.....7/8-18, 10-4
 Council of District Executives.....11-5
 Covenant people.....5-18
 Covington, Pierre.....10-22
 Davies, Jeanne.....10-22
 Decade to Overcome Violence.....1/2-20, 7/8-8, 10-14, 12-21
 Detrick, Joe A.....4-22
 Detrick, Mary Cline.....4-20
 Deoleo, Ruben.....10-22
 Disabilities ministry.....9-3
 Disaster relief.....1/2-21, 3-6, 4-24, 5-4, 5-20, 5-25, 7/8-20, 10-3, 10-12, 10-20, 12-14
 Districts.....7/8-5
 Dominican Republic.....1/2-20, 6-20
 Eberly, William Robert.....10-5
 Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria.....4-11, 6-21, 7/8-8
 Elizabethtown College.....3-23
 Environmental Stewardship.....6-24, 12-8
 Estep, William R.....4-17
 Fairly Legal.....9-24
 Farrar, Fletcher.....6-5
 Feetwashing.....12-18
 Foods Resource Bank.....3-21
 Footprints Conference.....10-3
 Franklin, William N.....5-3
 Freedom Writers.....5-32
 Gagnon, Robert A. J.....4-17
 Garcia, Mandy.....5-22
 Gible, H. Lamar.....7/8-9
 Glick, Ray.....10-22
 Global Food Crisis Fund.....1/2-10, 1/2-21, 3-20, 3-21 5-21, 10-21, 12-14
 Gruwell, Erin.....5-32
 Guyer, Kay.....3-12
 Harness, Virginia.....6-5
 Haiti.....1/2-14, 3-6, 9-3, 9-22, 10-8
 Hayward, Brenda.....10-22
 Historic peace churches.....1/2-20, 7/8-12
 Holderread, Ken and Elsie.....1/2-8
 Holderreed, Louise.....5-5
 Holland, Scott.....7/8-8
 Homosexuality.....3-16, 4-16 5-14, 6-6
 Honduras mission trip.....4-3
 Horn of Africa crisis.....12-12
 Huck Finn.....3-24
 Iglesia de los Hermanos (D.R.).....6-20
 Igreja da Irmandade (Brazil).....1/2-20
 Inclusivity in the church.....6-6

Inglenook Cookbook.....9-20
 Institute for Youth and Young Adults.....5-23
 International Day of Prayer for Peace.....9-22
 International Ecumenical Peace Convocation.....7/8-8
 Israel.....5-12
 Johansen, Robert.....7/8-8
 Johansen, Ruthann Knechel.....1/2-22, 7/8-8
 John Kline homestead.....1/2-5, 10-25
 John Kline manuscript.....4-23
 Jones, Phil.....1/2-13
 Keeney, Mervin and Gwen Brumbaugh.....1/2-8
 Kettering, Merlyn.....1/2-11
 Keyser, Judy.....10-22
 King James Bible.....5-8, 5-24
 King, Jr., Martin Luther.....7/8-2
 Kirchner, Shawn.....7/8-15
 Krog, Karen.....10-22
 Lauderdale, Kirby.....3-15
 L'Eglise des Freres Haitiens.....1/2-21, 5-4, 7/8-21, 10-12
 Lieberman, Deborah.....1/2-21
 Long, Theodore E.....6-5
 Lybrook Ministries.....5-25
 Manchester College.....1/2-25, 4-26, 7/8-25
 Mason, Mary.....1/2-11
 McFadden, Joyce Snyder.....10-5
 McPherson College.....5-25, 9-22, 9-25
 Miller, Donald.....1/2-20, 10-14
 Miller, James E.....4-22
 Miller, Phyllis Louise.....7/8-5
 Ministerial Leadership Paper 12-21
 Mishler, Grace.....4-12
 Mission.....4-8, 4-11
 Moffet, Samuel Hugh.....4-10
 Morse, Kenneth.....7/8-15
 Mullen, Wilbur.....10-4
 Music in worship.....7/8-14
 Mutual assistance.....6-18
 Mutual Kumquat.....1/2-25
 National budget.....4-20
 National Council of Churches.....5-21, 6-23
 National Festival of Young Preachers.....3-4
 NATO.....5-21
 Neher, Dean.....6-4
 Neher, Ken.....10-22
 New Community Project.....1/2-12, 12-11
 New Covenant School.....1/2-14
 Newman, Linda.....10-22
 New Testament as creed.....3-18
 New Windsor Conference Center.....11-20, 12-20
 Niger.....3-20
 Nigeria.....6-21, 7/8-24
 Noffsinger, Stan.....1/2-13, 7/8-8, 9-21, 10-12, 10-20, 12-21
 North Korea.....3-21 5-21
 Nuclear weapons.....5-21
 On Earth Peace.....6-22, 9-22, 12-22
 Oregon/Washington district...4-5

Palestine.....5-12
 Parker, Rebecca Ann.....4-9
 Peace Church Conference...1/2-20
 Peacemaking.....6-4, 7/8-3 7/8-6, 9-16, 9-21, 10-21
 Peter Becker Community.....5-3, 7/8-4
 Plunkett, Geraldine N.....6-5
 Pope Benedict XVI.....12-21
 Progressive Brethren.....1/2-22
 Pyongyang University of Science and Technology.....3-21, 5-21
 Radcliff, David.....1/2-12
 Reiman, Phil and Louise Baldwin.....1/2-10
 Royer, Howard.....3-21, 10-21
 Sabbath.....10-18
 Saving Grace.....4-9
 Schrock, Roger and Carolyn.....1/2-8
 Schweitzer, Steven J.....5-23
 Self, Derek.....10-4
 Shank, Robert and Linda.....3-21, 4-12
 Shetler, Marcia.....4-22
 Simple life.....3-32
 Smith, Carol.....4-22
 Sollenberger, Beth.....4-22
 Soul Surfer.....10-24
 Special Response Process...1/2-22, 3-16, 4-16, 4-21, 5-14, 6-16, 9-6
 Springs of Living Water.....4-13
 Stauffer, Tim.....10-22
 Stern, Mike.....4-4
 Strickwerda, Carl J.....3-23
 Sudan.....1/2-8, 3-20, 3-22
 Suzuki, David.....6-24
 Thanksgiving.....11-8
 The Help.....11-24
 The Immoral Bible.....7/8-26
 The Tree of Life.....12-24
 Thompson, Jan and Roma Jo1/2-9
 Tickle, Phyllis.....4-16
 Uganda.....6-25
 Ullom, Becky.....5-22
 United Nations.....5-22, 11-21
 University of La Verne.....2/2-1, 11-21
 Voices for an Open Spirit...1/2-22
 Waggy, Carol Spicher.....4-20
 Wagner, Michael.....1/2-13, 4-12
 Washington, D.C.....5-22, 9-21
 Welch, Dawna.....6-5
 Willrett, Joy.....10-22
 Wink, Walter.....4-16
 Wittmeyer, Jay.....3-21, 6-20
 World Council of Churches...5-21, 7/8-8, 10-1510-23
 World Day of Peace, Assisi, Italy.....12-21
 Women's Caucus.....1/2-22
 Workcamps.....11-25
 Wright, N. T. (Tom).....4-16
 Yearbook.....12-22
 Yoder, Bradley J.....7/8-8
 Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies.....4-23
 Youth.....1/2-25, 4-22, 6-3, 10-3
 Ziegler, M.R.....10-14

ADVERTISEMENT

Perhaps like us, you were among those who came home from Annual Conference this past summer with a feeling of sadness not only about decisions and maneuvers related to gender and sexuality, but also the tone of the Conference. If so, we are directing this letter to you...

Sisters and Brothers of the Church of the Brethren,

The Church of the Brethren we have known and loved is not the church that was on display this past summer at Annual Conference. The Church of the Brethren we have known and loved seeks the mind of Christ, respects expressions of conscience, extends hospitality, refuses to do violence to those who are vulnerable, seeks peace among us.

All of these values lead us as well, to extend a spirit of acceptance and inclusion toward all who would join company with us as we follow Jesus. For our congregations, this "all" has and will continue to include lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender persons. And this, we have to tell you, has been a blessing for our congregations. What a wealth of giftedness, commitment, faithfulness, and compassion is shared by our LGBT sisters and brothers! We are grateful and we are clear that this sharing is what it means to be the church; this is what it means to be Brethren.

Are you ready to join us? To identify with the radical, inclusive love of Jesus? To practice the healing and transforming power of hospitality?

The Supportive Communities Network of the Church of the Brethren includes 24 congregations and other groups. We have been around for more than 15 years. We believe that being open, not closed, is what will extend a vibrant ministry through the church. We want the Brethren to be their best and truest selves. We invite you to join us. Visit the SCN page on the Brethren Mennonite Council web site (www.bmclgbt.org) to sign on to this letter, or to find resources there to encourage your congregation or group to move toward public openness.

Grace and peace,

SCN Pastors

Melissa Bennett, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren
Kurt Borgmann, Manchester Church of the Brethren
Susan Boyer, La Verne Church of the Brethren
Anita Smith Buckwalter, Lansing Church of the Brethren
Jim Chinworth, Manchester Church of the Brethren
Karen Eberly, Manchester Church of the Brethren
Roger Eberly, Emerging Welcomers at Turkey Creek Church of the Brethren
Debbie Eisenbise, Skyridge Church of the Brethren
Brian Flory, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren
Sara Haldeman-Scarr, San Diego Church of the Brethren
Tom Hostetler, La Verne Church of the Brethren
Joel Kline, Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren
Kres Lipscomb, Springfield First Church of the Brethren
Janice Kulp Long, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren
John R. Long, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren
Janet Ober, La Verne Church of the Brethren
Bonnie Kline Smeltzer, University Baptist and Brethren Church
Jay Steele, Open Circle Church of the Brethren
Christy Waltersdorff, York Center Church of the Brethren

We need an intervention

Brothers and sisters, as long as we continue to tear each other down over the question of homosexuality, our church is going nowhere but down the drain.

We are struggling over the wrong question. Our issues are not really over homosexuality but differing traditions regarding how the Bible is interpreted. It is incorrect to view the struggle between these two traditions as conservative Brethren against progressives, because both sides are conservatives defending different Brethren traditions. The *oldest* tradition, in fact, claims that the Bible needs interpretation and is not infallible—what many now would assume to be the progressive stance.

We are not fundamentalists; we are not evangelicals; we are not even main-line Christians. Our tradition is a hybrid inheritance based on both radical Pietism and Anabaptism.

As a retired pastor and Bethany Seminary graduate, I agreed to support the teachings of the Church of the Brethren more than 20 years ago. I can't do that now because we are not being Brethren. And we won't be until a majority of us agrees to support a tradition we all agree on, that of the gathered community. We are a very inbred denomination. A good number of our churches are mostly a network of a few extended families. And just as families sometime have to compromise to remain in relationship with each other, so do our churches these days.

We need a denomination-wide intervention to help us reach a possibility point we all can live with. Without this, we are headed where some other denominational church families have gone before us: divorce.

Monty Keeling
Gainesville, Fla.

Respect my journey

I cannot stay silent after reading Lois Duple's letter in the October MESSENGER. You have every right to your opinions and beliefs Ms. Duple, but I am challenging the harsh and hurtful way you express your opinions.

You say lgbtq folks should be "compassionately respected," and then seem upset that gays are beginning to be

given the same rights as heterosexuals. How is that an issue? Aren't all human beings equal in God's eyes?

You call progressive Brethren a "rainbow scarf-waving group whose goal is to coerce," and go on to say they are "a big bully sporting a long rainbow scarf." Explain to me, please, how using those words conveys the compassionate respect you claim to hold? Also, please explain how the query that was voted down would have coerced you into believing anything different from what you currently believe? If you read the query, didn't it seem to ask only that the body agree that we are not of one mind on human sexuality? Explain to me, please, how acknowledging the truth—that our denominational body is not of one mind on sexuality—is coercing you?

According to your letter, progressive folks (the ones you call the "elephant that refuses to leave the room") are to have the "door shut respectfully" while you on the other side continue to follow Jesus. You are implying those upon whom you shut the door are not following Jesus. How is that "compassionately respectful" of others?

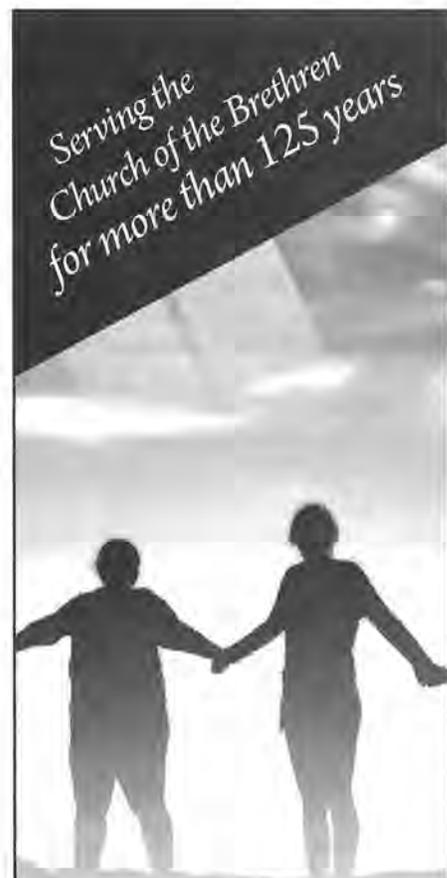
I have no problem that you disagree with how I follow my faith journey. But I expect you to allow me my journey, and I am outraged at the tenor of how you express your disagreement.

Steve Eikenberry
Fort Wayne, Ind

This door is never closed

I write in response to Lois Duples' letter in the October MESSENGER that sought to portray those striving for lgbtq rights and equality as an elephantine, bullying force. Sister Duple wrote, "As for justice, lgbts are being granted rights left and right by the world." I wonder how she can make such a statement. The reality is that our lgbtq brothers and sisters still struggle to gain opportunities the rest of us take for granted. It is dangerous and erroneous to assert that lgbtq individuals are winning key rights worldwide. Our lgbtq friends still struggle to adopt children, teach in schools and churches, rent and buy homes without scrutiny, be scout leaders, donate blood, be ordained as ministers . . . the list goes on.

Many of these individuals that comprise your dreaded "elephant" form an



Serving the Church of the Brethren for more than 125 years

Mutual Aid Association's Share Fund assists congregations in their sharing ministry by providing funds for individuals in crisis.

Help is available for those suffering with:

- Fire or natural disasters
- Health expenses
- Disability
- Lost wages
- Burial expenses

SHARE FUND, INC.
MATCHING GRANT PROGRAM
A Mutual Aid Association Company

For more information call
800-255-1243

or visit our website at
MAABRETHREN.COM

© 9/9/BMAA/1/3/P

integral part of my life. Despite discrimination, they continue, with grace and dignity, to contribute a great amount of love and care to this world. I see them nurturing their children, being faithful partners, caring for their parents, encouraging our youth, and volunteering untold hours to their churches and communities. I see them emulating the very heart of Jesus, accepting everyone for who they were created to be. They are my friends, and a much-needed part of

the body of Christ. I have yet to see anyone among the progressive fellowship use bullying tactics in the pursuit of justice regarding this issue.

When I read Sister Duple's words, "... if the elephant refuses to leave the living room, let's respectfully shut the door and follow Jesus," I was immediately reminded of Matthew's words, "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you" (Matthew 7:7). Here, we find a

reminder that we are all invited to come to Jesus through an open door. This doorway is never closed to those who truly seek to take this journey with a loving, grace-filled God. As human beings, not one of us is freer from flaws, but thank goodness there is no condemnation (not even for an "elephant") for those who seek a life with Jesus Christ.

Marcia Wright
Fort Wayne, Ind

 **Pontius' Puddle**




Everence



Let's grow together

Financial services rooted in faith and values to help you grow and thrive.

Talk to your local representative or visit Everence.com to learn about the benefits of becoming a member.

2111135

The real bullies

Please let me take issue with the claim of the editor of MESSENGER that, in Annual Conference, "cutthroat politics and death threats are becoming the norm."

This claim is not true. One death threat by one unidentified individual was given prominent mention in the MESSENGER, but this is definitely not the norm, and it is not characteristic of Christians who oppose the approval of homosexuality.

It is irresponsible, and not respectful of others in the church, for MESSENGER to

CLASSIFIED ADS

INGLENOOK TESTERS WANTED. Thanks to everyone who submitted recipes for the new Inglenook Cookbook. Over 2,000 recipes were received, and it is now time to put them to the test. Are you good in the kitchen, enjoying cooking? Then sign up to be an Inglenook tester. It's easy, fun, and it gives you the chance to sample some of the recipes we've received. So, put on those aprons, get in the kitchen, and help us out! Visit www.inglenookcookbook.org/tester and sign up today. And stay up to date on the cookbook project by becoming a Facebook friend at: www.facebook.com/inglenookcookbook.

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.

WORSHIP WITH US IN NORTHERN VIRGINIA. Do you know of someone living in, moving to, or visiting the Virginia suburbs of Washington, D.C.? The people of the Oakton Church of the Brethren warmly invite everyone to join us Sunday mornings for Church School at 9:45 a.m. and Worship at 11:00 a.m. Contact the church office at (703)281-4411, email office@oaktonbrethren.org or visit the church website at www.oaktonbrethren.org for more information.

so characterize the members of the church who hold to the truth of the New Testament and who resist the attempt of some in the church to change the teachings of the New Testament to conform to prevailing liberal attitudes on moral standards.

There seems to be a movement in our church's leadership to replace the church's creed of the New Testament

with the creed of the New York Times.

If bullying is being done, it is being done by those who try to "correct" the New Testament so that it advances the causes of homosexuality, feminism, and socialism. It is noteworthy that the publisher of MESSENGER suggests that "Annual Conference abandon the tradition of accepting nominations from the floor" when a man nominated from the

floor was elected. And it is notable that it is this liberal group which pushes for approval of homosexuality, requires special district meetings on it, and refuses to accept the Christian standards of what appears to be two-thirds of the membership of the church. Those who do this are the real bullies.

Walter McSherry
Spartansburg, S.C.

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

Cedar Lake, Auburn, Ind.:
Roger Hauptert, Mary Hauptert, Mike Stafford, Linda Brown

East Cocalico, Stevens, Pa.:
John Weber, Wendy Weber

Florin, Mount Joy, Pa.:
Vanessa Ely Vargas

Hanover, Pa.: Rebecca Gardner

Happy Corner, Clayton, Ohio: Dwayne Henderson, Dylan McPherson, Bryce Timmons

Hartville, Ohio: Amie Mann, Bernie Mann, David Send, Carol Yakupcak

Lakeview, Brethren, Mich.:
Terri Renee Amsden, Megan Elizabeth Amsden, Mark Francis Bongard, Edward K. Lodin, Lisa Marie Lodin, Eddie Lodin, Gary Arne Lodin

Lakewood, Millbury, Ohio:
John Morris

Lancaster, Pa.: Cindy Lattimer

Lincolnshire, Fort Wayne, Ind.: David Bibbee, Sue Bibbee, Charlene Collette, Craig Colvin, Ruth Colvin, Terri Franks, Lori Linn, Jack Steckly, Judy Steckly

Lower Deer Creek, Camden, Ind.: Elijah Dunk, Joseph Dunk, Crystal Dunk

Manassas, Va.: Kate Butterfield, Chris Byrne, Anthony Chavez, Barbara Chavez, Tristen Craighead, Jacob Eberly, Brad Harner, Jaylin Kimble, T.J. Maples, Olivia Montalvo, Mari Raimondi, Travis Raimondi, Lindsey

Villegas, Joseph Wampler, Katelyn Wampler, Matthew Wampler, Sarah Wampler.

Palmyra, Pa.: Robert Lehman, Sylvia Lehman, Dana Lehman, Rebekah Miller, Laura Whitman, Jacob Smith, Cody Whitman

Peace, Portland, Ore.: Matt Guynn, Sarah Kinsel

Plumcreek, Shelocta, Pa.:
Berea Longwell, Sarah Rager, Debra Rager

Ridgeway Community, Harrisburg, Pa.: Janet Eisenbise, Sue Goetz

Saint Petersburg, Fla.:
Connie Bierdemann

Scaup Level, Windber, Pa.:
Katie Walker, Jean Budlong, Pat Gardner, Emily Kobus Hoffman

South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa: Dan Gates, Lisa Gates, David Baldwin, Mitch Black, Shawn Oelmann, Janelle Westemeier, Cord Overton

Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va.:
Bev Butterworth, Nick Dean, Gayle Joiner, Don Showalter

Troutville, Va.: Carol Pave Waddell, Julie Grace Graybill

Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio: Carrie Raymond, Johnathan Cress

Anniversaries

Bartholomew, John and Ruth, Lisbon, Ohio, 60

Bollinger, Ben and Loretta, Hanover, Pa., 50

Brehm, Lester and Doris, Hooversville, Pa., 50

Dayton, Paul and Opal, Windber, Pa., 50

Deardorff, Barry and Arlene, Elgin, Ill., 55

Diebus, Adam and Kay, Lebanon, Pa., 50

Dietzel, Harlan and Mildred, North Manchester, Ind., 65

Dulabaum, Willard and Pauline, Elgin, Ill., 55

Etter, Owen and Ermaleen,

Mechancisburg, Pa., 60

Fogelsanger, Jay and Doris, Hanover, Pa., 55

Fyock, Wayne and Joy, Windber, Pa., 60

Gingrich, Samuel and Mildred, Palmyra, Pa., 60

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

Higginbotham, Ralph and Patricia, Uniontown, Ohio, 50

Meek, Marvin and Sally, Rogers, Ohio, 50

Muscattello, Sandy and Carol, Windber, Pa., 50

Payne, Maurice and Betty, Knoxville, Md., 60

Refi, Alex and Nancy, Windber, Pa., 60

Rhodes, Leon and Jo Ann, McVeytown, Pa., 60

Sheldon, James and Judy, Tipp City, Ohio, 50

Straub, Gene and Donna, Taneytown, Md., 50

Thomas, Sheldon and Jean, Davidsville, Pa., 70

Watkins, Lawrence and Ruth, New Paris, Ind., 72

Deaths

Bashore, Samuel Ronald, 67, Harrisburg, Pa., Oct. 6

Breshears, Truman C., 91, Belton, Mo., Sept. 27

Brumbaugh, Helen, 81, Homer City, Pa., Sept. 1

Burgette, Chester Steward, 90, Fort Wayne, Ind., Sept. 20, 2010

Burgette, Crystal L., 89, Fort Wayne, Ind., May 26

Callaway, Warren, 81, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Sept. 10

Clapper, Vernon H., 88, New Oxford, Pa., Sept. 25

Felker, Goldie, 95, Palmyra, Pa., June 2

Fletcher, Blanche, 94, Jefferson, Md., Sept. 20

Frantz, Virginia L., 75, Wichita, Kan., Sept. 13

Gainer, Sarah, 88, Hershey, Pa., Oct. 18

Gilbert, Pauline, 96,

Hartville, Ohio, Sept. 12

Good, Paul, 79, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 14, 2010

Gottshall, Charlie, 86, Palmyra, Pa., March 8

Heisey, Arlington, 73, Palmyra, Pa., May 30

Heisey, Samuel B., 95, Ephrata, Pa., July 20

Hoffman, Theresa, 72, Windber, Pa., Dec. 3, 2010

Hosler, Stanley W., 100, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 9

Jackson, Mattie, 89, Greenville, Ohio, Sept. 27

Kimmel, Connie, 76, Indiana, Pa., July 23

Kinsel, Glenn Eugene, 88, New Oxford, Pa., Oct. 19

Lewallen, Joy F., 90, Fort Wayne, Ind., June 24

Michael, Charlotte Pearl, 98, Olympia, Wash., Aug. 30

Miller, Paul, 70, Windber, Pa., April 25

Miller, Wilmer, 100, Windber, Pa., Dec. 8, 2010

Morgan, Ruth, 96, La Verne, Calif., Sept. 27

Mumma, Edith, 88, East Petersburg, Pa., Oct. 9

Myer, Leah M., 91, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 14

O'Hara, James, Sr., 62, Windber, Pa., Oct. 4, 2010

Onkst, Robert H., 73, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Sept. 18

Parsell, Hazel Wood, 90, Roanoke, Va., Oct. 2

Pearson, Mary J., 92, Martinsburg, Pa., Sept. 9

Peffley, Pauline Bordner Sanders, 90, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 4

Peters, Arthur R., Jr., 82, Johnstown, Pa., May 10

Pfaltzgraff, Violet H., 92, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 23

Shenk, E. Titus, 98, Ephrata, Pa., June 3

Sizemore, John Harlan, 81, New Paris, Ind., Sept. 30

Swinger, Edna Louise, 98, Edmond, Okla., Oct. 16

Tannreuther, Elizabeth, 57,

Waterloo, Iowa, Sept. 20

Townsend, Evelyn D., 95, Ankeny, Iowa, Oct. 17

Utterback, June, 90, Brunswick, Md., Sept. 7

Vizi, Margaret E., 79, Windber, Pa., Sept. 17

Wagner, Mark, 87, Hummels-town, Pa., Sept. 16

Walker, Dorothy, 92, Windber, Pa., May 9

Wampler, Louise, 55, Daleville, Va., July 6

Weaver, Virgil, 90, Windber, Pa., Oct. 2, 2010

Webb, Roy, 88, Fincastle, Va., May 7

Young, Lora Lee Wimer, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 24

Zullinger, Chloe, 88, Newburg, Pa., Sept. 15g. 28

Licensings

Parker, Darrow, Mich. Dist. (New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Sept. 18

Wehrle, Richard, Shen. Dist. (Charlottesville, Va.), Aug. 21

Ordinations

Davis, Jacob S., Mich. Dist. (New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich.), Sept. 18

Kabler, Eric, W. Pa. Dist. (Moxham, Johnstown, Pa.), Oct. 9

Placements

Caldwell, Rodney R., pastor, Cherry Grove, Lanark, Ill., Sept. 15

Daggett, Joan L., from acting district executive/minister, Shenandoah District, Weyers Cave, Va., to executive director, Valley Brethren Mennonite Heritage Center, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 19

Kelliher, Patrick D., pastor, Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va., Oct. 1

Peters, Franklin D., Jr., pastor, Pulaski, First, Pulaski, Va., Oct. 1

Fear not

There is plenty to fear: Ghosts, werewolves, vampires (except for the cute ones in *Twilight*), Republicans, Democrats, the Tea Party, our collective indifference, the dark, rainbow scarf-wearers, "those people," e coli, the heartbreak of psoriasis, the economy, Michael Moore, Bill O'Reilly, NPR, PBS, Fox News, and what may become of our planet if we don't wise up and quit drinking bottled water.

But every year around this time some TV station trots out



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER Editor

A Charlie Brown Christmas, and Linus stands on that empty stage and reminds us of the true meaning of Christmas. He recites from Luke, where the angel appears to the shepherds, and says, "Fear not: for behold, I bring unto you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

Fear not.

Quiet, Rush. Quiet, Bill. Quiet all you who would stir fear in our hearts.

Fear is a potent motivator. But the

angel of the Lord is telling us we don't need to be afraid. Grace is afoot. Amazing grace. Unfathomable grace. Grace that is greater than fear. Grace that sends fear packing.

It's risky to accept that grace. Because accepting it means that we also have to accept the no-nonsense, plain-dress brother with the furrowed brow and six-inch beard. And the sister in dreadlocks wearing the colorful headscarf and old-timey, ankle-

and scriptural relativists, those who see the world in black-and-white and those who see the world in shades of gray.

Thanksgiving is approaching as I write this. And I am painfully aware as we gather for the holidays that I have relatives who are at the opposite end of the political and theological spectrum from me. They have no idea how wrong-headed they are. And yet I love them completely. I really do. I would take them into my home without hesitation. And they would do the same for me. They have, actually. Because we are family. And that transcends any differences we may have.

Brethren, we are family. In recent years we have learned to fear one another. Maybe we have been listening a little too much to what the world has told us about "the others." That those who look a certain way, behave a certain way, believe a certain way, are not to be trusted and are, in fact, to be feared.

"Fear not," the angel said. These are your brothers and sisters. Your uncles and aunts. Your long-lost relatives. Grace is afoot. We need only accept it.

There is noise and chaos on the set. *Charlie Brown* has lost control of his Christmas pageant. "Isn't there anyone who knows what Christmas is all about?" he asks. And then Linus walks calmly to the center of the stage and says: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, 'Fear not: for behold, I bring unto you good

FEAR IS A POTENT MOTIVATOR. BUT THE ANGEL OF THE LORD IS TELLING US WE DON'T NEED TO BE AFRAID. GRACE IS AFOOT. AMAZING GRACE. UNFATHOMABLE GRACE. GRACE THAT IS GREATER THAN FEAR. GRACE THAT SENDS FEAR PACKING.

length skirt. And the brother in the immaculate suit and shiny wingtips who looks a little too "1 percent." These are our brothers and sisters. They come from Pennsylvania and Virginia (of course), but also from Ohio, Indiana, Montana, Arizona, Florida, California, Oregon, Puerto Rico, and Nigeria.

Fear not. It's just us Brethren.

Yes, we have different interpretations. Some of us believe doctrinal purity is of utmost importance. Others feel that God's embrace extends beyond what once was believed to be carved in stone. But Brethren, we are part of a unique family that includes inlaws and outlaws, scriptural purists

tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.' And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.'" Linus picks up his blanket and walks back toward *Charlie Brown* and says, "That's what Christmas is all about, *Charlie Brown*."

Fear not. Good tidings of great joy are at hand. We need only open our hearts. ❧

COMING IN JANUARY/FEBRUARY: Relationship building in the heart of Africa, the meaning of shalom, a reminder of our unique voice in the world, Bible study, media review, reflections, letters, and more.



Confused about where you're headed during these uncertain economic times?

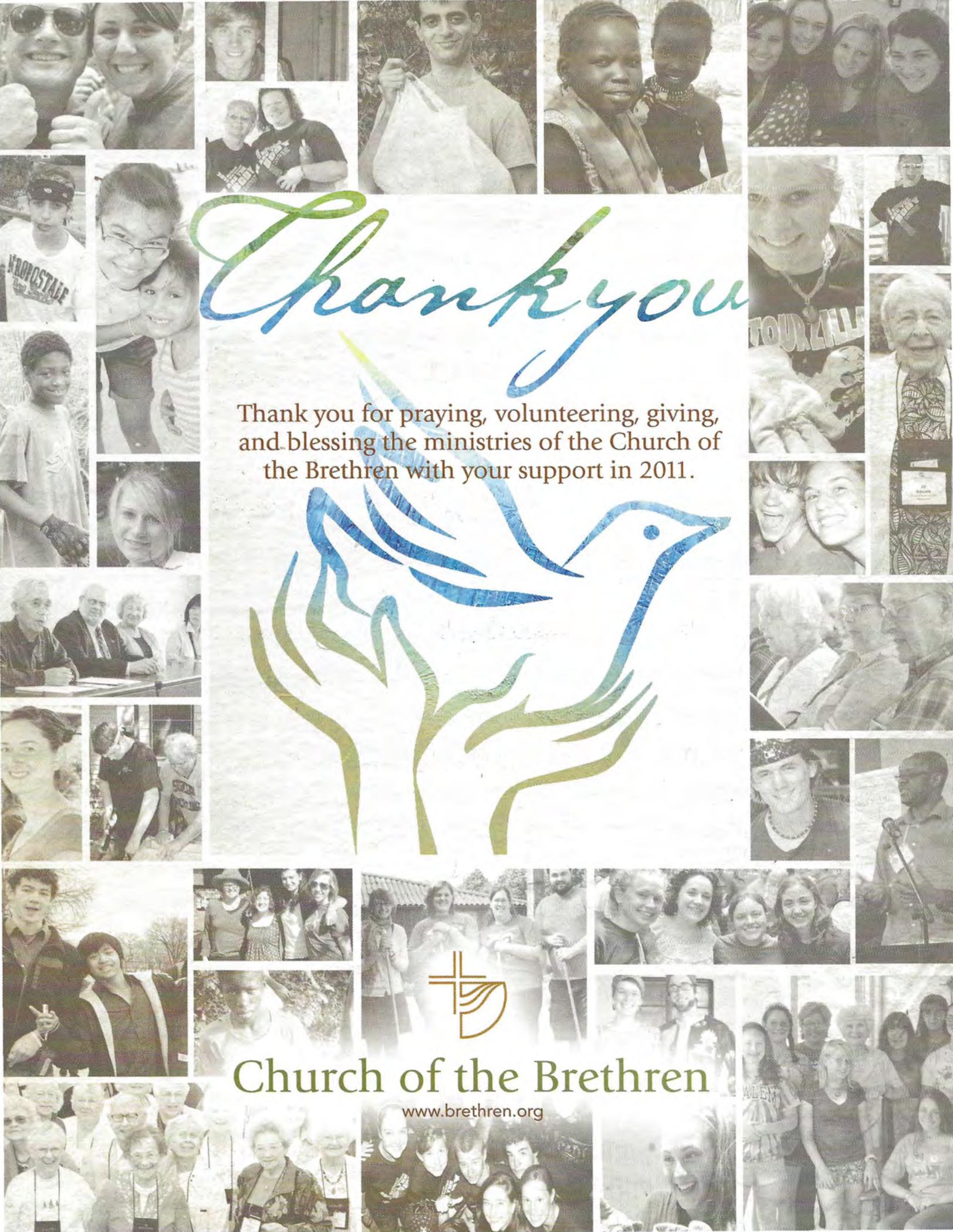
Let Church of the Brethren Benefit Trust help you chart your future with financial workshops and seminars.

BBT offers more than a dozen sessions, many with presentations that can be tailored for your group.

Visit www.brethrenbenefittrust.org/workshops for more information.



1505 Dundee Avenue • Elgin, Illinois 60120-1619
800-746-1505 • www.brethrenbenefittrust.org



Thank you

Thank you for praying, volunteering, giving,
and blessing the ministries of the Church of
the Brethren with your support in 2011.



Church of the Brethren

www.brethren.org