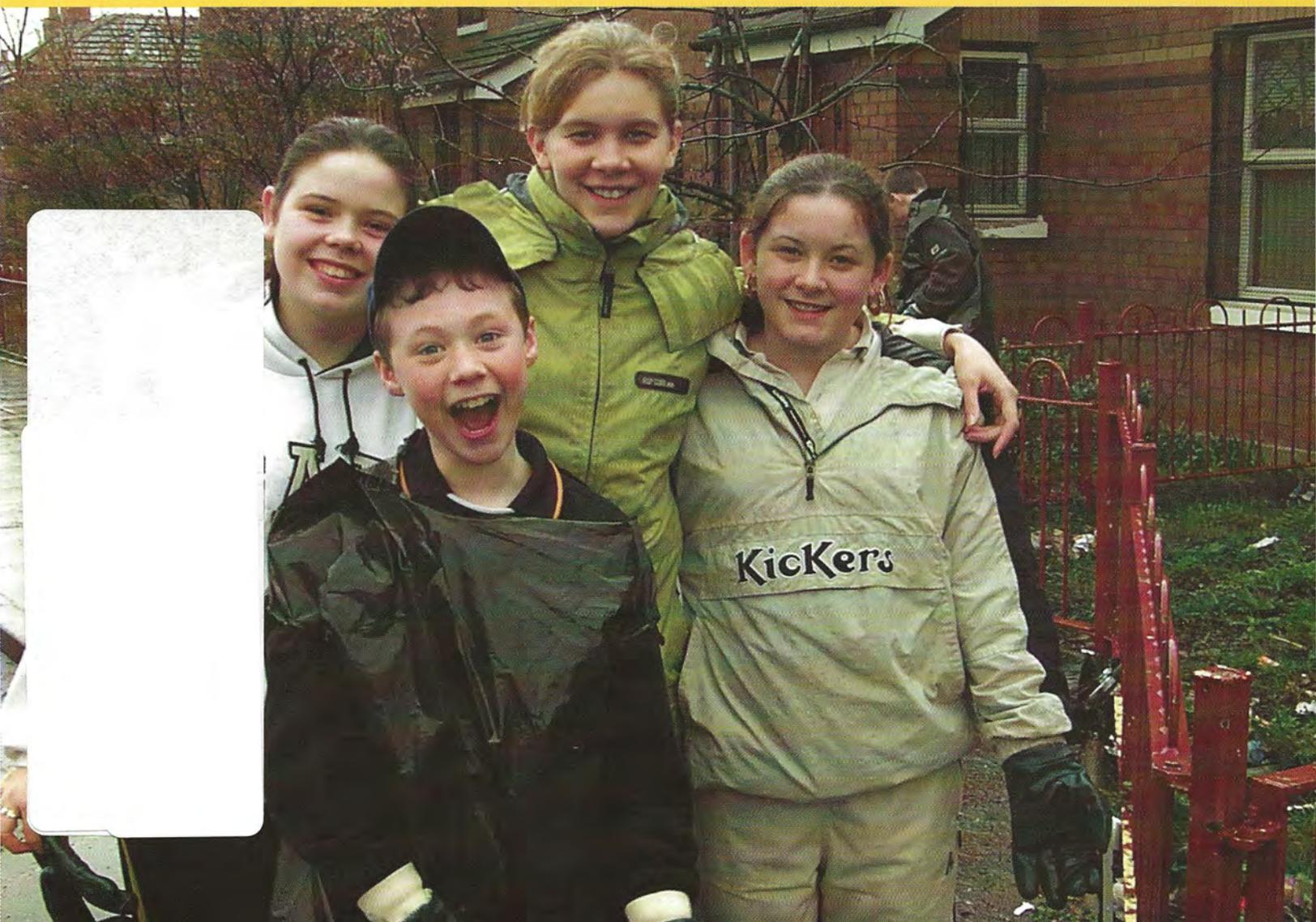


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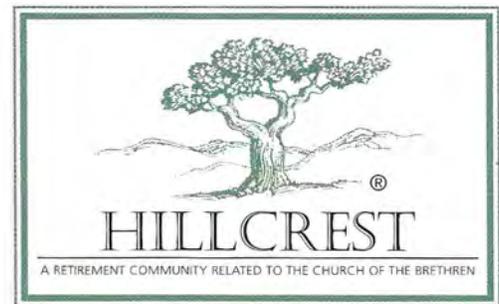


Hillcrest's plans for the future

Ferne and Joe Schechter. Joe is immediate past president of the Hillcrest Residents Association.

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ON THE COVER

Nowhere in the world outside the United States are more Brethren Volunteer Service workers serving than in Northern Ireland. The once volatile conflict between Protestant and Catholic groups in the region has subsided in recent years, but much work remains in building reconciliation and understanding. One of the current BVS projects in Belfast is at the Forthspring Community. It is located in a Methodist church in the western part of the city, where towering "peace walls" separate rival communities. Natalie Dutrow of the McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren is assisting the organization's many ministries, helping youth build a new set of values and bridging the gap between Protestant and Catholic teens. On this particular afternoon, she and new friends Claire, Jonny, and Shauneen paused for a photo along one of the streets of West Belfast. Dutrow and other BVSers past and present share some of their stories in a look at 30 years of BVS work in Northern Ireland.

10 Citizenship at Ground Zero

What does it mean to be a Christian citizen in a post-Sept. 11 world? In April a group of Brethren adults visited New York and Washington, D.C., to ponder that question. Erin Matteson writes about stones she brought back to build a life upon.

12 Thirty years in Northern Ireland

A 12-page special feature marks the 30-year anniversary of Brethren Volunteer Service sending volunteers to Northern Ireland. Walt Wiltschek traveled there to interview current BVSers at their projects. And former BVSers contribute their perspectives, edited by Kristin Flory and Megan Blinn.

24 India action explained

After two years of work, a study committee recommended new relationships with two India churches that grew out of Brethren mission efforts. Here the study committee explains its proposal, which will come before Annual Conference.

DEPARTMENTS

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- 32 Editorial





FROM THE PUBLISHER

It was time for the children's sermon, and the minister was demonstrating how hard it is to hug another person when you're hugging yourself. He wrapped his arms around himself and had his young son do the same. Then they tried to hug each other while keeping their arms tightly in place. The result was more a bump than a hug—a little uncomfortable, and decidedly unsatisfying as far as hugs go.

In sharp contrast, one of the images gracing the walls at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin is called "Embrace of Peace," by George Tooker. The two figures are reaching urgently for each other, arms outstretched, as if nothing matters more than being together. It is the artist's statement about the nature of the community of faith. We know that God reaches that passionately for us; surely it is that gesture that motivates us to reach out to the world.

It is understandable that the place with more Brethren Volunteer Service workers than any other location outside the US is one where volunteers can walk with those who are building bridges of peace and reconciliation. As in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (see p. 12), the Brethren are at work in many places around the world, learning to see beyond simplistic descriptions of religious and political intractability.

The Church of the Brethren's history of looking beyond the world's definitions of the "enemy" caught the attention of Faith & Values Media, as it prepared to add our church to the series of television spots featuring its member groups. (The spots are being aired on the Hallmark cable network.) The producers thought the story of Brethren involvement with the Iraqi people demonstrated something essential about the Church of the Brethren's Christian calling.

That desire to embrace the world does describe the Brethren at our best. It's deep in our history, and it's a vision that continues to lead us into the future. But sometimes it is easier for us to exercise Christian compassion toward so-called enemies in other countries. A test of our true willingness to embrace is much closer to home: As we prepare our hearts for deliberations at Annual Conference, will we reach out to one another with arms that are bigger than our differences?

When we hold ourselves too tightly, we can't. But when we see how God has welcomed each of us, prodigal as we are, we can't help but open our arms to all.

Wendy McFadden

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The ark of God's children

Jacob and Melissa Bowman of Curryville, Pa., decided to "raise an ark" to help feed God's hungry children. Heifer International sends animals to poor families all over the world. Last year Melissa and Jacob saw the idea in the Heifer Project catalog to raise \$5,000 for approximately two of each kind of animal the organization sends out. Heifer Project calls it "raising an ark." In August the 11-year-old twins challenged their church, the Martinsburg Memorial Church of the Brethren, and their family to do just that.

Melissa and Jacob presented the idea to the church board, visited every Sunday school class to deliver hand-decorated ark collection cans, and gave reports at worship services. They explained Heifer Project to the children during Sunday morning story time. They read *Faith the Cow*, by Susan Bame Hoover, sharing the story of Dan West and HPI's Church of the Brethren beginning. They also made a large ark out of paper grocery bags to hang on the wall at church. They added animal stickers as the project progressed and a rainbow over the ark grew with each \$100 given.

Although they expected the project to take a year, they were thrilled when the Christmas Eve offering increased the collection total past their original goal. In five months they raised \$6,100. Their family and friends are proud of them and of Martinsburg Memorial church which gave them so much support.

—Sherry Bowman

12-year-old twins Jacob and Melissa Bowman challenged Martinsburg Memorial to "fill the ark" for Heifer International.



Missouri youth "acts out" for tolerance

"God loves everyone." With this quote in the local newspaper, Bryan Grosbach went on record in the public debate on tolerance.

Bryan, a member of Messiah Church of the Brethren, Kansas City, Mo., and son of Dale and Deborah Grosbach of Gladstone, Mo., is a senior at Winnetonka High School in Kansas City. He has been active in his school in a number of activities, including drama.

After Winnetonka drama instructor Sheri Coffman received a letter from a former student expressing his fear of being discovered by his peers as being gay, she began listening to the words spoken in the hallways of her school. What she discovered about the intolerance of the school community challenged her. To help raise awareness for the need for tolerance for all persons, she proposed to her senior drama students that

they present the play *The Laramie Project* as their senior project.

The Laramie Project, written by Moises Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project of New York, N.Y., is an examination of the changes the people and community

undergo following the brutal murder of gay college student Matthew Shepard in October 1998. The production of the play at Winnetonka was one of the first in the country by a high school drama department.

One of the student actors was asked by a parent to not visit their child. The anti-gay protester Rev. Fred Phelps condemned the school, the teachers, and the actors.

that touches on the topic of homosexuality is bound to be controversial, and the presentation by the Winnetonka seniors was no exception. One of the student actors was asked by a parent to not visit their child because of the actor's participation in the play. The anti-gay protester Rev. Fred Phelps condemned the school, the teachers, and the actors through press releases and by protesting at their performances.

The play was strongly supported by the school administration and the surrounding community. *The Laramie Project* played to five sold-out performances, three in a public theater in downtown Kansas City, and two at the high school. After his graduation from Winnetonka in June, Bryan plans to attend McPherson College where he intends to study business, and to participate in cross country and track.

Any public presentation

The play is a series of vignettes and monologues representing the responses to questions posed to the citizens of Laramie by the writers over a period of 18 months following the murder. Sixteen senior drama students took part in the production. Bryan played several of the citizens of Laramie, including the leading role of Jediah Schultz, a straight Wyoming stu-

dent who reflects on the confusion, anger, and changes that the people of Laramie go through due to the nature of the crime, and the attention that it brought to their community from around the world.

After his graduation from Winnetonka in June, Bryan plans to attend McPherson College where he intends to study business, and to participate in cross country and track.

Brethren Home residents conduct "soys in space" experiment

Some residents of The Brethren Home Community in New Oxford, Pa., boldly went where no residents had gone before this winter.

Working alongside students from the New Oxford Elementary School, "Villagers" from the community are helping with a "Soys in Space" experiment to determine the effects of space travel on soybeans. A group of four residents, 12 fourth-grade students, parents, and the school's principal traveled to Kennedy Space Center in December to watch the launch of the space shuttle Endeavour with their precious science-project cargo aboard.

The launch was delayed several times, so the group missed seeing the shuttle lift off, but they did get to visit the Astronaut Hall of Fame and spent two days touring Kennedy Space Center. They were even seated with the astronauts' families during the second attempt to watch the launch.

New Oxford Elementary principal Joan Crouse said the



NASA Commander Dominic L. Pudwill Gorie (Captain, USN) visited The Brethren Home Community in New Oxford, Pa., in February, thanking the community and the New Oxford schools for their participation in the "Soys in Space" program. He paused for a photo with Kay Jones, public relations/communications coordinator for The Brethren Home.

trip was worthwhile despite the disappointment of missing the blast-off.

The seeds eventually did make the trip, while the students kept a control group on Earth. On Feb. 22, Commander Dominic L. Pudwill Gorie

(Capt. USN) of the Endeavour returned the seeds. He first appeared on The Brethren Home Community's closed-circuit television program "In Touch," then went to New Oxford High School where the students, the Villagers who had participated, and three buses of other Brethren Home residents gathered to watch as the soybeans were presented.

The soybeans that were sent into space and the control group that stayed on Earth are now being grown by the students and residents to see what effects, if any, the weightlessness, extreme temperatures, and such may have had on the space soys. "This is the first intergenerational science experiment NASA's ever had," Crouse says.

Remembered

Barry Weber, 54, of Bloomingdale, Ill., died of a heart attack March 5. A graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary, he was a clinical psychologist in private practice. Previously he had been a Church of the Brethren pastor. The week of his death he received his certificate in forensic psychology. Barry was working on two books—one science fiction and one on psychology and theology. He was the father of two adult daughters and 10-year-old twins. He was a member of the York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill.



Barry Weber

Here is the church, where is the steeple?

Eldon Coffman, then pastor of the Cabool, Mo., Church of the Brethren, illustrated his sermon a dozen years ago with a story about a church that kept using the funds set aside for its steeple to help members through personal crises.

Afterward a church member suggested, "Maybe we should have such a fund," and so a "Steeple Fund" was added to the church's budget. That "Steeple Fund" has helped church and community members through the years, including a family recovering from a disastrous fire, members whose car was stolen, and a couple who incurred steep medical bills.

Recently a Cabool church member, new to the congregation, read over the budget and commented, "I didn't know we were planning to build a steeple onto the church."

The reason the Cabool congregation has a "Steeple Fund" but its building will never have a steeple was quickly explained.

—Irene Shull Reynolds



Atlantic Northeast welcomes another Korean congregation

Pastor Tae Yi and the Good Shepherd Korean Church Fellowship were welcomed into the Atlantic Northeast District family of churches last fall. The congregation of 40 worshipers purchased a church building adjacent to a Korean community in Lansdale, Pa. The group, which rented space for five years, celebrates this new beginning as well as its partnership with the neighboring Indian Creek congregation, which continues to give them prayer and financial support.

The property, originally a church and more recently a day care center, was purchased for \$202,000. Some remodeling needs to be done. The district has pledged to give \$1,000 per month for three years toward the mortgage payments.

This is the second Korean congregation in the district. The first was Grace Christian Korean in Philadelphia, received in October 1999.

The district Korean Advisory Committee gives guidance and offers encouragement to the two congregations. Earl K. Ziegler chairs the committee, which includes S. Joan Hershey, Ronald Hendricks, Jim Bauer, and Mark Baliles.

New Korean Brethren. Above: pastor Tae Yi with the deacons of Good Shepherd Korean Church Fellowship. Below: the building that the group has purchased and is remodeling.



MILESTONES

Live Oak awarded "Church of the Year"

The Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren was presented with an award for Organization/Church of the Year at the 11th Annual Awards Banquet held by the Live Oak District Chamber of Commerce. Criteria for the award included donations, volunteer time, and community service. This is the first award of its kind to be given to a church.

The Live Oak Church has a 91-year history of commu-

nity service. During that time the church has provided shelter to flood victims, housed the Japanese returning home from "relocation" camps following World War II, sponsored refugees, and opened a child-care center, which cares for 80 of the community's children.

Recently the Live Oak Church joined in partnership with Casa de Esperanza, the local battered women's shelter and rape crisis center. The church became an advocate

for victims of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. —Anne Palmer

E-town turns 100

The Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren celebrated its centennial May 4. Church member Jean Moyer wrote a play for the occasion. In it she features three students poring over old church council minutes they found in the Elizabethtown College library. They learned that being a Brethren 100 years ago didn't look like fun,

because so many local amusements were forbidden, including the "theatorium," bowling, basketball games, picnics, and visiting Mount Gretna. While they discussed how different these earlier Brethren were, two of them materialized, S. R. Zug and his wife, Fannie, who were equally appalled at the changes they saw in the church of today. The folks from the past, however, delight in learning that doing the work of Jesus is still the focus of the church.

—Karen Wenger

BRETHRENSPEAK

“Evangelism is an invitation to follow Jesus of Nazareth into God’s dream for us all!”

—Michael Curry, bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of North Carolina, speaking at the Evangelism Connections 2002 conference

Bethany board looks at demographics

The Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees gathered for its semiannual meeting April 5-7 in Richmond, Ind., and spent significant time discussing the opportunities and challenges of the increasingly diverse nature of Bethany’s student body.

That group now includes commuters, students who are residential, and those who take the majority of their classes at the seminary’s Susquehanna Valley Satellite. The board also discussed how “Connections,” the seminary’s emerging distributed education program, will add further to the diversity, and other demographic issues.

The board’s Institutional Advancement Committee

reported that the theme “Bethany’s Centennial: A Pilgrimage of Faith, A Future with Hope” has been chosen for the seminary’s centennial, which will be celebrated October 2004 through October 2005; that three discernment events for people at various stages of life are slated for the 2002 calendar year; and that as of April 6, total gifts and commitments to Bethany’s capital campaign stood at \$9,391,924.

The Finance and Business Affairs Committee presented a 2002-2003 fiscal year budget with a net income of \$3,830, with \$1,908,560 in expected revenue and \$1,904,730 in expenses.

The Academic and Student Affairs Committee reported on “Connections,” noting that Dan Ulrich has been

appointed associate dean and director of distributed education for a three-year term beginning July 1. It also reported that discussions on expanded cross-cultural options for students are taking place with several agencies, including a stronger relationship with Brethren Colleges Abroad.

In other action, the board:

- Approved 11 students for graduation upon successful completion of their graduation requirements as determined by faculty;
- Approved Dan Ulrich for advancement to Associate Professor of New Testament Studies with tenure and Scott Holland for advancement to Associate Professor of Peace Studies and Cross-Cultural Studies;
- Elected Anne Reid and Connie Rutt to the board pending Annual Conference confirmation;
- Chose the following officers: John Gingrich, chair; Anne Reid, vice chair; Ed Poling, secretary; Susan Boyer, chair of Academic and Student Affairs Committee; Mark Baeverstad, chair of Finance and Business Affairs Committee; Janice Ruhl, chair of Institutional Advancement Committee.

Dominican youth travel team. *A group of 10 youth from the Brethren in the Dominican Republic will travel through the US this summer on a month-long worship tour. The team plans to make stops at Annual Conference, congregations and camps, and National Youth Conference. Team members are: Front row: Minerva Vargas, Aurelis Reyes, Miladys Figuereo, and Wichi Lamu. Back row: Rodolfo Agramonte, Derlin Garcia, Julian Cabral, and Jairon Rodriguez. Not pictured: Benito Encarnacion and Ariel Rosario.*



Backy Baille-Crouse

YOUTHBEAT

NYC registration tops 4,000, but shows drop from 1998 event

A total of 4,078 registrations for the 2002 National Youth Conference (NYC) were received by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office through April 1, the end of the main registration period.

While late registrations continued to be accepted with a surcharge through May 15, boosting the total to near 4,150, it marks the first time in recent history that attendance will have dropped from one NYC to the next. About 4,500 people participated in the 1998 NYC, and about 4,100 in 1994, continuing an upward trend over the past few decades. It still remains one of the largest gatherings in the denomination, along with Annual Conference.

This year will be the fourth straight time that NYC, held every four years, will take place at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo. Previous conferences were held in locations including Estes Park, Colo.; New Mexico; North Carolina; and New York. The 2002 NYC will be held July 16-21.

Methodist comedian Chris Danielson

entertained the Regional Youth Conference crowd with a series of sketches, including one in which he had Jenna Lamb of Vandalia, Ohio, and other "contestants" try to pronounce Old Testament city names with a mouthful of marshmallows.



Blind trust walk. Aaron Hostetler of the Bremen (Ind.) Church of the Brethren and Carrie Fry-Miller of the Beacon Heights congregation (Fort Wayne, Ind.) experience a blind trust walk during worship at Regional Youth Conference.

Midwestern youth meet for regional event at Manchester

Youth and advisors from six Midwestern districts converged on Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., April 12-14 for the school's annual Church of the Brethren Regional Youth Conference. About 165 people attended the weekend event, which used the National Youth Conference theme "For Such a Time as This."

Keynote speakers for the weekend worship celebrations included Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren pastor Amy Messler, Elkhart (Ind.) Valley pastor Frank Ramirez, and Manchester campus pastor Jim Chinworth.

Methodist humorist Chris Danielson provided the Saturday evening entertainment, with acts ranging from a contemporary spin on the Jonah story, to having volunteers pronounce Old Testament city names while holding a mouthful of marshmallows, to a touching story about cerebral palsy delivered in a first-person style.

Other activities during the weekend included a variety of workshops, the opportunity to join in the college's Peace Week activities, campus tours, and a performance by Manchester's "Controlled Catastrophe" improv group.



BRETHRENSPEAK

"A lot of people have had weaknesses, and God has used each and every one of them."

— Elkhart (Ind.) Valley Church of the Brethren pastor Frank Ramirez, speaking at Regional Youth Conference at Manchester College

UPCOMINGEVENTS

June 1-7 Ministry Summer Service training, Earlham College campus, Richmond, Ind. (Interns serve through mid-August)

June 1-9 Brethren Witness Faith Expedition to Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, Alaska

June 6-9 Fellowship of Brethren Homes' Forum 2002, McPherson, Kan.

June 8 "The Big Picture: What Does Peace Have to Do With Me?" event for youth and adults, Brethren Service Center, New Windsor, Md.

June 17-21 Creative Church Leader training event, Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind.

June 23 National Youth Conference Prayer Day

June 23-29 Ohio Valley Song & Story Fest, Woodland Altars, Peebles, Ohio

June 27-29 Council of District Executives meeting, Louisville, Ky.

June 28-29, July 1 General Board meetings, Louisville, Ky.

June 29-July 3 Annual Conference, Louisville, Ky.

July 1 Brethren Benefit Trust board meeting, Louisville, Ky.

July 14-Aug. 3 Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 249, Sedalia, Colo.

July 16-21 National Youth Conference, Fort Collins, Colo.

Membership slide continues, but slows slightly, in 2001

Church of the Brethren membership dropped again in 2001, though not quite as sharply as in recent years. The denomination's 23 US districts reported a net loss of 1,051 members in the past year, according to statistics in the *Church of the Brethren Yearbook* published by Brethren Press.

The decrease, about 0.77 percent, brings the denomination's total membership to 134,828. It is the smallest one-year decline in both number and percentage since 1997, when a net loss of 411 members was reported. The Church of the Brethren has not shown a net gain in membership since 1974, when it grew by 54 members. The overall downward trend extends to the early 1960s.

Fifteen districts reported net losses in 2001, seven had net gains, and one, Northern Plains, reported no change. The largest declines came in the Midwest, where the five districts that cover Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin had a combined net loss of 751 members. Michigan was the exception, with a 1.8 percent increase.

The largest numerical and percentage increase came in Southeastern District, which reported a net gain of 72 members (2.63 percent). Mid-Atlantic reported a 45-member increase.

Total reported worship attendance is about half of the reported membership, at 71,737 per week—a decrease of 264 from 2000. The number of congregations decreased by just two, to 1,035. There are also 31 fellowships and four projects.

Personnel moves

•**Richard B. Gardner** has announced his plans to retire as academic dean and professor of New Testament at Bethany Theological Seminary effective at the conclusion of the next academic year, June 2003.

Gardner began as dean in July 1992, two years before Bethany relocated from Oak Brook, Ill., to Richmond, Ind. He first joined Bethany's faculty in 1988, when he came from the staff of the General Board. Gardner plans to continue teaching at Bethany on a half-time basis for two years and then in the future as needed.

•**Tom Zuercher**, district executive of the Northern Ohio District since 1991, has announced his resignation effective Oct. 5. He has been called to serve as pastor of the Ashland-Dickey congregation of Northern Ohio District.

Zuercher has also been serving as chair of the Council of District Executives since January of this year.

•**Matt Guynn** will continue working with On Earth Peace

Paul Simon Practical Peacemaker

Messenger Dinner at Annual Conference,
Sunday, June 30th, 5:00 p.m.

Paul Simon is a former U.S. Senator, and director of the Public Policy Institute, Southern Illinois University. Senior statesman Simon, who retired from the U.S. Senate in 1996, speaks from wide experience on "the things that make for peace" in the trouble spots of the world

Tickets may be purchased through the Annual Conference Office,
1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120.



through at least September 2003. Guynn had been coordinating the agency's "Seeking Peace" project in a short-term capacity since September 2001, as a response to Sept. 11 and subsequent events.

Guynn will continue to coordinate the next steps of Seeking Peace while also coordinating Ministry of Reconciliation workshops and activities and working with the agency's Peace Witness program in an organizational and advisory role.

•**Tim Van Meter** has resigned as assistant professor and director of the Institute for Ministry With Youth and Young Adults at Bethany Theological Seminary effective June 30. He joined Bethany to launch the new program in fall 2000.

Van Meter will begin a new position with Lancaster (Pa.) Theological Seminary on July 1.

WORLDWATCH



1. North Korea. The General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund made a grant of \$30,000 for long-term work being carried out through Church World Service and other Christian development organizations. The funds will support food production, health care, and emergency relief as needed in the famine-stricken region.

2. Tijuana, Mexico. An allocation of \$10,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund will support an emergency housing request from *Compañeros en Ministerio/Partners in Ministry Inc.*, a General Board partner. The funds will assist with expenses related to building new housing where a flash fire destroyed 32 homes in the community of Colonia Nueva Aurora.

3. Nigeria. Paul and Dorothy Grout and Janis Pyle, the General Board's coordinator for mission connections, traveled to Nigeria in April for a 12-day visit with the *Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria* (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). Grout became the first Annual Conference moderator to travel to Nigeria since 1993, when Chuck Boyer visited. As a part of the visit, Grout preached at the "majalisa," or annual meeting, being held April 10-13 at Kulp Bible College near Mubi, Adamawa State.

4. Washington, D.C. The Church of the Brethren Washington Office organized Brethren participation in a major "Columbia Mobilization" event April 19-22, seeking to show solidarity with the people of the South American nation. The four-day event, convened by School of the Americas Watch and Witness for

Peace, included rallies, workshops, lobbying, and marches.

5. New Windsor, Md. Brethren Volunteer Service Older Adult Unit 248 met April 21-May 2 at the Brethren Service Center for orientation. It was the fourth older adult unit held in recent years and also the largest, with nine participants.

6. Elgin, Ill. The General Board's Small Membership/Rural Church Advisory Committee met for the first time on April 13, at the General Offices. The initial group was made up of people named by districts in the Midwest. In the future it may be expanded, or subgroups may be formed to deal with concerns in other regions.

7. Los Fresnos, Texas. A \$10,000 grant from the Emergency Disaster Fund will support the refugee work of Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries. The grant will assist in providing temporary housing, clothing, food, health kits, medical and dental care, and legal assistance, as well as transportation for refugees being reunited with friends or relatives already legally in the United States who will assume their care.

8. Sudan. A Church of the Brethren Faith Expedition group traveled to several communities in war-torn southern Sudan in late February and early March. The group of 12 people representing nine districts went to learn about living conditions in the east African country, to show support for Sudan's struggling people, to observe Brethren-supported programs, and to prepare to share their learnings after returning home.

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The building stones of citizenship

The Christian Citizenship Seminar



Walt Wiltschek

A Sept. 11-related mosaic of children's drawings at the United Nations being photographed by Erin Matteson.

by Erin Matteson

I remember from when I was little the enjoyment of piling stones up one at a time as high as they could go. Of course I piled them so quickly, and really with little care, that they fell down fast.

By the time I grew a bit older, and enjoyed walking on walls that were made of piled stones or bricks, I had come to realize that the stability of the structure came from the placement of the stones, and the strength of the foundation.

There are many choices for the stones we as Christians will gather to build our lives upon. There are the stones of public opinion, stones of materialism, stones of convenience, and of empty busyness. But when we are baptized, we make a choice that Christ is our cornerstone.

We come to realize that we will have to build our lives slowly and carefully on

Christ. And when we do, we ask what it means to live not simply as a citizen, but as a Christian citizen. The Christian Citizenship Seminar—sponsored by the Brethren Witness office and the Washington Office and held during April in New York and Washington—was a time to go off somewhere quiet with others, like Jesus often tried to do, to ponder what it means to be a Christian citizen.

In New York, we revisited the realities of the wealth of our nation as compared to the rest of the world. Our military budget is about half of that of the world. We heard a report from our delegation's trip to Iraq, revealing what happens when US power and influence is directed toward hurting a country's medical and educational systems.

As Christian citizens, we must stop to ask, what is the new world Christ would have us build? How would Christ have us relate to and care for others, individually and as nations? How do we think beyond our own native lands, to the caretaking of all of God's creation? Building our lives on Christ will mean gathering stones of compassion and a willingness to sacrifice, and stones of justice.

In New York, we visited Ground Zero, seeing firsthand the destruction and loss. As we approached the site, it got deathly quiet, and as we walked the area it seemed as though there were still soot in the air. With each step I felt emotionally heavier, until I thought I might choke.

The air there is still heavy with confusion, questions, and pain. As Christian citizens, we hope that includes the pain of yearning for a different world. We hope that breathing in that air will make us willing to be in better relationship with those different from us.

As a way of discovering good building stones, we spent time with those working to improve Muslim-Christian-Jewish relations. We also spent time with those

The urgency of Christian citizenship explained by Brethren Witness director David Radcliff.



Walt Wiltschek

Walt Wiltschek



At Ground Zero, Linda Williams of San Diego First Church of the Brethren poses with a new friend.

working against media violence. We spoke with Marie Dennis, who works with the Catholic organization Maryknoll, which is committed to having persons work in the poorest communities in the world. They do so to learn about and educate others regarding the impact on the globe of decisions made in Washington, D.C. Low wages and poor living conditions destroy not only persons and whole economies, but also the sustainability of the earth.

There is something wrong when about 350 billionaires are controlling more wealth than 40 percent of the earth's population. There is something wrong when millions are living on a pile of beans and a potato a day. Christian citizenship beckons to us to live simply, to live faithfully caring for the stranger, and to try to persuade our government to be a better example to the world.

We visited the United Nations. The UN seems to be losing respect, as shown by the growing violence toward peacekeeping operations. Exploring Christian citizenship led us to ask how our government's use of power and control has influenced others' attitudes toward the United Nations, damaging its capacity for effectiveness.

While we were at Christian Citizenship Seminar, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continued to escalate and Iraq decided to stop selling oil temporarily. Opinions abounded, and we had to form our own opinions. At the same time we were committed to a life firmly built on Christ.

Through all the changes going on in our world and in ourselves, we worshiped daily. We worshiped to express

our sorrow at the world's lostness. We worshiped earnestly as Brethren, seeking God's guidance on how to influence leadership at all levels toward building for peace. We worshiped to give thanks, not unlike the early church, for other believers who encourage us and walk with us along the way.

In Washington during our final hours of the seminar, we prepared to visit our

representatives in Congress, to speak to them about issues we believed were of concern to Christ. These included the sanctions against Iraq, our nation's military budget, and living conditions in other countries. Together we tried to live the faith we were building upon, carefully, thoughtfully, one stone at a time.



Erin Matteson is the pastor of Faith Church of the Brethren in Batavia, Ill., and enjoys the opportunity to sing whenever she can. She is married to Russ Matteson, manager of marketing and sales for Brethren Press, and has two lively daughters, Emily (9 1/2) and Hannah (6).

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- IRELAND:..... SEPTEMBER 20 - OCTOBER 1
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA AND ITS FJORDS: JUNE 17 - JULY 1
- SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS: AUGUST 12-26
- SWISS-VOLHYNIAN MENNONITE HERITAGE TOUR:.. SEPTEMBER 18 - OCTOBER 3

Far East

- VIETNAM: NOVEMBER 6-24

North America

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- EASTERN CANADA: AUGUST 2-12
- FALL FOLIAGE TOUR IN NEW ENGLAND: OCTOBER 8-14
- MAJESTIC CANADIAN ROCKIES: JULY 15-28
- MENNONITE & AMISH COMMUNITIES IN OHIO: MAY 10-14

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- WEST AFRICA: JULY 29 - AUGUST 19
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Kristin Flory



NURTURING HOPE IN

Today's BVSErs build on a 30-year legacy of peace and service

The "Troubles" in Northern Ireland began in the late 1960s, but the conflict is rooted in events from the 1920s and in the centuries-earlier settlement by English and Scottish people in parts of Ireland. Often regarded as a "religious war," the communal divisions also run along political, economic, social, and territorial lines.

In the past 30 years, more than 100 Brethren Volunteer Service workers have served in Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland. As Dale Ott writes on page 14, the Church of the Brethren was invited by a Methodist pastor to send a youth worker to a community center in the Shankill area of Belfast. Since then BVSErs have worked in Catholic areas and in

Protestant areas, with people of all ages, all economic, political, and educational backgrounds. They have not volunteered to solve the conflicts, but they have been invited to come and accompany some of the groups and individuals who were and are trying to seek ways that "make for peace."

BVSErs have not brought great change to Ireland/Northern Ireland; rather, they have taken part in small, ordinary ways in the powerful force of life that has not been extinguished by the pain and confusion of ongoing conflict. In Northern Ireland, where the past four years have brought a tentative peace and the growing awareness that peace cannot last without justice, BVSErs are now,

more than ever, a rare gift. They bring their desire to learn, their belief in the future, their willingness to live lightly, and the history of a church that doesn't shy away from conflict in order to avoid war.

Walt Wiltschek traveled to Northern Ireland earlier this year to visit current BVS projects and interview the volunteers. Accompanying his article are some perspectives and memories from some of the past BVSErs who served during these 30 years.

These perspectives were edited by Megan Blinn, former Northern Ireland BVSEr and a member of L'Arche Belfast, and Kristin Flory, coordinator of the Brethren Service office in Geneva since 1987.



The six Brethren Volunteer Service workers currently in Northern Ireland gathered for a retreat along the coast in March. From left, Sarah McLaughlin, John Adams, Sara Cook, April Angel, Natalie Dutrow, and Hope Woodard.

NORTHERN IRELAND

by Walt Wiltschek

■■■ Tuesday, 5 p.m.

Rain falls from a gray sky as my bus trundles toward the main bus station in Belfast, Northern Ireland. It seems appropriate somehow for this place, which has lived under a figurative dark cloud of conflict and sectarianism for decades—centuries, really, as its history dates to the era of colonizing empires.

I've been to Europe a number of times for family visits and other ventures over the years and I've studied its history, but this is my first time in this particular corner of the region. I don't expect to dodge bullets as I step off the bus, but neither am I fully sure what it will be like.

Friendly faces soon emerge from the crowd as I find Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) European coordinator Kristin Flory and John Adams, one of six BVS workers currently in Northern Ireland. A seventh is due to arrive this summer,

making this the largest concentration of BVS workers outside the United States.

We step into an ancient establishment across the street for dinner and begin to go over the plans for the coming days. They point out the nearby Europa Hotel as once being "the most bombed hotel in Europe," but today it and the rest of downtown look little different from any other small European capital, with cheery storefronts and bustling commerce.

After our meal, John and I catch a bus to the Currach Community, a small home where he lives along the "peace line" between Protestant and Catholic communities.

■■■ Tuesday, 9 p.m.

John takes me on an extensive walking tour of northern and western sections of Belfast, areas

“I know we can’t change Northern Ireland overnight, but we try to find ways to bring communities together, to encourage dialog and foster trust by helping people to get to know each other better.”

of the city where the conflict—often referred to by the understated euphemism, “The Troubles”—has been centered.

In most of Belfast, overt fighting has disappeared as a power-sharing agreement for the government and moves toward disarmament have taken hold since the cease-fires of 1994 and 1997 and the Good Friday accords of 1998. Tensions still bubble beneath the surface, though, and in the north and west they sometimes boil over.

As we walk down a street in the northern section, a stretch where barbed wire, graffiti, and broken windows are visible, John says, “If we hear gunfire, we’ll turn back!” I’m not sure if he’s joking or not, but no signs of danger are visible other than a siren in the distance. We

discover the next morning that a small riot had occurred less than a mile away.

Our journey continues over miles of the city, first along the working-class Protestant stronghold of the Shankill Road and later down the Catholic-dominated Falls Road. Colorful murals mark areas where paramilitary groups for one side or the other have been active and some still operate.

We eventually wind up in a hilltop graveyard, where a forest of Celtic-looking crosses rises dramatically under the mist and fog. John points out areas where some of the prominent Catholic nationalists are buried, some of them from the Irish Republican Army (IRA) hunger strikes of the 1980s.

We head back to Currach after this stop, which

LEARNING TO LIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

BVS goes to Belfast

The “new round of troubles” exploded like a firestorm in Northern Ireland in 1971. Roadblocks became the norm, and in August, the practice of “detention without trial” was formally introduced. On Aug. 9, more than 300 men were detained without charges or trial. Almost all were Catholics, and nationalists. Stories quickly circulated about “brutalities” committed by British soldiers. These events, in turn, provoked even more violence from gunmen still at large.

In December of 1971 the Conference of European Churches and the Irish Council of Churches invited me to Belfast for an “information

seminar.” Following the seminar, I just managed to get through a roadblock in time to visit a youth club at the Shankill Methodist Church, where I was fortunate enough to talk with the pastor, the Rev. Harold Good. He asked me whether a BVSer might come to help with youth activities in the Shankill area. Delighted by his interest, I told him I was quite sure we could find someone in time. Fortunately, after just a few months, we found a discerning and diplomatic volunteer in Ken Smith. He arrived in Belfast in late spring of 1972, and began working at the Agnes Street Community Centre.

Apropos of today’s “obsession with terrorism,” I close this brief writing with the following excerpt from an introspective letter by Ken Smith dated July 9, 1972 [an IRA cease-fire ended that day and 10 people were killed, both Catholics and Protes-

tants]. He reflects his experience against a biblical theme.

“What do I really seek among the masked men with truncheons, the bombed-out pubs, ‘the terror by night,’ ‘the destruction that wasteth at noonday,’ if not a reflection of my own violent soul? . . . The gunman is my brother and the bomber is my guilty accomplice. . . . Ulster is only the grandiose pretext under which I begin to wrestle my humanity back from the violent self at my side. Twentieth century man is a terrorist. . . . I am here to reaffirm my humanity. . . . I am here to ‘help’ no man, but to learn to live among them.”—Dale Ott

Dale Ott was the director of the Brethren Service office in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1966 to 1987. Still in Geneva, he keeps busy with walking, reading, writing, sending opinions to newspapers, and discussing “forbidden” subjects like religion and politics. His membership is with the La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren.

Dale Ott in the early 1980s.



serves as a reminder that whatever the causes of the conflict, death has been one of its results.

■ ■ ■ Tuesday, 11 p.m.

We're still energized after the brisk walk, so John and I sit down at Currach and talk about his work. He is Catholic, from Connecticut, and grew up in a family that mirrored some of the issues here. His grandfather served as an officer in the British army, his grandmother in the Irish nationalist movement, and his father was born in Dublin, capital of the Irish Republic.

This heritage understandably led John to curiosity about his family's homeland. He first came to Ireland and Northern Ireland in 1994 as he studied political science and international relations in college. He continued with an Irish studies major in a graduate program at Catholic University in Washington, D.C., and returned to do an internship in the Irish legislature in 1999.

He subsequently wanted to find work that would be meaningful, "something that would really turn my life around," he says, and through a series of contacts found his way to BVS. It eventually led to a placement with the Mediation Network of Northern Ireland, in Belfast, which promotes conflict resolution and reconciliation training.

He says he becomes frustrated with people who think they know the answers to the challenges Northern Ireland faces, when he's not even sure the right questions are being asked yet.

"I know we can't change Northern Ireland overnight," he says, "but we try to find ways to bring communities together, to encourage dialog and foster trust by helping people to get to know each other better. Northern Ireland is going through a lot. . . . It's going to take years till we see a final peaceful solution to the problems of Northern Ireland."



■ ■ ■ Wednesday, 10 a.m.

After breakfast with Kristin Flory, she and I walk over to the downtown offices of the Irish Council of Churches to meet with general secretary David Stevens.

He's remarkably casual and relaxed for someone of his high position, working with Protestant churches in both the Republic and Northern Ireland. As he leans back in an office chair, he pulls out a rich history of some of the religious issues that have faced the island.

Stevens has also been a longtime local contact for BVS, working with Kristin and her predecessor, Dale Ott, through the 30 years that BVS has had a presence here. He recalls story after story of BVS workers who have served there through that time and some of the issues that were dominating during their tenures.

In recent years, he says, those issues have changed form again.

"It's an odd reality, this place," he adds. "Depending where you're located, you may be living a 'normal' life, but if you live in some areas of North Belfast, life has gotten worse."

He echoes John's sentiments that there will be no quick fixes, no easy answers to the often-dark past. Many issues remain unresolved, Stevens says, and it has forced the council to adjust its focus as it takes part in the painstaking healing process.

"I suppose we were given an agenda by 30-some years of the Troubles," he says. "Now

1979 BVS retreat
with Northern
Ireland volunteers.

we're in a period of transition, and it's going to be a long period of transition. It's fragile, precarious, and it seems to go on forever. We're dealing with the legacy of the past."

■■■ Wednesday, 1 p.m.

A taxi ride back to West Belfast puts us at Forthspring Community Center, located in a Methodist church that sits just on the other side of the "peace wall" from my accommodations at Currach. The looming concrete and wire walls, some being extended that very week, seek to squelch conflict by keeping opposing groups separate. Critics, however, say the walls only give troublemakers a new challenge.

After a brief chat with the pastor, we find Natalie Dutrow, a young BVS worker from the McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren. She's obviously found her niche working with youth in this cross-community setting, as kids call out "Natalie!" and wave as we walk to a nearby deli for lunch. She smiles and yells back. It hasn't always been that way, she says.

"It takes a long time to build some of those relationships," she says. "It's a slow process. It's so discouraging when you first start because you think you're never going to understand them."

Despite the difficulty, she doesn't regret coming here following her graduation from Elizabethtown College last year. She knew she wanted to be engaged in youth work, and most of those BVS opportunities

were in Northern Ireland—a place she was interested in seeing, although its reputation scared her. Since arriving, she says, her fear has disappeared.

About half of her work at Forthspring is cross-community, with a variety of special pro-

grams—including a popular cooking program she started for boys—to bring Catholic and Protestant youth together. The other half is dedicated to "drop-in" evenings when youth from one group or the other come together.

They work at "single identity," developing an expression of oneself that doesn't require putting down others. They also try to broaden worldviews, a challenge in a place where people sometimes never leave their own neighborhood, let alone leave the city or travel outside Northern Ireland.

"Cross-community work is so difficult to do and such a delicate balance," Natalie says. "You can't just throw a bunch of kids together here and expect them to get along. . . . There's hope, but it's really little things. You have to look really hard."

■■■ Wednesday, 3 p.m.

We head into the central part of Belfast again to visit the Mediation Network where John serves. We say hello as we see him working the phone at his desk, then go into an inner office to meet with Andrew McCracken, the jovial business manager for the organization.

He, too, comments on the gradual changes, mostly positive, occurring in Belfast—"You get used to them as they happen," he says—and traces some of the political and social developments that have occurred.

"A lot of people don't own the fact that there's still a lot of change that has to happen," he says, "The lesson we're trying to teach others is that change isn't something you fear. It's sometime you deal with, and you must have a mechanism to deal with it."

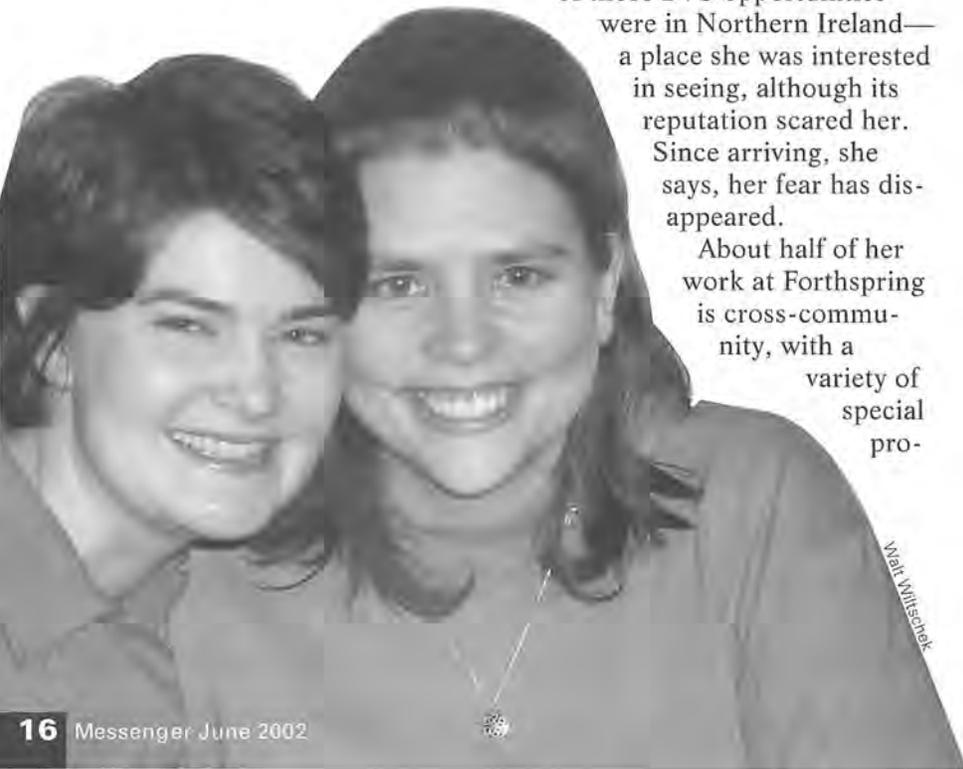
That's led the Mediation Network to develop a new mission statement: "to offer creative approaches to good relations in Northern Ireland." BVS workers and other volunteers, Andrew says, are a key part of that work, from having people with different, non-Irish accents answer the phone to the attitude they bring.

"There's something about enthusiasm that isn't linked to salary," he says. "It means the person is motivated by their own inner self, wanting to be in a place where what you gain is experience or learning, or just being present in a place where you can see the work that's going on."

"We work them hard," he adds with a laugh, "There's no doubt about it."

Sara Cook and Hope

Woodard both work at BVS projects in the city of Coleraine, in northwestern Northern Ireland. Cook currently serves at the Ballysally Community Center and Woodard at Kilcranny House. The two met up with others from Kilcranny House this particular evening to celebrate Woodard's one-year anniversary at the project.



Walt Mitschek

LEARNING TO LIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND:

Pastors and paramilitants

I spent five years between 1974 and 1981 living and working in Belfast through BVS. I worked directly for two groups—two groups from opposite ends of the spectrum.

My first project was the Irish Council of Churches, an ecumenical group that is part of the World Council of Churches, with members from all the Protestant denominations and with a close working relationship with the Roman Catholic church.

A few years after working for the ICC, I became the BVSer for the New Ulster Political Research Group (NUPRG), a research group for the Ulster Defence Association (UDA). BVS viewed the placement as an opportunity to put the Church of the Brethren's beliefs on pacifism into action. For me, too, this was about acting on my personal belief in pacifism. For NUPRG, having an American in their office lent credibility to their professed neutrality.

The NUPRG came into being because a few leaders in the UDA recognized that "violence was not getting the results" for which they had hoped. Key representatives of the UDA managed to convince the organization to take their men "off the streets." They then formed the NUPRG, spent 18 months in research developing a viable plan to resolve the "troubles." The plan called for negoti-

ated independence for Northern Ireland—in which the loyalists would give up the link to the Crown and the republicans would give up the dream of a united Ireland. Thus, there would be no "winners" and no "losers" in this very detailed and carefully thought out plan. Their plan was similar to the "Good Friday Agreement" of 1998, the most recent diplomatic attempt to solve the "troubles" in Northern Ireland.

I came to admire these men who had been part of the violence in Northern Ireland and now were putting their lives on the line in a different way. The plan they were presenting made it essential for them to work with the other side. Unfortunately, the British government refused to talk with representatives of the NUPRG because of their connection with the UDA and other paramilitary groups. Consequently, members eventually became discouraged and began to shift back towards their original militant stance.

Through BVS, I had the privilege of working with some amazing people and incredible groups, who dared to



At the BVS house in Ligoniel, Belfast: *Ruby Stickel (middle, with scarf) enjoying time with fellow BVSErs about 1977.*

take some radically new and different approaches to resolving the "troubles" in Northern Ireland. My work with the two groups contributed to my belief that all parties involved in conflict situations should be involved in discussions. For without open discussion and contact between all parties, how can there be any real or lasting solution?—**Ruby Stickel**

Ruby Stickel served in Belfast from 1974 to 1976 and 1979 to 1981. Ruby will soon retire from the Department of Labor and Industry in Harrisburg, Pa., to pursue her longtime interests in holistic healing, the environment, and peace. A member of the Church of the Brethren, she attends the Harrisburg Quaker Meeting.

■ ■ ■ Wednesday, 5 p.m.

Another taxi brings me to an organization called NICHS, in North Belfast. I first meet with the director, Jackie Chalk—an English woman who radiates cheerfulness and energy. Jackie talks about the work of NICHS, which operates a youth resource center and carries out a variety of cross-community and cross-border contact programs, some of them intensive and requiring a commitment of up to two years.

She calls the climate in the immediate community "a bit scary," noting that one-fourth of all the sectarian conflict and killings have occurred within a two-mile radius of her office. Driving her work is a desire to create a

better future for her young godchildren and for the many youth who pass through NICHS' doors. "I just want them to have a happy and peaceful life," she says.

Helping her and the NICHS staff in that effort is April Angel, a BVS worker from the Bear Creek Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio. April worked at the Women's Aid project in Belfast her first year, then moved to NICHS last fall. As we talk in her third-floor office, she says she has found the work with youth rewarding, but also an eye-opener.

"It's a humbling experience to realize you can only do what you can do," April says. "It's hard in the beginning because you want to see the results of what you're doing. You want high rewards, but you don't always see it. It can be hard to accept."



Walt Wiitschek

BVSeer April Angel of the Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren in Ohio works on the third floor at NICHHS, a youth program located in the sometimes turbulent area of North Belfast.

Later in the evening, we have a chance to see some of the small changes she is trying to build. We travel to a youth drop-in center where a group of teenagers from a Catholic community is doing a live, online chat—complete with Web cameras—with a Protestant teen group in another building a few miles away.

It's a first step before the groups meet face-to-face. It might not seem like much, but for them it's a new frontier. The staff monitor the exchanges to keep them positive amid the usual giggles of youth checking one another out.

"You learn to see things from a different angle," April says of her experience. "Being on the outside looking in you can see a lot more, not just what the media want you to see."

■ ■ ■ **Thursday, 9:30 a.m.**

The morning begins with one more brief trip in Belfast, as Quaker Cottage coordinator Grant McCullough picks me up and drives up a hill overlooking the city. The cottage has no current BVS workers, but it's the oldest active BVS project in Northern Ireland.

In the rural setting, staff work with mothers and children, most of them from poorer families. They seek to both strengthen the mothers and provide programs for the children while encouraging understanding between Protestant and Catholic clients. McCullough speaks highly of the BVS workers who have served

LEARNING TO LIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: **Outsmarting cows**

When I was a volunteer at the Kilcranny House/Peace People farm, I chose to live in the barn for a year. The barn was surrounded on three sides by lush green cow pasture and located just behind the vegetable garden. Creature comforts were limited: no insulation, no plumbing, a small electric heater. Everyone thought I was a bit odd for actually wanting to live in the barn.

Kilcranny was thought by the surrounding community to be a weird vegetarian commune. (The longhaired guy living in the barn didn't do much

to convince people otherwise.) Anne Cummings, who ran the place, was the antithesis of weird veggie commune, and she worked hard to convince the community and the world that Kilcranny House was a legitimate conference center. Anne wanted to run a successful business and be respected by our patrons. I wanted to grow organic veggies and create the perfect compost heap. After a while I came to realize that Kilcranny was about balance and extremes coming together, and I grew to appreciate and respect Anne and her work at the farm.

I appreciated the animals as much as I appreciated Anne. The geese, goats, chickens, ducks, a donkey, and a pony made a lasting impression on me. The goats, Clover and Rebecca, taught me humility. Somehow every morning Clover managed to either kick over the bucket of milk I had just got from her, or stick her dirty hoof in it.

Every animal had a distinct "personality." Take the neighbor's cow, for instance. Walking home after a late night in Coleraine, I was cutting through our neighbor's pasture when I got the chilly sensation of being fol-

“The lessons I learned from the animals, my co-workers, and living in the barn are the ones I usually think of when someone asks me what being a BVSer in Northern Ireland meant to me.”

Dave Meredith tries out some stilts at the farm at Kilcranny House in 1992.



there over the years, including Christy Bischoff, who finished her term in February.

“She reached one kid that no one else could,” McCullough says. “That’s the kind of difference a volunteer can make. The value of having volunteers is incredible. They seem neutral in this environment, so they’re not labeled, and they also bring a cultural awareness to our children. It unlocks a whole sort of avenue for the children, that the world isn’t just Belfast.”

As I ride the van back into the city while it picks up clients, the driver asks one woman if she would ever venture into a Protestant neighborhood—designated by curbs painted in the red, white, and blue of the British flag—just a few blocks away from her Catholic one. She answers “Oh, no!” without hesitation. There is still much work to do.

“As they meet, they find more in common than different,” McCullough says. “There’s a

lot they share. When you open up your heart and share with someone, the label’s gone.”

■ ■ ■ Thursday, 1 p.m.

I leave Belfast via another bus, this time rolling westward toward Derry (also known as Londonderry). The scenery is breathtaking, a reminder that with conflict fading this could become another European tourist mecca.

At the Derry station, I find BVS volunteer Sarah McLaughlin, and we talk over lunch. She grew up in Spokane, Wash., and did a study abroad program in Ireland while she attended St. Joseph’s University. She returned after graduation for a service-learning program that included a day in Derry, where she met then-BVS worker Holly White and other staff at the Peace and Reconciliation Group (PRG).

Sarah was determined to come back, and

lowed. When I turned around, one of our neighbor’s cows stood frozen in her tracks not 20 feet away. I think she really thought that I couldn’t see her and that she was sneaking up on me. Every time I continued to walk, she started also, matching my pace exactly. It began to freak me out, so finally I turned around and walked backwards the rest of the way home, as she stood frozen in the middle of the field, confused and wondering how her prey could have slipped away from her like that. To this day whenever I do a job resume, I include “able

to outsmart cows.”

The lessons I learned from the animals, my co-workers, and living in the barn are the ones I usually think of when someone asks me what being a BVSer in Northern Ireland meant to me. —**Dave Meredith**

Dave Meredith served 1992-1994 at the Kilcranny House farm in Coleraine, Northern Ireland. Today he is the Community Recreation Coordinator for the City of Richmond (Ind.) Parks and Recreation Department, where he runs the city’s largest free summer camp, shows free outdoor movies, and coordinates classes, workshops, and clubs. “Yes, it’s a pretty cool job, but what I really want to be is a fireman.”

LEARNING TO LIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: **One word**

I was the first BVSer at the Peace and Reconciliation Group, a peace group in Derry/Londonderry, a city in the northwest of Northern Ireland. After a year of preparations, my co-workers and I were facilitating our cross-cultural (Protestant and Catholic) youth group to go on a 10-day exchange to Germany. It was the first exchange our group had organized.

By the time we went on the exchange I had worked for a year in Northern Ireland and was versed in the nuances that make up life there—what colors it's okay or not okay to wear, where to say the full name of my city (Londonderry) and where to say the shorter version (Derry), where to take a black taxi and where not to. . . I knew this. But in one word I realized that I was no onlooker, neutral party sitting on a fence, trying to help "them" bridge their differences. I had come smack-dab into the reality of my own prejudice.

The incident: well, it's a long story culminating in me calling a young man in

our cross-cultural youth group "sectarian." This is the equivalent of calling someone in a diverse group a "racist." My utterance of one word in this situation was enough to jeopardize my project's history of cross-cultural work, not to mention endangering the success of the exchange trip to Germany we were about to go on. Really.

The young man's parents (I had unknowingly said this to the stepson of a prominent local politician) called the next day to threaten to take him out of the program, and to spread the word that we were cross-cultural in name only. I made apologies to the young man, to his parents, to the group, and to my co-workers. This incident knocked the self-serving, American peacemaker right out of me, but the young man held no apparent grudge against me and even

formed a cross-cultural romance with a young woman on the trip.

In my studies on the process of intercultural education I keep running up on the idea of the experience of intercultural interactions as a process, rather than an end—especially our awareness of this process and our interactions. On the PRG exchange, we group leaders learned a lot about the youth we worked with from the experience of accompanying them. I wasn't the altruistic youth group leader, but a true participant in this experiment that we were undertaking. I didn't have the answers, I wasn't sure of the questions, but I was there. Participating. Sharing. Making gigantic mistakes. Learning something in the process.—*Mysti Roberts*

Mysti Roberts spent one year in Poland with BVS before moving to the Peace and Reconciliation Group in Londonderry/Derry (1997-1998). Today she is in St. Paul, Minn., in graduate studies in "experiential education," which she says is a "fancy-schmancy term for 'learning by doing,'" or hands-on activities, field trips, service projects, and educational exchanges.

Mysti Roberts, left, with project director *Tanya Gallagher* at the Peace and Reconciliation Group in 1998.



did so in October 2000. PRG, like several of the other projects, works at cross-community understanding and dialog in a variety of ways. One facet of its work is "cultural exchanges" for high school students and young adults, an area where Sarah has been particularly involved.

As we tour the offices, other staff talk about their work in a city where the current tensions exploded with "Bloody Sunday" in 1972. Today a river largely separates the Protestant and Catholic communities except for one Protestant compound called "The Fountain" in the heart of Derry.

"Segregation and separation is the norm," says PRG coordinator Tanya Gallagher. "People can do everything separately. It's ground ripe for misunderstanding and misconceptions, for hatred and fear to be communicated from one generation to the next."

We walk around the city's centuries-old walls before I depart, and many of the issues are visible: the peace walls around The Fountain, the river that serves as a wall, and more murals. One reads, "The desire for peace is a flame that cannot be extinguished." Someone, however, has crossed out the "not."

Different languages

■ ■ ■ Thursday, 6 p.m.

I arrive at the train station in the northwestern city of Coleraine, near the coast, and meet up with the final two BVS workers on my tour—Hope Woodard, from the Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., and Sara Cook, who grew up in Indiana and Ohio, where her father is a Church of God pastor.

It turns out to be Hope's one-year anniversary at her Kilcranny House project, so the evening is full of festivities. We go bowling and have a homemade Italian feast as I meet her co-workers and am quickly made to feel at home.

After dinner, Hope and Sara talk about their work. Sara currently serves at the Ballysally Youth and Community Center, which seeks to give kids alternatives to the paramilitaries and other street temptations, but will move to PRG in Derry when Sarah McLaughlin finishes in October. Hope's work is at a retreat center that hosts a variety of groups and emphasizes environmental education.

"It's not really a religious conflict," Sara says. "It's much more of a historical piece, and ethnic and cultural and political. It's amazing because it affects everything from people's names, to the schools they went to, to the nursery rhymes they sing to their kids, a whole different slang. The more you learn, the more questions you have."

Hope says one boy who attended an activity at Kilcranny later wrote on an evaluation that he found the discussion on human rights interesting "because I didn't know I had any."

She acknowledges, too, that the cross-community work can be difficult, since people will often be "politically correct" in such situations, saying what they are expected to say. It takes time to build trust to the point where they can be honest. Still, the two volunteers say they see progress.

"You can see some people being open to the process," Sara says. "People are more comfortable with the idea of peace, even if they can't completely embrace it yet."

■ ■ ■ Friday, 11 a.m.

After a night at Kilcranny and a tour of the facilities there, I'm on a train again, heading back to Belfast and again observing the rugged beauty of the land while pondering the tension and sadness that has filled it.

I worked in Belfast along the "peace line," a large metal wall separating Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods. I felt comfortable crossing the line because I knew there would be no questions once I opened my mouth and my accent was recognized. Even though we technically speak the same language in the United States as people do in Northern Ireland, it doesn't sound the same. I often had difficulty understanding the English I heard. On one

occasion, I was having dinner in a restaurant with a friend. The waitress ran to the table, said something, and my friend ran out of the restaurant. I was baffled, and tried to pay the waitress. She told me there had been a bomb threat and urged me to leave.

When I think of the number of mistakes I made coming from a country with no visible military presence to a country where there were uniformed soldiers on the streets, I am amazed that I suffered no major consequence. Probably the worst situation was borrowing my boss's car and traveling around Northern Ireland with two other Americans. We traveled into a small town, parked outside a pub, and went in for a meal. We saw the signs indicating that this was a controlled zone, but this had no meaning for us. When we returned to the car we found the British Army doing maneuvers around it. We learned they were going to blow up the car, fearing it had a bomb planted inside. We all sighed a breath of relief, and didn't repeat this mistake.

The people of Belfast were very friendly but the climate and customs, in addition to the language, were a challenge to me. I was also bothered by the security measures common at

the time—being frisked and having one's bag checked. It wasn't until I had been there a year that I felt at home. Many of my friends started saying, "I never liked an American before," and I started to love my friends and the experience in Northern Ireland.—Peg Gibble

Peg Gibble worked in Belfast from 1983 to 1985 with a project of the Belfast Voluntary Welfare Society called the "Family Centre" for a year, and then with the Irish Council of Churches as well as with the Corrymeela Community in her second year. Today she lives in Elgin, Ill., where she is a member of the Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren and works as a licensed clinical social worker. Peg is a single parent and has three children.



Peg Gibble when she was a BVSer, with a caseworker and children from the Family Centre in Belfast.

“I expect that one could spend three years here and not understand all the complexities of the situation, let alone three days.”



As Sara and others noted along the way, the conflict is no longer really over religion. Its centuries-old roots may lie in that soil, but today Brethren in the United States likely have more actual theological quarrels than do the parties in Northern Ireland, many of whom never go to church. Instead, the names “Protestants” and “Catholics” have become labels for groups that differ in economics, politics, and a host of other social issues.

As we continue to learn in the US, old prejudices and stereotypes die hard. The barriers between blacks and whites and the sometimes bloody history of race relations in this country may be our closest parallel.

I expect that one could spend three years here and not understand all the complexities of the situation, let alone three days. I admire those who persist in such muddied waters. It is good to

BVS worker John Adams *pauses on the streets of downtown Belfast as he heads to a day of work at the Mediation Network.*

LEARNING TO LIVE IN NORTHERN IRELAND: Gratitude

Belfast was a galvanizing experience. I speak of the importance of Belfast and its people in my life in terms of profound gratitude. Alfie Midgley, who was my friend from the start, perhaps best personifies what I received in Belfast. When I met him, Alfie was a youth worker at Agnes Street Community Centre. He had been a shop steward and labor organizer in a time and place in which working people were easily divided.

Alfie could recount strikes and labor rallies broken, literally, by a sectarian opportunist waving the Union Jack. This symbol of political difference could overshadow the workers’ common experience of injustice. Alfie was a radical. He once organized his shop floor so that production bonuses were shared equally by all the workers.

With friends on both sides of the religious/political divide, Alfie had hope.

The great Brazilian teacher and liberation thinker, Paulo Freire, and Alfie were shoots from the same stalk. Neither believed that experts and teachers are repositories of knowledge. Instead, they both believed in leaders who animate the people around them to think, speak, and act. Leaders encourage people to identify their problems and take action to address them. Both Alfie and Freire understood and respected the capacity of those who are overlooked, marginalized, and excluded to disclose important, world-changing truths. In Freire’s words are mirrored the wisdom that Alfie taught in his own way: liberation is mutual.

“True generosity consists precisely

in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. False charity constrains the fearful and subdued, the ‘rejects of life,’ to extend their trembling hands. True generosity lies in striving, so that these hands—whether of individuals or entire peoples—need be extended less and less in supplication, so that more and more they become human hands which work and, working, transform the world” (*The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*).

I lived and worked with Alfie at a bleak time. Gunmen and car bombers made the sectarian divisions seem insurmountable and eternal. But Alfie spoke out of a certitude that they were neither. Alfie lived for change. He had learned that change was possible under difficult circumstances. Alfie taught me to respect the capacity of disadvan-

see signs of hope, and comforting to know that the Church of the Brethren is related to efforts to nurture that hopefulness here.

■ ■ ■ **Friday, 5 p.m.**

After lunch with former BVS worker Megan Blinn and Scott Shively and a few hours to explore downtown Belfast on my own, I'm on yet another train, this time heading to Dublin and eventually my flight home.

The border between Northern Ireland and the Republic is invisible as the train crosses it, with no signs and no checks of documents. In other respects, however, the two places are worlds apart. Political realities may mean that a border will need to still be part of the future. I find myself hoping for these warmhearted people, though, that the conflict will not be.



Walt Wiltschek is manager of news services for the Church of the Brethren General Board. He traveled to Northern Ireland in late March following a trip to London.

taged people and to take the long view.

I returned from Belfast determined to re-plant myself at home. In the 30 years since—building housing, developing shelters, organizing tenants, working with exploited new arrivals to our land—I have seen our harsh society move in the direction of manufacturing more poor and vulnerable members, persons to be excluded, institutionalized, or repressed from our collective awareness. Despite all this, I do not dismay because I have known people like Alfie. Gratitude keeps me going.—Ken Smith

Ken Smith of New Castle, Del., the "pioneer" BVSer (1972-1974) in Northern Ireland, served at the Agnes Street Community Centre, Belfast. Today he is the director of the Delaware Housing Coalition, a non-profit organization that does advocacy and organizing around low-income housing issues.

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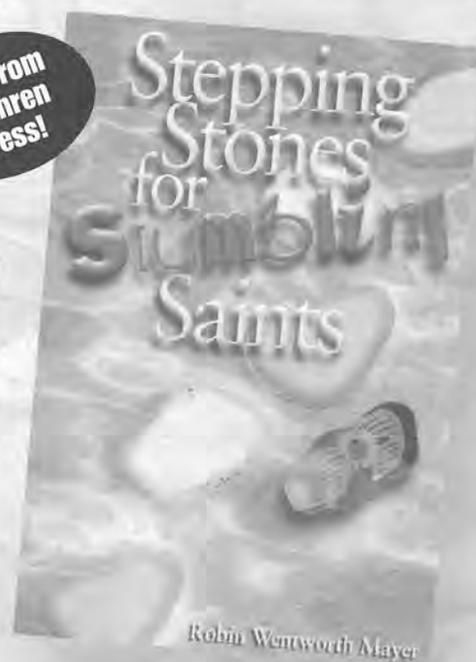


Stepping Stones for Stumbling Saints

by Robin Wentworth Mayer

This whimsical collection of conversational essays illustrates the familiar ways we all stumble in the walk of faith, but it also offers stepping stones to help us regain our footing. You may recognize Mayer from her popular Messenger columns of the same title. Here are readable essays that focus on coping with fear, failure, and feelings of inadequacy, learning from our mistakes, personal growth through painful experiences, working on building healthy relationships, making changes, accepting limitations, and focusing on things above. Walk beside someone who will help you see faith's stepping stones.

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Christy Waltresdorff



New "relationships" with

INDIA

The General Board brings to the Annual Conference this year a recommendation for broadening denominational partnerships in India to include the Brethren who chose to leave the united church. Excerpts from the recommendation, approved at the March General Board meeting, are on page 27.

Brethren tradition in India continues as Wendell Flory washes feet.



Merv Keeney

The Church of North India (CNI) has been a partner with the US church since its formation in 1970, and the General Board action encourages strengthening this relationship, also. Tensions between the two groups have continued since some Brethren began to separate in 1978. The 1998 request from the India Brethren for recognition led to formation in 1999 of the General Board study committee.

The General Board study committee includes Christy Waltersdorff, a pastor and General Board member, who had never been to India prior to the committee's visit in 2000; Wendell Flory, a former India missionary, who enjoyed reviving his Gujarati language from more than 40 years ago; Ernest Thakor, a member of the Indian community in America, who has lived in the US since childhood and has extended family in both churches in India; and Merv Keeney, the General Board's director for Global Mission Partnerships, who has responsibility for international mission relationships. Here, the committee responds to common questions about what they learned and the proposal.

“The committee found the India Brethren to be a worshiping community that is seeking to reclaim its Brethren identity and wants to reconnect with the US church which helped to birth it.”

CHURCHES

What key points do our members need to know about this proposed direction?

Christy: When this process began, our committee did not have preconceived notions of the outcome. We really tried to see the situation with fresh eyes and open hearts. This recommendation was created through a great deal of prayer, thought, and conversation. The committee took its responsibilities very seriously. We looked carefully at the issues, both past and present. We listened to the opinions of others. And what it came down to for me was, where is God in this situation? Where is the Holy Spirit leading us at this time? In a country where Christians make up only two percent of the population and Hindu-Muslim violence is escalating, it seems right to lend support and affirm our relationships with two Christian groups.

Wendell: Both the Church of North India and the Brethren have values that we need to honor. We saw God at work among both groups. The US Church of the Brethren, which helped to found

both these Christian groups in India, needs to support both groups.

Ernie: The committee has met separately with the CNI and the Indian Brethren and heard from concerned voices here in the US. Throughout this process we have prayerfully sought God's will for sisters and brothers in India. In the end we found it difficult to deny relationship to the India Brethren who are bound to us through common heritage.

Christy Waltersdorff is greeted by a few of the next generation of Brethren in India.





“The young adults spoke with passion about their dreams for the church and their hopes for connecting with Brethren young adults in the US and around the world.”

In what ways are the India Brethren a community of faith?

Merv: The committee found the India Brethren to be a worshipping community that is seeking to reclaim its Brethren identity and wants to reconnect with the US church which helped to birth it. Over more than two decades of separation from CNI, they have re-established Brethren practices and ordinances. They hold meetings to make decisions together for the good of the church. We observed leadership being elected and respectful transitions between leaders. The Brethren in India have a sense of community and identity.

What did you hear in your meetings with the women and young people among the India Brethren?

Christy: What we heard and saw were Christians committed to the gospel of Jesus Christ. We listened to people who are excited about their faith and their church. The young adults spoke with passion about their dreams for the church and their hopes for connecting with Brethren young adults in the United States and around the world. People shared quite openly about their pain in the separation from the CNI and the ongoing conflict between the two groups. Many expressed the hope that the two churches would be able to work together and be witnesses for Christ in India.

Students at the Brethren High School, Valsad, sit attentively on the ground as classmates and school administration welcomed the committee with garlands, dance, and music.

What about a sense of mission?

Merv: We saw evidence of outreach among the India Brethren both in starting congregations and in service to their communities. The Brethren reported starting new congregations at Dolara (1989), Rudha (1993), Sadanvan (1994), and Surat (1997); and a number of “evangelistic centers,” the status of a worshipping group prior to becoming a congregation, have been begun. In the year between the committee’s two visits, we observed the Mypur center moving from a mud-walled hut to a cement and steel building. Three high schools have been started to serve the communities and the Vocational Training College is still being administered. Among the Brethren gathered at Valsad last year to meet us, we observed a group of young people boxing up relief materials for earthquake victims in the northern part of their state within just a day or so of the tremors.

How does this proposed direction rest on Brethren identity and reflect Christian values?

Wendell: Brethren values contained in our ordinances are greatly respected by the India Brethren. We observed love feast, baptism by immersion, a child dedication service, openness to each member’s ideas and opinions, and use of the former District Constitution and procedures. We support openness to allow Christians to develop the kind of church in which each feels comfortable. That is certainly what Brethren founders did in 1708.

Christy: Our denomination has a long history of supporting no force in religion. In fact, those who gave birth to the church did so by walking away from the large, established state churches. They formed a small community dedicated to seeking the wisdom of the scriptures in their life together. During our two trips to India we saw two very committed Christian communities: the Church of North India and the Brethren group. Christ calls us to reach out to our sisters and brothers, to provide support and affirmation, to encourage one another in our faith. I don’t think we can do otherwise and still remain faithful to who Christ is calling us to be.

Why did it require more than two years of study for the committee to bring a recommendation?

Wendell: We realized that the request from the “separated Brethren” had been raised more than 20 years ago, and India relationships had been dealt with by Annual Conference previously. So there was a long history to factor into our thinking. We needed to hear

Recommendations of the General Board Study Committee on India

The 10-page study committee report concludes with these recommendations:

Even if oneness within a structure has eluded some participants in the union, let us continue to seek and make real our oneness in Christ. Having acknowledged the essential role for the Indian churches to guide their own futures, the decision before the US church is simply a choice about how to relate to the two churches in India. While the committee understands the reasons for earlier stances taken by the church to relate solely to CNI, especially in the years immediately following the union, we conclude that a fresh approach is more in the spirit of God's leading at this time. We envision an approach that nurtures new relationships with both churches.

In its role of overseeing international relationships for the denomination, the General Board is encouraged to begin an intentional process of building a relationship with the India Brethren. This will be a time of learning to know each other after three decades of separation. Initial tasks will include defining the relationship and clarifying mutual expectations. Based on preliminary discussions with the India Brethren, the following steps might be components of this relationship-building process:

- seminars in India on Brethren beliefs and practices, including peace,
- exchanges and visits for facilitating the interpersonal relationships,
- discussion of Brethren identity and spiritual formation in our differing cultures,
- participation by India Brethren leaders in US denominational training events, perhaps including study at Bethany,
- visitors to each other's annual meetings, and
- interactions with representatives of other international Brethren bodies.

The Church of North India has been our partner for 30 years. We remain committed to this partnership and desire to strengthen it. In consultation with CNI leadership, we want to explore ways to relate more meaningfully with CNI members as well. Based on our preliminary discussions with CNI leadership, the following steps might be included in strengthening our relationships:

- exchanges and visits to facilitate interpersonal relationships,
- discussion of spiritual formation in our differing cultures,
- seminars and training events in India and the US,
- visitors to each other's annual meetings, and
- workcamps.

The US church desires a relationship with two churches in India: the Church of North India and the India Brethren. And, to the extent that our participation is desired, the US church may continue to work with both churches to resolve the differences that exist surrounding the sharing of buildings and properties, joint mission and witness in their common communities, and the upbuilding of Christ's church in India.

The committee at the Wilbur Stover bungalow in Valsad, where meetings were held with the Brethren board as well as groups of young people and women. Committee members include Christy Waltersdorff, left, Wendell Flory, Merv Keeney, center, and Ernest Thakor, at right. Also present in the photo are Bob Gross, Gabriel Jerome, one of the young adults, and Shantilal Bhagat.

both groups fully. We wanted to give thorough and prayerful consideration as to how the American church could best respond to the request for recognition within the conflict situation that exists.

What prompts action now?

Ernie: The 1998 request for recognition prompted the General Board's response, but the issue of recognition is not new. For more than 20 years the Brethren in India have requested a relationship with the US church. During this time CNI has made it clear that it believes we can only have a relationship with them since the Brethren church no longer exists in India. We have honored our commitment to the CNI, and encouraged the groups to work out their differences. Yet the Brethren who separated have no desire to rejoin CNI. A change in mission policy has created a situation where we recognize Brethren in other lands, but to this point deny the same status to the India Brethren. By having a partnership with both churches we hope to open doors to resolve conflict and build more meaningful relationships.

How does the committee respond to the opposition of many former missionaries?

Wendell: I speak as a former missionary to India myself. During my years of service (1952-57) the negotiations for a future united church were under way. I was very much in favor of the proposed union, knowing that, with Indian independence under way, the days of the missionary were nearing an end. On my return to India with the committee I came to realize that political changes do not govern Christian feelings and wishes. Changes have occurred both in India and in the US church. To be bound by decisions of 30 years ago is impossible. We must make decisions based on current realities.

Merv: Brethren have always been ready to reshape our human-created church structures as God's leading or the work of the church have called for it. I believe the committee was able to see more options as it looked beyond the last three decades of church union. Many



of the India Brethren still remember the pre-union era which goes back to 1895, and seek to reclaim Brethren identity and practice—which was itself modeled after the first-century Christian community.

What about people who say we are breaking our word or covenant?

Christy: This is a very painful aspect of this whole issue. We certainly respect those who feel that we gave our word 30 years ago to honor the covenant forming the united church. We also talked with Indian Christians who feel that the united church broke the covenant very early in the union. There is certainly enough blame to go around for all involved in this conflict. It is important for all to move away from the blame game and to move ahead with the mission of the church. When the united church was created there were great hopes by all involved. For some, those hopes have not been realized. We feel that it is important to support both those who have found a home in the CNI and those who have returned to their Brethren roots and built their own church.

Why did the committee recommend building relationship instead of formal recognition?

Wendell: The relationship-building emphasis of the proposal encourages conversations and joint ministry between the US church and both groups in India. Our committee did not define the nature of the relationship with the India Brethren. Obviously we cannot go back to the former missionary relationship. We must create a new, forward-looking partnership with them.

Merv: What we propose is based on the way we relate to other churches who are a part of the global Church of the Brethren, such as Dominican Republic, Nigeria, and emerging Brazil. The church is not like a multinational corporation where the international headquarters has power over the national offices and directs their work. As God works through the Church of the Brethren, activating new relationship to Christ in people of other lands, the emerging churches are full members of the body of Christ, not stepchildren. We offer each other mutual acknowledgment, as branches on the same vine connected through Schwarzenau and rooted in Christ. Beginning from this point, we can begin to explore ways to both nurture and challenge each other toward greater discipleship.

Has the Board discontinued its efforts at reconciliation in India?

Christy: Absolutely not. Reconciliation is our greatest hope. Bob Gross has been working diligently with both sides to develop a process for talking with one another. It speaks well of Bob and his gifts in mediation that both groups feel comfortable with his leadership. Rec-

onciliation will certainly not be easy, and some believe it will never happen. But I believe that we should never underestimate the power of the Holy Spirit!

Merv: The reconciliation effort is a separate track from the question of relating to the India Brethren which the committee is addressing. Division and conflict have consumed energies and diminished the witness of both parties in India, so the General Board's mission office had retained Bob as a mediator and facilitator and we traveled to India together seeking resolution of the conflict even before the committee was formed. Since the parties in India have welcomed this external involvement, we will continue to support it.

Ernie, how does this question look to the primarily-Indian congregation you attend at Naperville, Ill.?

Ernie: The idea of the US church having a relationship with both the CNI and the Brethren in India is much more acceptable to the Indian community in America than in India. Members from both the CNI and India Brethren worship as one family here, yet they continue to support their parent church's position in India. The American experience has taught them that the behavior that led to the conflict in India would not be accepted here. They also understand that both sides in India have done a great deal that reflects poorly on the Christian community. We have a common feeling that something different needs to be tried to help the two sides to get along with each other.

Since the General Board is empowered to implement and oversee international mission for the denomination, why is the change in India relationships being brought to the Annual Conference?

Merv: While this proposed direction would not completely reverse earlier Conference actions, it proposes a new direction by affirming both churches in India. As the gathered, representative body that speaks on behalf of the whole church, the Annual Conference is the forum for the church to discern God's guidance in unity.

So, where is God in all of this?

Christy: That is the question I have been asking since my first visit to India in 2000. Like in all human conflict, God is right in the middle of it with us, encouraging us, challenging us, urging us to look beyond our own agendas, our own needs, our own power, and our own plans to see new possibilities. God is with us all along. I hope that the CNI, the India Brethren, and the Church of the Brethren in the US will stop looking inward and begin to look toward God for guidance, direction, and wisdom.



“We feel that it is important to support both those who have found a home in the CNI and those who have returned to their Brethren roots and built their own church.”

“We will be determining in the ‘big meeting’ the future shape of our common life and ministry. While I’m not disinterested in outcomes, I am aware that the manner of our living and conversation contributes to the outcomes.”

A fruitful conversation at Louisville

In 1993, the metaphor chosen by the writers of a *Christian Century* article to describe the church was “vacuous center.” What was called for was the development of an “emphatic center” framed by a discerned vision of what God is doing in the world and a church shaped by the New Testament.

It has been nearly a decade since then and the Church of the Brethren will be determining in the “big meeting” the future shape of our common life and ministry. While I’m not disinterested in outcomes, I am aware that the manner of our living and conversation contributes to the outcomes.

Specifically, I’m hopeful we can have a fruitful conversation at this year’s Annual Conference. Dale Ziemer of the Center

for Parish Development has outlined some biblical norms on which I trust we can agree, and which I would advocate we practice at Louisville.

1. Be clear about your purpose.

In going to the microphone, we need to ask, “Is what I’m going to say for the purpose of exchanging ideas, to deliberate on the issue, or to win the competition of solutions for the future direction of the church?” Can we remember the work of the Holy Spirit is to build up the body, and to gain a deeper discovery of God’s nature and purpose in the world?

2. Balance “advocating” and “inquiring.”

The dominant pattern in Western culture

is to take a position and argue it. Depending on how it is done, such advocacy may not lead to a fruitful conversation. Appreciative inquiry, on the other hand, invites an openness that can deepen our understanding of God’s interests and concerns. A posture of inquiry tends to withhold judgment, even while remaining true to the values or intent behind a position.

3. Wait for one another.

The Corinthians were not good at waiting for one another, particularly when it came to a common meal. The same thing can happen when we talk “at” each other. Checking out our understanding of what is said to us takes time. But it results in understanding.

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CPS COs, Volunteers and Friends of Castañer: A group of committed Castañer residents is planning to rebuild and restore the old Casa Grande to its original specifications using native lumber. The structure will be mainly used as a history of coffee museum—the agricultural commodity most associated with the community. Estimated cost is \$1,000,000. Your help is appreciated. Send donations to Los Amigos de la Casa Grande, Castañer, Inc., Apartado 1027, Castañer, Puerto Rico 00631. For more information, call Gil Claudio 440-259-4884.

Travel with purpose—(Bohrer Tours, Indianapolis, Ind.) SOUTH PACIFIC EXPLORER, May 5-21, 2003, visiting New Zealand and Australia. Special places of interest—Queenstown, Christchurch, Melbourne, Sidney, Canberra, Cairns, The Great Barrier Reef Excursion. For information, contact Bohrer Tours, Wendell and Joan Bohrer, 8520 Royal Meadow Drive, Indianapolis, IN 46217; tel/fax 1-317-882-5067, cell 1-317-201-3847, e-mail rdwboh@strato.net or rdwboh@aol.com.

Travel: “CHINA: Ancient Wisdom.” January 18-23, 2003, educational tour of Beijing, Xian, and Shanghai. The Forbidden City, Temple of Heaven, Great Wall, Ming Tombs, Ancient Observatory, Buddhist/Taoist Temples, Terra Cotta Soldiers, Chinese school, traditional pharmacy, evening cruise on Yangtze River. College credit available: “The Religions of China” & “Multi-Cultural Education.” Superior class hotel, buffet meals, leave from 50 different USA cities: \$2195. Contact: Drs. Herb & Jeanne Smith, McPherson College, McPherson, KS 67460. E-mail: smithh@cs.mcpherson.edu.

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Assumptions, particularly in heated conversation, often result in miscommunication, or worse, when we act on such assumptions.

4. Bear with one another.

When the going gets tough, Paul's advice in Ephesians 4:2 is love in action. In such moments, even the church needs to be reminded of this norm.

5. Be subject to one another.

In times when agreement is hard to come by, this value is all the more important. It involves the hard work of listening to another point of view, maybe for the first time.

These biblical norms are a start for a fruitful conversation. On the day of Pentecost, Luke writes that when the Holy Spirit was poured out on those gathered, ancient differences and barriers were overcome. God's nature and purpose in Jesus Christ was seen clearly and shared. Without the Holy Spirit shaping the conversation, our speeches can degenerate into a verbal brawl, even on the Conference floor.

Glenn F. Timmons

Elgin, Ill.

Jesus didn't deny ministry

What does it mean to deny another's ministry?

In the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37), Jesus illustrated true ministry by the actions of the Samaritan, who, alone of the passersby, stopped to serve the wounded man by the roadside. Yet to the Jews, the Samaritans were anathema, unclean, strange. Would any good Jew allow him/herself to be ministered to by a Samaritan? Would any good Jew deem a Samaritan a worthy example of ministry? Jesus did.

Jesus contrasted the lavishness of the ministry of the woman who anointed his feet with the paucity of the ministry of his host, the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50). Yet the eyes of the community would have deemed Jesus' host the one best fit for ministry, and not the woman, a sinner. Did Jesus' host see the woman as fit for ministry to him? No. But Jesus did.

Sarah Major (1808-1884) was a

Brethren woman with the gift of preaching born into a Brethren world whose tradition denied the overt ministry of women. Scripture was cited that prohibited her use of her gifts. Did her gifts dry up and disappear? No. Did God transplant her gifts into a more "suitable" body? No. Scripture could still be cited to prohibit the ministry of women in official capacities in our church. Yet who would say that they had never been helped by the ministry of a woman?

What does it mean to silence anyone with God-given gifts? It is inconsistent to accept the ministry of women in official capacities despite scripture to the contrary, and not to accept the ministry of others, such as gays and lesbians, despite possible scripturally based reservations. The Bible is complex enough to offer scriptural support for almost any point of view. But Jesus' every action showed that he came to teach the law of love, not the love of law, even of scriptural law.

The priest who "passed by on the other side" probably could have cited a scriptural reason for not stopping to help the wounded man by the roadside. Perhaps a religious code for cleanliness would have been violated, or a prohibition of association with the "wrong" kind of person. Was Jesus impressed by his strict adherence to religious law? No. Jesus was impressed by wholehearted service by anyone! Even tax-collectors. Even prostitutes. Even Samaritans.

If God has given someone a gift for ministry, who are we to stand in God's way? Who are we to limit the hand of God ministering through every single one of our brothers and sisters? The gifts of God are freely scattered throughout the community. Is the world such a perfect place that some people's gifts are not needed? No!

The issue is whether or not we are open to receive and encourage the ministry of each of our brothers and sisters. Jesus lifted up people who were thought to be unclean and impure as models of ministry and service to others. Will we? Jesus was willing to be served by people others deemed unfit. Are we?

Shawn Kirchner

La Verne, Calif.

Please send information for Turning Points to Verneida Cole, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 x 247; vcole_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published.

New members

28th Street, Altoona, Pa.:

Robert H. Buterbaugh, Jr., Tamara R. Buterbaugh, Justin Clark, Brittany Hiles, Cathy Hiles, John Hiles

Ambler, Pa.: Linden McEntire,

John Hill, Gary Scott, Sandy Miller, Craig Miller, Phil Smith, Betty Smith, Jack Brycki, David Morgan

Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio:

Chris Landis, Jennifer Landis

Black Rock, Glenville, Pa.:

Daniel Beard, Amy Furhman, Andy Miller, Zane Miller, Mark Schaefer, Robyn Schaefer, Laura Schaefer, Carley Wantz, Emily Weaver

Blue Ridge, Va.:

Cathryn Woolridge, Chelsey Heinlen, Aaron Thomas

Brandts, St. Thomas, Pa.:

Ray Heckman, Barb Heckman, Michelle Strock, Ed Shields, Deanna Shields, Roger Harmon, Lisa Harmon

Brook Park Community,

Ohio: Zachary Ammons, Garrett Baer, Jane Boomer, Lauren Schmid, David Sweet, Sandy Sweet

Chambersburg, Pa.:

Ryan Shipp, Margaret Wooley Defiance, Ohio: Patrick Foster

Dixon, Ill.:

Clay Appenheimer, Myrtie Bain, Ramses Arreola, Rachel Cervantes, Dylan Coloni, Clifford Reisinger, Sharon Reisinger

Downsville, Williamsport,

Md.: Jason Hamby, Joe Spielman, Joanne Weicht

Dupont, Ohio:

Scott Sarka, Alayna Leatherman, Holly Workman, Chad Adkins, Sonya Adkins, Jerry Craft, Rhonda Craft

Easton Peachblossom, Easton,

Md.: William and Daisy Starkey, Barbara Taylor, Fred Ireland, Eric and Jody Gunn, Randy and Robin

Bachand, Rica Denlinger, Michael and Robin Vallaint, Robert and Judy Musch

Eel River Community, Silver

Lake, Ind.: Bill Sherwin, Joyce Sherwin, Terry Workman, Angie Kneller, Carrie Sautter, Nathan Sautter

Elizabethtown, Pa.:

Blake Rosenberger, Chloe Hockey, Kaitlyn Retherford, Laura Jo Funck

Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio:

Ryan Jones

First, Saint Petersburg, Fla.:

Teresa King, Kyle King, Martin King, Anne Carter, Frank Beard, Larry Ehret,

Vicki Ehret, Bill Fleming, Rosalie Fleming, Josephine Johnson

Florin, Mount Joy, Pa.:

Margie

Funk, James Grubb, Rickie Grubb, Brent Peiffer, Mandy Peiffer, Michael Rutherford, Christopher Weatherbie, Karen Weatherbie, Veda Wilson

Frederick, Md.:

Mary Sue Boxer, Steve Brunner, Peggy Brunner, David Cruzan,

Cathy Cruzan, Dan Cuddahee, Bette Cuddahec, Marcia Kolander, Charles Kreitz,

Kimberly Kreitz, Judd Rexroth, Meegan Rexroth, Stacey Harrison, Amy Harrison, Tom Mitchell, Cathy Mitchell, Timothy Russell,

Angie Russell, Lester Caudle, Lisa Caudle, Daniel Guyton, John Lee, Joyce Early

Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.:

Thomas Jouannet, Eugene Hofman, Elizabeth Hofman, Fawn Marie Winfield,

Angela Marie Gainer, Sherry Lynn Tester, Alan Harshman, Larry Specht, Robin Specht, Linda C. Grossnickle

Hagerstown, Md.:

Travis Edward Poling, Freda C. Thawley, Jordan Crilly, Cassandra Heyer, Megan Stotelmyer, Aaron Gingrich,

Garrett Jessop, Justine Beachley, Mariel Beachley

Harrisburg, First, Pa.:

Betty Brinkman, Fred Kho, Brian Kho, Helen Kho, Bryon Kho, Olivia Boswell,

Nathaniel Olivencia, Jessica Olivencia

Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.:

Kim Marshall, Rachel Bardell, Donald Speece

Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.:

Muriel Ferris, John and Estella Horning, Roy and Phillis Stern

Hagerstown, Pa.:

Goldie Seaton, Matthew Stotelmyer, Ryan Hutzler, Christiana Beachley, Elizabeth Jane Beachley, Ryan David Beachley, Dennis

Browne, Amy Clipp, Amanda Crossland, Laura Farnen, Lois Hightman,

Edward L. Poling, Marjorie Poling, Laverne Rohrer

Huntsdale, Carlisle, Pa.:

Glenn Rhoads, Marlin Sheaffer, Ruth Shoff, Jared Davis, Mike Dewalt, Shawn Sennett, Jr.,

Natasha Sennett, Amanda Rhoads, Justin Rhoads, Drew Sheaffer, William Sheaffer, Clayton Weber, Glenn

Vanasaden, Sr.

Kokomo, Ind.:

Lisa Bricker, Mary Cox, Alan Lawson, Danielle Lawson, Sarah Steiner

Lititz, Pa.:

Natasha Blymier, Courtney Bomberger, Jessica DeWitt, Chelsea Kreiter,

Billy Longenecker, Bobby Longenecker, Kaitlyn Ober, Brittany Ruth, Lauren

Tennis, Meredith Way, Erinn Weiler, Rodney Adair, Sandra Pennell, Ronald

Gordley, Pauline Gordley, Craig Thompson, Lynne

Thompson, Keith DeWitt, Lisa DeWitt

Manor, Boonsboro, Md.: Earl May, Glenna May, Dan Cole, Wanda Cole, John Golden

Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Virginia Crossen, Jean N. Hreha, Jeff Workman, Kerri Workman

Marsh Creek, Gettysburg, Pa.: Sherry Hoover, Benjamin Smith, Mark Orndorff, Cheryl Orndorff

McPherson, Kan.: Bob Brax, Jill Brax, Ben Clark, Brady Crist, Lesli Gilbert, Craig Lolling, Robb Krehbiel, Will Krehbiel, Taylor Stevens

Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa.: Fred Graham, Barbara Graham, Sarah Drennen, Katrina Frey, Kevin Groff, Eric Holzhauser, Jared Krantz, Neal Lefever, Caitlyn Mauger, Karen Mauger, Nicole Welk, Ben Wimer, Jacob Holzhauser

Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa.: William Ake, Betty Ake, Steve Ayers, Kendra Foor

Middle Creek, Lititz, Pa.: Robert McCloud, Evelyn McCloud, Miquel Saenz, Dolly Saenz, Isai Saenz, Daniel Saenz, Stephen Soltys, Delma Soltys, Arline Heisy, Amy Charles, Kay Shirk, Arlene Hershey

Middlebury, Ind.: Mike Baxley, Linda Baxley, Ken Abbott, JoAnn Abbott, Jennifer Heckaman, Jeff Plummer, Jan Plummer, Andy Showalter, Marcy Showalter, Jeremy Gingerich, Liz Gingerich, Jeanne Fore,

Mount Morris, Ill.: Harold Root, Georgian Root, Earl Miller, Richard Voss, Theresa Le Francois, Mary Green

Mountville, Pa.: Victoria Hart, Timothy Plack

Moxham, Johnstown, Pa.: Gale Lynn Shipley, John Ross Robertson

Myerstown, Pa.: Jennifer Wenger, Kimberly Wenger, Sarah Hartranft, Andrew Brubaker, Trina Miller, Michael Deitz, Brandon Deitz, Jeremy Burke, David Ceresini, Lori Ceresini, Brittany Ceresini, Megan Lengel, Monica Mishoe, Brian Miller, Donald Hickernell, Phyllis Hickernell, Jeanette Hartman, Jason Krall, Anita Hartranft, David Wenger

Osage, McCune, Kan.: David Wallace

Prairie City, Iowa: Jon Nolin, Kerry Gumm, Carroll Nolin, Marilyn Nolin, Tim Neal, Teri Neal, Lauren Neal, Brandon Neal

Scalp Level, Windber, Pa.: Kerrie Smith, Joshua Robertson, Ray Crawford, Heidi Smith, Mandy Robertson, Jane Shirk, Jackie Schoening, Neva Wise

Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Ron Woodall, Ann Woodall

Union Bridge, Md.: Joan Baile, Melvin Baile, Barb Dickason, Rob Dickason,

Benjamin Leiter
Union Center, Nappanee, Ind.: Terry Chanley, Trisha Searer, Margaret Neff, Kathy Miller, Crystal Hackler, Tiffany Dull, Mike Newcomer

Uniontown, Pa.: Mark Ellsworth, Mark Allen Ellsworth, Kenneth Hager, Bethany Frazee, Arta Faye Hruby, A. Scott Hruby, Jared Stein

West Manchester, North Manchester, Ind.: Preston Moudy

Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio: Michael Hileman

Wedding anniversaries

Brubaker, John Henry and Orlena, Lititz, Pa., 60

Erslinger, Mervin, Sr., and Ruby, New Paris, Ind., 55

Frederick, Carlyle and Juanita, Nappanee, Ind., 55

Gordan, Michael and Eleanor, Lorida, Fla., 50

Group, Russell and June, Franklin Grove, Ill., 60

Hasting, Delmar and LaVern, Lorida, Fla., 50

Heign, Ike and Mary Lou, Middlebury, Ind., 50

Hinton, William and Emma Jane, Martinsburg, Pa., 60

Imhoff, Kenneth and Lou Ella, West Salem, Ohio, 50

Little, Norman and Eileen, North Manchester, Ind., 60

Kesier, Roger and Thyra, Nappanee, Ind., 50

King, Roy and Pauline, Dover, Pa., 65

Miller, Frances and Bryce, Topeka, Kan., 50

Miller, Howard and Lena, Westminster, Md., 50

Moon, Walter and Evaline, Friedens, Pa., 65

Mowry, Richard and Dorothy, Manns Choice, Pa., 50

Mumma, Emily and Luke, Lorida, Fla., 50

Myers, Galen and Sylvia, Lorida, Fla., 60

Price, Gerald and Wretha, Lorida, Fla., 50

Robertson, Jesse and Wilma, Lorida, Fla., 55

Robinson, Minor and Ruth, Ft. Loudon, Pa., 60

Ruff, Carlton and Hilda, Broadway, Va., 60

Skillings, Harold and Lois, Springfield, Ohio, 50

Smith, Kenny and Dorothy, New Paris, Ind., 60

Stouder, Charles and Evangeline, Elkhart, Ind., 65

Snyder, Donald and Gladie, Waynesboro, Va., 65

Weaver, Raymond and Carol, Modesto, Calif., 60

Weldy, Edgar and Shirley, Middlebury, Ind., 50

Wenger, Richard and Marge, Lancaster, Pa., 55

Wentz, Gene and Thelma, Lorida, Fla., 55

Wyant, Delbert and Nellie, Topeka, Kan., 50

Wyrick, Clarence and Ellen, Lorida, Fla., 55

Deaths

Arndt, Christian, 80, Lancaster, Pa., March 24

Amos, Ruth Kinzie, 86, South Whitley, Ind., March 30

Barkdoll, Fred H., 81, Middletown, Md., Feb. 19

Bealer, Earl A., 81, Pottstown, Pa., April 1

Bowman, Evelyne, 81, Elkhart, Ind., March 14

Bowman, Gladys, 84, Wardensville, W. Va., Oct. 1

Brenneman, Earl W., 79, Glenville, Pa., March 30

Brubaker, Viola, 95, Rocky Mount, Va., March 24

Bush, William H., 95, Chambersburg, Pa., March 13

Buterbaugh, Ruth, 89, Ashland, Ohio, March 25

Callahan, Sara, 84, Reading, Pa., March 30

Cardwell, Walter, 75, East Freedom, Pa., April 8

Casper, Muriel, 93, St. Petersburg, Fla., April 13

Castle, Charles, 77, Jefferson, Md., Feb. 11

Clingenpeel, Lloyd, 94, Boones Mill, Va., Jan. 2

Conrad, Teresa Gearhart, 39, Hagerstown, Md., March 27

Cooper, Virginia, 89, Frederick, Md., March 5

Cripe, Don, 84, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 10

Cumming, Mary Elizabeth Gaunty, 93, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, Feb. 18

Dickey, Martha Frantz, 79, North Manchester, Ind., March 30

Diffenderfer, Edna, 89, Reading, Pa., Jan. 19

Eastep, Doris, 67, Wardensville, W. Va., June 3

Ebersole, Marie H., 90, Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 28

Faint, Blaine, 70, Honolulu, Hawaii, Jan. 18

Frushour, Rebecca, 86, Boonsboro, Md., July 3

Fuhrman, Merle M., 76, Glenville, Pa., Feb. 21

Good, David, 77, Ashland, Ohio, March 29

Gordan, Donald, 55, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 13

Gordan, Israel, 94, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 2

Grossnickle, Naomi, 83, Frederick, Pa., March 30

Grossnickle, Pauline K., 82, Myersville, Md., Jan. 26

Hamilton, Robert, 78, Lititz, Pa., Jan. 12

Harshman, Mary Poffenberger, 95, Boonsboro, Md., April 29

Hartman, Harl, 82, Pittsburg, Kan., April 3

Hawk, Gerry, 68, Sheloceta, Pa., March 22

Hendricks, Estelle, 87, Kingsley, Iowa, April 1

Hildebrand, William, Sr., 97, Frederick, Md., Feb. 11

Kaufman, Mel, 73, Middlebury, Ind., April 5

Keiper, H. LaRue, 92, Martinsburg, Pa., March 24

Kimmel, Lloyd, Jr., 93, Frederick, Md., March 2

Kline, Woodrow A., 87, Boonsboro, Md., Nov. 11

Lehman, Robert, 87, Johnstown, Pa., March 25

Leiby, Dorothy, 86, York, Pa., Jan. 25

Martz, Viola, 78, Washingtonville, Ohio, Jan. 1

Measley, Marion Elizabeth, 72, Glen Rock, Pa., Feb. 11

Medlar, Milton, 93, Dayton, Ohio, Sept. 5

Metzler, Miriam, 86, Lititz, Pa., April 14

Miller, Edith, 88, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 21

Mishler, Katherine, 88, Elkhart, Ind., Feb. 2

Myers, Mary Leanna, 96, McSherrystown, Pa., March 26

Nielsen, Alfred O., 84, Modesto, Calif., March 24

Nosselt, Lillian, 93, Seminole, Fla., April 14

Nusbaum, Thelma, 77, Middlebury, Ind., Feb. 26

Penrod, Eleanor S., 94, Johnstown, Pa., March 8

Petcher, Rhett, 86, Johnson City, Tenn., March 4

Phelps, Forrest R., 91, Greenville, Ohio, March 2

Ramser, Robert, 55, New Waterford, Ohio, March 24

Rantz, George C., Sr., 81, Pottstown, Pa., Feb. 25

Rash, Irene May, 91, Waterford, Calif., March 26

Replogle, Florence, 84, Greenville, Ohio, March 30

Ritchie, Cleta, 85, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 21

Rock, M. Lucille, 69, Chambersburg, Pa., Nov. 8

Roland, Esther, 81, Lititz, Pa., Feb. 21

Rowe, Patricia Elaine, 56, Ceres, Calif., Feb. 19

Rummel, Laura, 91, Johnstown, Pa., April 12

Sanborn, Malinda, 87, Boulder, Colo., April 17

Sandy, Michael W., 47, Elida, Ohio, March 21

Simmers, Martha, 95, Bridgewater, Va., March 13

Smith, Edward Charles, 68, Topeka, Kan., March 18

Snader, Paul, 86, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 23

Snyder, Verna, 87, Lancaster, Pa., Dec. 24

Stehman, J. Landis, 100, Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 27

Sweitzer, Emmert, 86, Shrewsbury, Pa., April 12

Teeter, John, 83, Warsaw, Ind., Dec. 13

Tombaugh, Verlin C., 90, Fallston, Md., April 5

Troxell, Robert W., 81, New Oxford, Pa., April 10

Walters, Thelma, 90, Martinsburg, Pa., March 25

Weaver, Dwight, 78, Elton, Pa., March 23

Weaver, Levi, 96, Lititz, Pa., March 4

Wiles, Letha A., 102, Middletown, Md., Sept. 28

Winkle, Lucille, 100, Continental, Ohio, April 12

Wolfe, Stewart, 91, West Reading, Pa., Feb. 7

Younkins, Fred H., 88, Brownsville, Ind., Jan. 6

Ordinations

Laszakovits, Gregory D., Papago Buttes, Scottsdale, Ariz., March 24

Murlin, Allen K., Kelly Chapel, Rada, W. Va., March 17

Pyles, Tyowen, Pitsburg, Arcanum, Ohio, March 17

Webster, Jerry R., Boulder Hill, Montgomery, Ill., April 7

Wenger, Jerriann Heiser, Huntingdon Stone, Huntingdon, Pa., March 17

Licensings

Boynton, Joni, Lewiston, Minn., April 7

Buckles, James William, New Carlisle, Ohio, April 7

Carr, Angela Tolbert, Christiansburg, Va., April 14

Reist, Pam, Lititz, Pa., Feb. 10

Walters, Karen S., Papago Buttes, Scottsdale, Ariz., March 24

Pastoral placements

Adkins, James, from interim to pastor, Richland, Pa., Feb. 10

Haldeman-Scarr, William L., from team pastor Bakersfield Community, Calif., to pastor, Pomona Fellowship, Calif., March 31

House, Daniel, team pastor, Piqua, Ohio, April 1

House, Rebecca, team pastor, Piqua, Ohio, April 1

Kingree, David, assistant pastor, Evergreen, Standardville, Va., Feb. 1

Maurer, Joann, from interim to pastor, Paxon, Harrisburg, Pa., Jan. 1

Princell, Pamela S., from youth pastor, Mexico, Ind., to pastor, Markle, Ind., April 7

Reiff, Opal G., from interim to pastor, Pike Creek, Monticello, Ind., April 7

Richardson, Rex, pastoral team with Paul Kohler, Champaign, Ill., Jan. 1

Routh, Joseph, pastor, Paradise, Smithville, Ohio, March 1

Stauffer, David C., pastor, Stevens Hill Community, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 1

Webb, Timothy, from interim to associate pastor, Locust Grove, New Castle, Ind., March 10

Webster, Jerry R., from interim pastor to pastor, Boulder Hill Neighborhood, Montgomery, Ill., Jan. 21

Williams, Edward Thomas, pastor, Knight's Chapel Fellowship, Barboursville, Va., March 1

Shifflett, Glenn D., from interim to pastor, Shiloh, Standardville, Va., April 1

Watkins, David S., pastor, Rossville, Ind., April 1



The pendulum needs a push

Finally the momentum has shifted against capital punishment in the United States. It seems only a matter of time now until this country no longer imposes the death penalty, like Canada, Mexico, Europe, and some 100 countries of the world. But tell that to the 14 men scheduled for execution in Texas before the end of July, or the hundreds awaiting death across the country. There is urgency to the abolition movement. How many more state killings will there be before capital punishment, now slowed, comes to a halt?

Last month Maryland's governor, citing "reasonable questions" about the fairness of the death penalty, ordered a moratorium on executions in his state. In Illinois, the Governor's Commission on Capital Punishment called for 85 legal reforms it said were necessary to make the state's system fair and just. The commission was appointed when Illinois Gov. George Ryan two years ago declared the nation's first capital punishment moratorium. After 13 men had been released from Death Row when it was proven they had been wrongfully convicted, Ryan courageously called a halt to executions.

Former US Senator Paul Simon, a longtime opponent of the death penalty, co-chaired the Illinois commission, which voted 8-5 to favor abolition of capital punishment. The issue is simple, Simon said in an interview with *MESSENGER*. "It's not a deterrent. It's just a barbaric practice." This is one of the subjects Simon can be expected to address when he speaks at the *MESSENGER* Dinner at Annual Conference in Louisville June 30.

Though a majority favored abolition, the commission concentrated its recommendations on making application of the death penalty more fair and just. Simon highlighted three general categories of recommendations:

- *Don't execute the retarded.* Since the death penalty was reinstated there have been 35 people with an IQ below 70 executed in the US, Simon says.

- *Provide adequate counsel and adequate review.* Unless it's a Timothy McVeigh-type case, Simon said, "If you can hire a good lawyer, you're not going to get the death penalty." More safeguards need to be implemented to prevent the poor from being sentenced to death disproportionately. The commission also found that state's attorneys in rural counties seek the death penalty more often than those from urban counties, so it said a statewide panel should review local recommendations for uniformity. Such a review could also guard against racial disparities, because the commission found that the death penalty is much more likely for killers of white victims than for killers of black victims.

- *Circumscribe the testimony of in-custody infor-*

mants. Simon's commission found that prison snitches, on whose testimony many convictions are based, have little to lose and much to gain by lying, so courts should take precautions to ensure their reliability.

Especially now that some politicians are beginning to see the light, the church has work to do. The Church of the Brethren has a long history of opposition to the death penalty, affirmed by Annual Conference statements in 1957, 1959, 1975, and 1987. But a strong majority of American Christians (presumably many Brethren among them) continue to support it, according to a 1991 Gallup Poll. Many Christians justify their support of the death penalty on what they believe is the biblical perspective, "an eye for an eye" (Exod. 2:23-25). They need to be persuaded to study the Bible more. In his new book, *Capital Punishment and the Bible* (Herald Press 2002), Gardner C. Hanks writes, "Christians need to approach this issue with a good deal of self-examination and discernment. For serious Christians, discernment must always begin with the biblical perspective. In this way, we open ourselves up to the mind of Jesus Christ."

Hanks argues that even if we study the Old Testament alone, we'll see that while the Hebrew law allowed the Israelites to practice capital punishment, it set stringent requirements for its practice. It required that the court give consideration of mitigating factors and demanded that capital punishment could be applied only when there was absolute certainty of the guilt of the accused. Finally, it required that capital punishment be applied fairly and without prejudice. These requirements end up being impossible to achieve, Hanks writes.

Then Jesus came along with a new requirement. To those who were about to stone the woman caught in adultery he said, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7).

Jesus taught love and forgiveness. Hanks: "But Jesus did not just teach this idea; he lived it out. Jesus' crucifixion and the other executions of the New Testament illustrate the failures of the human way of vengeance. Though laws exist to protect the innocent from execution, political and personal considerations overwhelm the laws. Sin is stronger than the law. Jesus' way is different. From the cross he forgave those who were killing him. The basic tenet of Christianity is that forgiveness is stronger than sin; love is stronger than death."—FLETCHER FARRAR

Capital Punishment and the Bible by Gardner C. Hanks is available from Brethren Press at 1-800-441-3712.

"How many more state killings will there be before capital punishment, now slowed, comes to a halt?"

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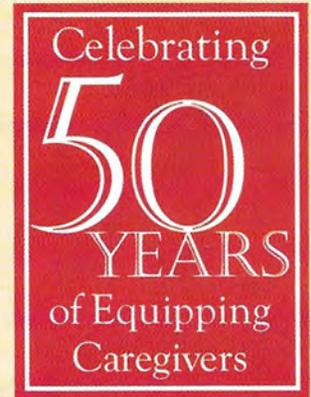
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McPherson, Kansas
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Keep On Keeping On

Tom Mullen, noted writer and humorist, will be the featured speaker at the Association of Brethren Caregivers' Annual Recognition Dinner



Using the theme "Keep On Keeping On" Mullen will invite attendees to honor the past but not be bound by it.

During the Saturday evening event, ABC will honor Phill Carlos Archbold, Charles Cable, and Janell Clary, RN, as recipients of the 2002 Annual Caregiving Awards. John Garber will be recognized upon his retirement from Bridgewater Retirement Community.



The Dinner will be June 29, 5 p.m., at the Kentucky International Convention Center, Rooms 109 & 112. Tickets are \$20 per person and should be purchased prior to Annual Conference.

Mullen will be available for book signing in the ABC Exhibit Booth following the Opening Worship.

Other Featured Meal Events

Brethren Chaplains Breakfast: The Last Dance

Those living with dying will dance until the last step. Chaplain Martha Waas-Gilbert will tell how chaplains can lead with style and grace.
Monday, July 1, 7 a.m.
Hyatt Regency, Kentucky Suite - Oaks
Tickets are \$12 per person

Church and Persons with Disabilities Network Luncheon: Exploring Jesus' Call to Be Friends

Black Rock Pastor Donald Hubbell will tell the inspiration for his church to develop a Summer Sunday program to educate children about disabilities.
Monday, July 1, Noon
Convention Center, Room 113
Tickets are \$16 per person

Denominational Deacon Luncheon

Michael Stern, a Brethren songwriter, storyteller and caregiver, will use music and story to creatively lead deacons in the four functions of deacon ministry.
Monday, July 1, Noon
Hyatt Regency, Regency Center
Tickets are \$16 per person



Association of
Brethren Caregivers
(847) 742-5100
www.brethren.org/abc/

For more information about the caring ministries events ABC will host at Annual Conference, visit the ABC website or consult the Annual Conference booklet.