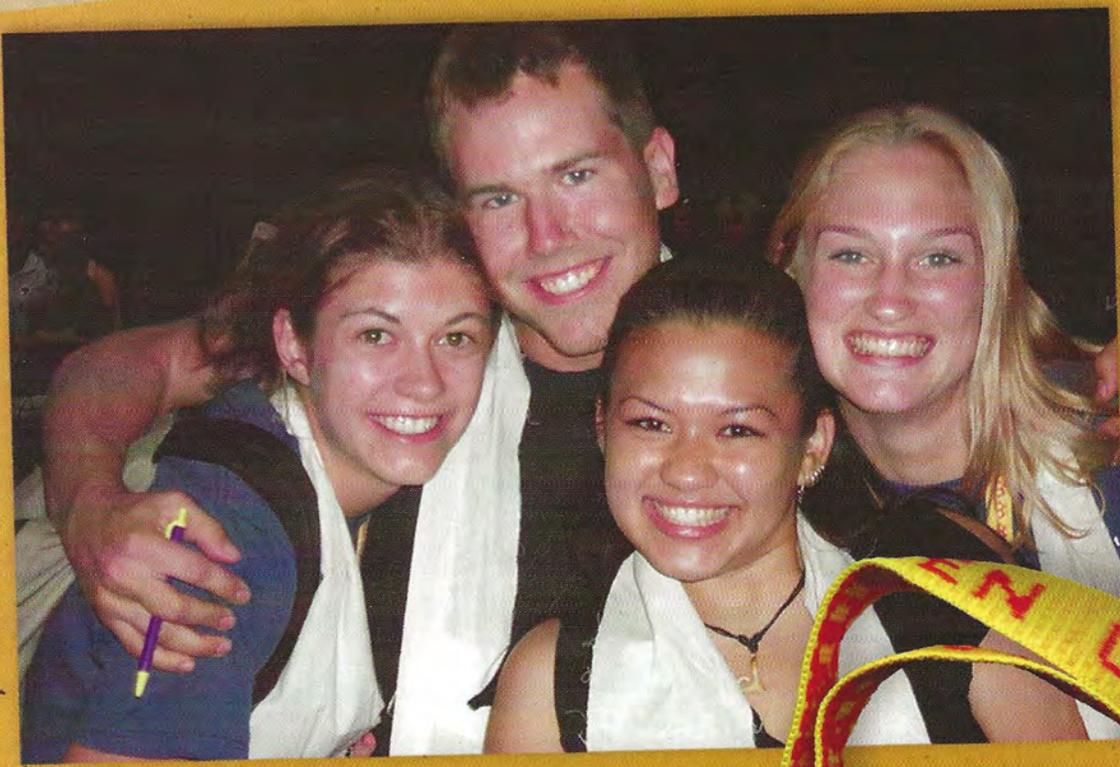


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The tree-planting service at
BethanyTheological Seminary
church planting training, May 2002



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Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER

Sharing an embrace one last time, Lorin Neuman-Lee, Adel, Iowa; Zack Hurst, Westminster, Md.; Erin McCourt, Modesto, Calif; and Alicia Schoen, McPherson, Kan., welcome an opportunity to capture the memories of NYC after the final worship service. Photo is by Walt Wiltschek.

Chris Detrick



10 Receiving a cup of cold water

It is not only more blessed to give than to receive, but often easier as well. Here Ken Gible explains what the Bible really says about the cup of cold water.

11 National Youth Conference 2002

This 12-page color section is a scrapbook of memories from NYC 2002—its spirit-filled worship, a world of workshops and vocational guidance, along with Christian rock, recreation, and the Rockies.

24 Christians coming together

In a major move toward ecumenical unity, Catholic, evangelical, and mainline Christian churches have quietly gotten together to form new relationships so they can speak with one voice when necessary and “offer a common witness for Christ in the world.” Judy Mills Reimer, general secretary, has been involved from the beginning and offers her perspective on what it all means.

28 Reflection on Sept. 11

Virginia Wiles, author of *Peace: God's Infinite Justice*, suggests Christians mark the notorious anniversary by meditating on what Paul means by “knowing nothing except Jesus Christ, and him crucified.”

DEPARTMENTS

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FROM THE PUBLISHER



I have finally given in to the fact that print is too small and lights are not bright enough. I've been nearsighted since a child, so it is a new and uncomfortable experience to find that I can't read small print no matter how close I get to it.

The situation became undeniable when I caused a meeting to start late after misreading the tiny silver hands on my tiny silver watch. After that, I went out and bought a bigger watch with a light-up face. And then I bought bifocal contact lenses.

It turns out that one eye has a contact lens for distance, and the other eye has a lens for reading. The optometrist said my brain would adjust. How impressive (assuming she's right) that I can force my brain into taking in these two sets of data and making sense of it. One eye can't see distance and the other can't see closer than three feet, but together they will be able to see just about everything.

With the pace of change in today's world, that exercise sounds familiar. One myopic part of me can comprehend what's right in front of me. Another part scans the horizon. If I can get myself properly trained, I will be able to take both the short and the long view, integrating two kinds of information.

In a recent personality profile of Christian pollster George Barna, Tim Stafford quotes from Barna's 1998 book *The Second Coming of the Church*: "At the risk of sounding like an alarmist, I believe the Church in America has no more than five years—perhaps even less—to turn itself around and begin to affect the culture, rather than be affected by it" (*Christianity Today*, Aug. 5, 2002). That's a downright gloomy picture of what can be seen around us. If he's right, the institutional church has only one year left.

Then Stafford provides a counterpoint by quoting *Leadership* editor Marshall Shelley, who says church history makes him doubt that "we're a step and a half away from extinction."

"The church is amazingly resilient," says Shelley. "Think of the Soviet Union, think of China, think of Africa. Spiritual vitality is not going to become extinct just because we don't have a certain kind of leader. The evidence is overwhelming on the other side. We have the privilege of cooperating with an irresistible force in God's grace."

Perhaps with one eye we can heed the prophets among us and use all suitable tools available to us to change, lest we die. And with the other eye, we can see with faith that God is not limited by numbers, trends, and other human constraints. With both eyes we can live vibrantly in a community of grace that faces the world realistically but which is not limited by our nearsightedness. "Be thou our vision, O Lord of our hearts."

Wendy McFadden

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How Indiana youth created the NYC theme song

Like thousands of other youth across the Church of the Brethren, members of the Bremen (Ind.) youth group were excited about National Youth Conference—but for a unique reason. They had created the NYC theme song.

The impetus came last September from adult advisor Mark Laudeman, who led the group in a conversation about the Esther story, source of the NYC theme. They discussed “how God puts us in situations where we can make a difference. We have a responsibility to act on what we believe, to stand up for what is right even when we want to stay silent, or when we want to conform to the ways of our world, or when we want to take an easier path.” The events of Sept. 11 gave potency to the theme, “for such a time as this.”

The youth chose several lines that seemed to say something special to them, and Mark used these to begin creating the song. Over a period of several weeks, they gave additional feedback while Mark continued to refine. Another adult, Dave Smith, wrote the second stanza and produced an instrumental track. (The third stanza was contributed by the NYC office, which also made some editorial refinements before the final version of the song was presented to the conference.)

Seventh-grader Emily Laudeman was pulled in to be lead singer. Her remarkably mature voice belies the fact that she wasn’t even old enough to attend National Youth Conference. For the audition CD, Emily was joined by Jordan Walter, Lauren Graybill, and Aaron Hostetler, who made the recording with the help of Dave Smith.

After submitting their creation to the contest, the youth group felt a great sense of accomplishment. “Though we take proud ownership in our song,” they wrote, “we know that song was a gift from God and that we are meant to share the spirit and the feelings of the song with others. We hope somehow, somewhere, the lyrics . . . will encour-



Members of the Bremen (Ind.) Church of the Brethren youth group show how exciting it was to submit an entry in the NYC theme song contest.

age someone to make a difference as they prepare to be ready for such a time as this.”

And the culmination? “It’s great to hear a song that started with five voices being sung by four thousand,” said Aaron Hostetler.

Brethren Village residents are “Wheeling for Wellness”

On Sept. 19 a team of eight recreational bicyclists—led by 83-year-old Brethren Village resident Mark Myer—will leave the continuing care retirement community located in Lancaster, Pa., and head west for what promises to be the ride of their lives.

Over the next 10 days these cyclists, riding in teams of two, will traverse the hills and vales, mountains and forests of Pennsylvania as they ride over 1,000 miles around the perimeter of the state, stopping at other retirement communities and as many Church of the Brethren sister facilities as possible.

As members of Team Wellness, their

goals are to raise funds for the construction of a new resident workshop at Brethren Village and to heighten awareness of the positive benefits of physical exercise for individuals of all ages. The event has a goal of raising \$250,000.

On nearly every day of their journey the Team will visit other retirement communities for lunch, dinner or overnight stays and deliver their wellness message to residents. Special dining events are planned for communities that, like Brethren Village, have contracted Allentown, Pa.-based Sodexo Senior Services to provide food and dining services for their campuses. Sodexo is partnering with Brethren Village to sponsor the ride.





Nevin Dulabaum

After a successful transplant operation, Cecil, Brian, and Judy Hess celebrate on the day Brian was cleared to leave Florida and return home to Pennsylvania following the surgery.

The Hess family sees a miracle of new life through medicine

Judy Hess is an active member of Sebring Church of the Brethren, where her husband, Cecil, serves as pastor.

In February 2001, Judy nearly died from kidney failure and began dialysis. On May 30 that year she was rushed to the hospital and brought back from cardiac arrest.

The prognosis? Undergoing a kidney transplant or receiving dialysis treatments three times a week for the rest of her life.

When he learned of his mother's condition, Brian Hess of Martinsburg, Pa., volunteered to donate one of his kidneys. After more than a year of tests and delays, Judy received a kidney from Brian in February.

More than 25 medical providers were used throughout the year to provide treatment, testing, dialysis, and the transplant, and more than \$250,000 in costs were incurred. According to the Hess family, the Brethren Medical Plan supported Judy, Brian, and Cecil by providing

coverage without complications.

Cecil Hess reports that his wife's health has improved "wonderfully" since the surgery, that she has gained weight and has high energy. Judy has been able to focus on getting better and on contemplating the events that have renewed her life.

"Thirty years ago I gave life to Brian, and now 30 years later he's giving me life back. It's just a miracle," Judy said.

—Nevin Dulabaum

Brethren Homes hold forum at The Cedars

The Fellowship of Brethren Homes held its Forum 2002 June 6-9 at The Cedars, a Church of the Brethren retirement community in McPherson, Kan.

Twenty-two people from nine retirement centers from across the nation participated this year. The program included touring The Cedars and a Mennonite facility, Schowalter Villa in Hesston, Kan.

In addition to the sharing times, there were two keynote speakers.

John Durso, an attorney working in long-term health care, presented a seminar focusing on current information on risk management and other legal issues for health care. Rick Stiffney, executive director of Mennonite Health Services, addressed the challenges facing retirement centers as he spoke at a Saturday evening banquet. Stiffney underscored the necessity of leadership with spiritual and faith-based perspectives.

The Fellowship of Brethren Homes—one of the ministry groups of the Association of Brethren Caregivers—received an invitation to hold Forum 2003 at The Brethren Village in Lancaster, Pa. The dates of Forum 2003 will be June 5-8.

California congregation celebrates 90 years

The Church of the Living Savior in McFarland, Calif., celebrated its 90th birthday April 21 with a special worship service and lunch. The congregation's pastor is Don Brewer.

The McFarland Church of the

Ralph McFadden



Participants at the annual Brethren Homes Forum toured The Cedars at McPherson, Kan., and a Mennonite facility, Schowalter Villa, in Hesston, Kan.

Brethren—as Church of the Savior was called until about 10 years ago—began with 22 charter members on April 21, 1912, just when the tiny farming town of McFarland was beginning to grow.

McFarland's first Brethren met in private homes until the construction of a church building was authorized. The church was built for \$3,000 and dedicated in 1913.

A Ladies' Aid group soon formed and Sunday school was organized. Parishioners celebrated Independence Day their first year in the church with an all-day meeting, a literary program, and a duet of "My Country 'Tis of Thee."

The Brethren used the church for 40 years until their numbers grew to nearly 200. Work began on a new, larger church building, parsonage, and six apartments for senior citizens. The first worship service in the new church building was held in April 1953. The congregation currently numbers about 100 members.

—Erin Waldner, *The Bakersfield Californian*

Remembered

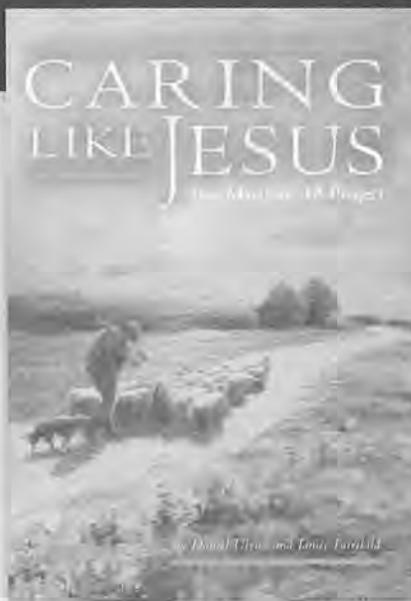
LaVon Widegren Rupel, a longtime church leader, died July 20 in Stockton, Calif.

A member of the Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, Rupel served on the General Board from 1987 to 1992 (including three years as chair of the World Ministries Commission), and on the McPherson (Kan.) College board of trustees for 18 years, the last six as chair.

She also served on Standing Committee and on several Annual Conference committees and was a speaker at the 1982 Annual Conference.

Her death came in the midst of National Youth Conference, an event for which she had six times previously served on the counseling team.

Rupel was 71. She is survived by three children and two brothers.



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FALL 2002 TOURS

IRELAND (September 20 - October 1)

FALL FOLIAGE TOUR in NEW ENGLAND
(October 8-14)

SERVICE TOUR to ISRAEL (NAZARETH VILLAGE)
(October 25 - November 7)

VIETNAM (November 6-24)

CHRISTMAS SERVICE TOUR to PENNSYLVANIA
(November 28 - December 3)

2003 TOURS

JAMAICA SERVICE TOUR
(January 24 - February 2)

PARAGUAY SERVICE TOUR (April 3-17)

RUSSIA and UKRAINE (May 23 - June 6)

From PENNSYLVANIA to ONTARIO
(May 28 - June 2)

In the FOOTSTEPS of the APOSTLE PAUL
(May 30 - June 15)

EUROPEAN HERITAGE (June 9-25)

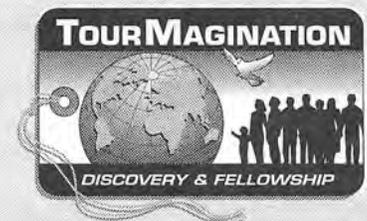
CHINA (June - TBA)

ALASKA (June 25 - July 7)

MAJESTIC CANADIAN ROCKIES (July 7-20)

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"I'm always moved by what an incredible privilege it is to work with this many of our denomination's youth."

—General Board
Youth/ Young Adult
Ministry coordinator
Chris Douglas, on NYC

Reflecting on the church's global identity. *Front row: Janis Pyle, Carol Mason Page, Kwanye Ragnjiya, Judy Mills Reimer. Back row: John Braun, Galen Hackman (in back), Warren Eshbach, Felix Arias, James Miller, Toma Ragnjiya, Bradley Bohrer, Marcos Inhauser, Merv Keeney, Nadine Monn.*

Global leaders gather to share and reflect at Elgin meeting. For the first time, representatives of international Church of the Brethren bodies gathered together and reflected on the global identity of the Church of the Brethren.

Called together by Merv Keeney, director of the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office, the group gathered at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., June 24-25. International participants included Toma Ragnjiya, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria, and his wife, Kwanye; Marcos Inhauser, president of the Igreja da Irmandade in Brazil; and Felix Arias, moderator of Iglesia de los Hermanos in the Dominican Republic.

Also at the table to listen and reflect were a small group of US participants: Warren Eshbach, John Braun, Galen Hackman, James Miller, Bradley Bohrer, and Carol Mason Page, as well as mission staff Nadine Monn and Janis Pyle. The group emphasized the need for a forum to continue to build relationship and partnership.

Brethren coal miners thank God for 'miracle' rescue

The Church of the Brethren had close connections to a national story in July, when nine miners were trapped in a flooded shaft near Somerset, Pa., for several days. Two of the miners were from Brethren congregations: John Unger from the Maple Spring congregation, Holsopple, Pa., and Randy Fogle from the Beachdale congregation at Berlin, Pa., both in Western Pennsylvania District.

The miners became trapped in the Queecreek deep mine on July 24 when a barrier to an old mine shaft was broken and the newer mine filled with water. Those who were trapped alerted another group, who were able to escape.

The district had already dealt with two tragedies in the past year. One of the airliners hijacked on Sept. 11 last year crashed near Somerset, and Standing Committee member Karen Jones

of Champion, Pa., was killed in a traffic accident before Annual Conference in Louisville.

This time, however, the story had a happy ending. Maple Spring organized a community prayer service for the trapped miners on July 26, and two days later—after being trapped for more than 77 hours—all nine miners were rescued. Unger, 52, of Holsopple, Pa., and Fogle, 43, of Garrett, Pa., were among three who were briefly hospitalized.

Members of Maple Spring held a praise service on the Sunday morning following the rescue, and the miners were quick to credit God for the "miracle." A community praise service at another church that evening also celebrated the answers to prayer.

The nine have sold the rights to their story to the Walt Disney Co. for \$150,000 each and were greeted by President George W. Bush in early August.

Volunteers learn about aviation incident response

A Child Care in Aviation Incident Response (CAIR) training was held July 28-30 at the New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center, bringing 25 volunteers from across the United States to learn about responding as part of the American Red Cross Aviation Incident Response Team.

This was the last of 10 training workshops held this year by the Disaster Child Care program. The CAIR team is a specially trained group of Disaster Child Care volunteers who will provide child-care services for children experiencing traumatic stress and grief in the wake of airline disasters.

Leadership for this training included Jane Morgan and Bev Hoover from the American Red Cross. Lydia Walker, former General Board staff and CAIR volunteer; Sharon Gilbert, CAIR volunteer; and Roy Winter, manager of Disaster Child Care, also made presentations during the training.

Youth seminar will explore globalization issues in 2003

The theme has been announced for next year's national Church of the Brethren youth Christian Citizenship Seminar, to be held May 3-8 in New York and Washington, D.C.

Youth will examine the topic "It's a Small World After All," focusing on glob-

alization and related issues.

Registrations will be due by April 1, 2003, or when 100 registrations have been received. Cost is \$300. The event is sponsored by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office.

BVS Unit 249 gathers in mountains of Colorado

Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 249 met from July 14 to Aug. 3 at Camp Colorado, located south of Denver near Sedalia—the first time a BVS orientation has been held at this camp. Seventeen people participated in the unit, including four young men from Germany completing their alternative service.

Five of the volunteers came from Church of the Brethren congregations: Henry Elsea III from the Cherry Grove congregation, Grantsville, Md.; Bryan Hissong from Happy Corner, Clayton, Ohio; Emily Tulli from West Richmond (Va.); Rebecca Tuttle from Quinter (Kan.); and Elisa Wolf from Akron (Pa.).

A highlight of the orientation was a day spent at National Youth Conference in Fort Collins, with a commissioning service during the evening worship celebration there. The schedule also featured a three-day trip to Alamosa, Colo., to learn about the issues of this depressed farmworker community, and a day trip to Colorado Springs to explore military realities and simplicity.

Song & Story Fest enjoys another successful event

About 140 people attended this year's Song & Story Fest, held at Woodland Altars in Ohio. Event director Ken Kline Smeltzer of Modesto, Calif., said the group included "families of all sizes, shapes, and ages."

Using the theme "A Woodland Gathering on the Path of Peace," the June 23-29 event featured a long list of musicians and storytellers. Many of them were returning from previous years.

Days began with a morning watch devotional time, followed by a choice of a half-dozen workshops for various age groups, quiet time and a period for free time and recreation (including optional off-site trips), and an evening campfire. Ending the daily program was a late-evening concert. Musical performers featured were Bill and Jacob Jolliff, Kindling, Mike Stern, Joseph Helfrich, and Tim Joseph.

"It's kind of an oasis in our busy lives," Smeltzer said of the event. "The music and the stories build faith."

The 2003 Song & Story Fest will be held at Camp Wilbur Stover in Idaho June 29 to July 5, the week before Annual Conference takes place in Boise.

Sample addresses 2002 meeting of Brethren Ministers' Association

Dr. Tex Sample, a popular lecturer, consultant, and author, addressed this year's Church of the Brethren Ministers' Association meeting July 3-4 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in Louisville, Ky., immediately following Annual Conference.

Sample—who is the Robert B. and Kathleen Rogers Professor of Church and Society emeritus at St. Paul School of Theology in Kansas City, Mo.—used lecture and Powerpoint programs for his presentation,

titled "The Eucharist and Social Justice: A Christian Approach."

Those in attendance said they enjoyed his "folksy Southern" style, which made him approachable even when dealing with controversial subjects. Sample encouraged the church to engage the world from a uniquely Christian perspective. Christians know justice not from a theoretical model of rights, he said, but from the very practical enacting of justice in daily life.

Sample, who also spoke at an Annual Conference worship service, noted that the Eucharist helps to form a com-

munity that practices what it preaches. And in that sense, the Eucharist is social justice as the church performs the supper with the many overtones of open fellowship at the table, remembering the future (the heavenly banquet), and the bounty of God in the feeding of the multitudes.

The event is planned by the association's executive committee, which each year

arranges for scholars, teachers, or consultants to provide leadership for the ministers on a variety of topics.

Tex Sample addresses the Brethren Ministers' Association
post-Conference meeting in Louisville, Ky., on "The Eucharist and Social Justice."



UPCOMINGEVENTS

Sept. 2-6 National Older Adult Conference, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Sept. 6-8 Missouri/Arkansas District Conference, Camp Windermere, Roach, Mo.; **"Open Mind, Open Heart" discernment event** for those considering ministry as a second career, at Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

Sept. 8 Bethany Emphasis Sunday

Sept. 9 Mission & Ministries Planning Council listening session, New Windsor, Md.

Sept. 13-14 South/Central Indiana District conference, Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren

Sept. 15-Oct. 5 Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 251, New Windsor, Md.

Sept. 20-21 On Earth Peace board meetings, New Windsor, Md.; **Northern Indiana District conference, Camp Alexander Mack**, Milford, Ind.; **Southern Pennsylvania District conference**, Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; **West Marva District conference**, Moorefield (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren

Sept. 21 Deacon Training Workshop, Faith Church of the Brethren, Batavia, Ill.

Sept. 27-28 Association of Brethren Caregivers board meetings, Elgin, Ill.

Oct. 4-6 Pacific Southwest District Conference, La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren

Brethren meet for leadership training

Twenty-three people representing 10 districts participated in the Creative Church Leader program at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., June 17-21.

James P. "Pat" Carlisle, director of The Center for Creative Church Leadership, served as the primary program leader. The majority of the participants took the course to receive continuing education credit, while three participants earned credit through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership's Training in Ministry (TRIM) program.

The event was sponsored through the Theological Explorations of Vocation Lilly grant that was received by the consortium of Church of the Brethren colleges. This program will be sponsored again next summer, with dates being announced in early 2003.

Hymn Society names Faus to two-year term as president

After many years as a member of the Hymn Society in the United States and Canada, Nancy Faus was installed July 17 as the organization's new president.

A member of the Mack Memorial Church

of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio, and a retired Bethany Theological Seminary professor, Faus is one of numerous Brethren involved with the hymn society. She was selected by members of the society and installed at its annual conference in Winston-Salem, N.C.

"It's an awesome responsibility and an honor," Faus said. During her two-year term, she will preside over next year's international conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The hymn society includes several thousand Catholic and Protestant members.

District executives call Kauffman, Markey to leadership positions

Northern Indiana District executive minister Herman Kauffman was elected as the new chairperson of the Council of District Executives when the council met at Annual Conference in Louisville, Ky. He fills the remaining term of Tom Zuercher, who is resigning as Northern Ohio District executive to take a pastorate later this year.

Southern Pennsylvania associate executive Georgia Markey was elected for a three-year term as vice chair beginning in January 2003. She replaces Ron Beachley, whose three-year term expires.



The Brethren Revival Fellowship held its second Brethren Alive conference July 26-28 on the campus of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The event, attended by several hundred people, included worship, Bible study, workshops, and fellowship, along with BRF's annual meeting. Above: Three women kneel at the foot of the cross following a worship service led by Paul Grout.

Personnel moves

•**Julie Garber** announced her resignation as editor of books and study resources for Brethren Press effective Aug. 9 in order to accept a new position at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind. She had served with the General Board overseeing the development of curricula, books, and other resources for 12 years.

She becomes associate dean and director of the Plowshares Grant, a Lilly-funded cooperative effort of Manchester, Earlham, and Goshen colleges. The program, funded for four years, is designed to strengthen peace studies on the campuses and will include a Peace House in Indianapolis.

•**Sue Grubb**, coordinator of orientation for Brethren Volunteer Service, has announced her resignation effective following the fall BVS orientation unit that meets Sept. 15-Oct. 5.

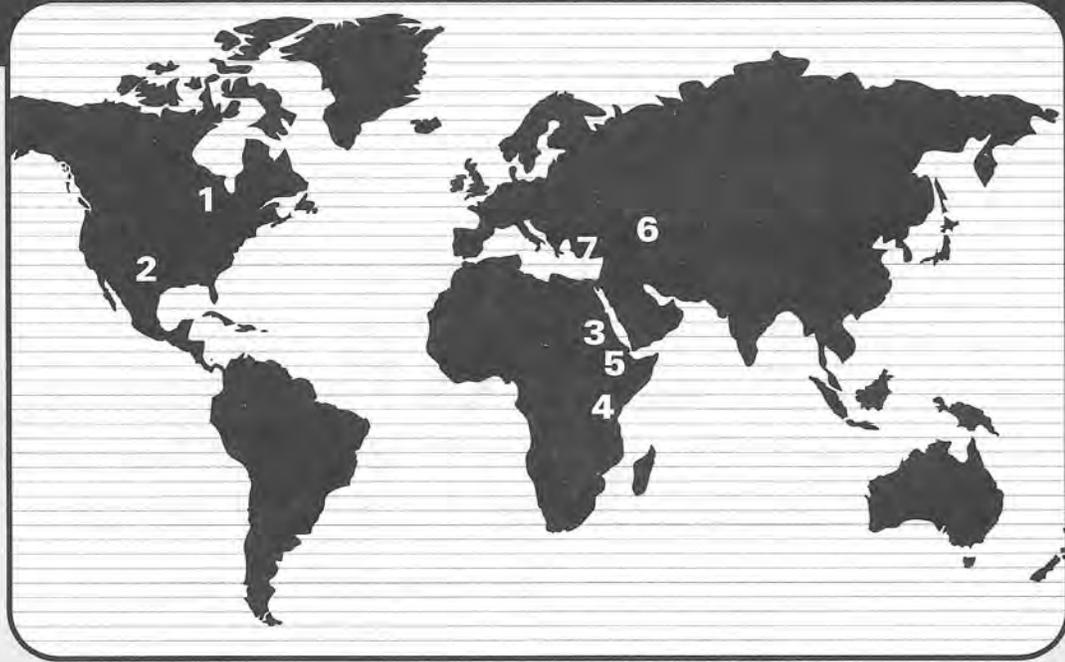
Grubb has served in the coordinator role since 1998. Prior to that, she served as a BVS volunteer in the Brethren Volunteer Service office and in Nigeria.

•**Richard Hanley** has announced his resignation as district minister of the Western Plains District effective Dec. 31. Hanley previously served as a pastor and was also district executive in West Marva District.

He was instrumental in creating a cooperative arrangement with the Southern Plains District and Area 4 Congregational Life Ministries to serve the two districts, which was put into place in 1999-2000. Hanley plans to continue serving as district minister of Southern Plains District.

•**Barry LeNoir** was called as the new manager of Camp Bethel in Virlina District effective Aug. 19.

LeNoir is a 1992 graduate of Virginia Tech University and had been teaching and coaching at a middle school in Vinton, Va. He previously served for nine years as program director at two Methodist camps. LeNoir and his family will be living at Camp Bethel, located in Fincastle, Va.



1. Siren, Wis. Work continued through the summer on the General Board's Emergency Response/Service Ministries disaster relief project in the town, cleaning up and rebuilding in the wake of a June 2001 tornado. ER/SM reported that work was progressing rapidly and could be completed by summer's end if skilled volunteers could be found.

2. Central Texas. A grant from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund will send \$5,000 toward Church World Service's response to severe flooding in the region. The funds will help provide seed grants to communities in 20 counties, with about 20,000 homes affected.

3. Sudan. The Church of the Brethren Washington Office in late July issued an alert after the government of Sudan and the Sudan Peoples Liberation Army (the lead rebel group), long locked in a civil war, came to a peace agreement in Machakos, Kenya.

Noting that the agreement was only a "small step" toward true peace in Sudan, the office urged final passage of the Sudan Peace Act by Congress, which must work out a compromise version of the act.

4. Tanzania. A \$5,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant will aid the needs of Burundian

refugees in the southeast African nation. The funds will help provide water and improved sanitation in the camps, provide clothing and household utensils, and provide peace/conflict transformation education.

5. Ethiopia. Another Emergency Disaster Fund grant, for \$10,000, will aid Church World Service work with food shortages and related needs due to drought. The grant will help to provide seeds, tools, livestock, water access, and educational workshops on health and sanitation.

6. Southern Russia/North Caucasus region. A \$10,000 grant from the Emergency Disaster Fund will support a Church World Service appeal for humanitarian assistance in a region where floods have left more than 200,000 people homeless. The funds will provide food parcels, hygiene kits, temporary shelter, bedding, and kitchen needs to more than 4,200 families.

7. Cyprus. Merv Keeney, director of Global Mission Partnerships for the Church of the Brethren General Board, was part of a seven-person delegation representing Church World Service in partnership conversations with the Middle East Council of Churches Aug. 1-4.

RECEIVING THE CUP OF COLD WATER

by Kenneth L. Gibble



Jesus said some unpleasant things.

Here's one of them: "Whoever welcomes you welcomes me," Jesus says. "And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward" (Matt. 10:42 NIV).

What's so unpleasant about that?

What Jesus said about a cup of cold water raises some troubling issues.

As always, we need to examine the context of these words from Matthew. Jesus' words about a cup of cold water come at the end of what Matthew calls his instructions to his disciples. On the eve of sending out the disciples on a preaching and healing mission to nearby towns and villages, Jesus tells them what he wants them to do, what he doesn't want them to do, and what difficulties they are going to encounter.

Jesus does not minimize those difficulties. He tells his disciples that they will encounter indifference, suspicion, and even hostility. He tells them he's sending them out "like sheep into the midst of wolves." If they encounter resistance or persecution, they are to flee. He warns them that being his disciple has implications even for families. Loyalty to Jesus and his way may well mean that brother will be set against brother, parents against children. He says, finally, his disciples must be willing to carry a cross if they want to be his true followers.

Would hearing those words make you eager to sign up? Probably not. And I'm sure some of the disciples began to wonder if following this rabbi Jesus might have gotten them in over their heads.

Oddly enough though, the first readers of Matthew's Gospel would have found those words of Jesus to be of great comfort and encouragement. Remember that what we call the book of Matthew didn't appear in written form until about 40 years after Jesus was no longer living on earth. At that time, Christians were indeed experiencing the very resistance and persecution that Jesus had warned about. In their suffering they found consolation in knowing that their Lord had foreseen their plight. They treasured his words: "Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul" (Matt. 10:28).

What connection does all this have to those words about giving a cup of cold water?

For a long time, I thought what Jesus meant is that when you and I do even such a simple thing as give a cup of cold water in his name to someone who is thirsty, we will have the reward of knowing we are doing his work. I thought Jesus was encouraging us to reach out to "these little ones," specifically to suffering children, but beyond that to anyone who is hungry or thirsty or lonely. I thought Jesus was telling us in these verses to serve others in his name.

I was wrong. Oh, not wrong in thinking that Jesus wants us to serve others. His call to service is unmistakable throughout the Gospels. But I was wrong in misreading this passage about the cup of cold water. Because the cup of cold water Jesus talks about is given *to* his disciples, not *by* his disciples. As Rick Gardner notes in his commentary on Matthew, the "little ones" refers to "the least of Jesus' followers" (*Matthew*, Believers Church Bible Commentary, Herald Press, 1991, p. 178).

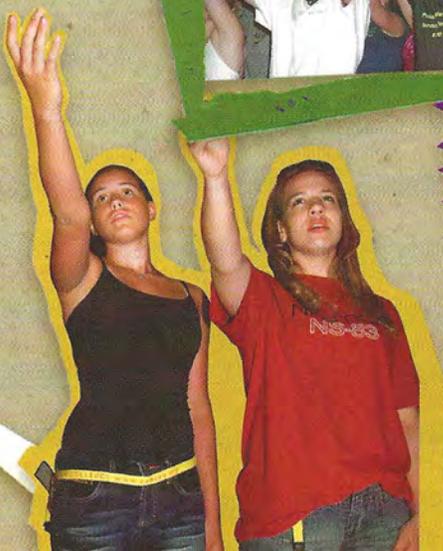
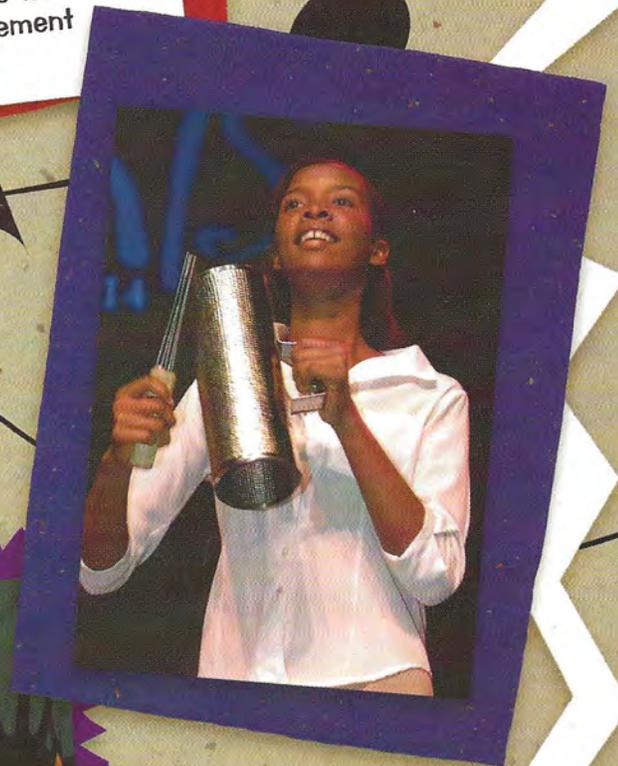
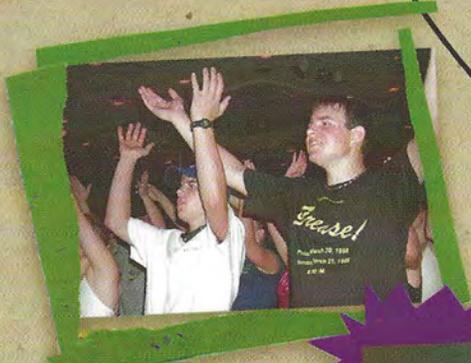
(continued on page 23)

NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

2002

A time to remember

NYC. It may designate New York City elsewhere in the country, but in the Church of the Brethren it can mean only one thing: National Youth Conference. In a denomination swimming with acronyms, those three letters likely generate more energy and excitement than any others.



WORSHIP

ROCKS

WITH MESS

Bonnie Kline Smeltzer, one of the evening worship coordinators for the 2002 NYC, expressed her hope "that all would sense the presence of God in worship—around, within, and beyond them."

After 10 worship celebrations featuring a host of creativity, it's hard to imagine any NYC participants could have left without doing so.

From youth bearing candles and water vessels in Tuesday night's opening worship to a moving anointing service Saturday night, and a commissioning on Sunday morning, the week featured a variety of avenues to seek the Spirit and sense Christ's call.

Jeff Carter joined Smeltzer in planning the five evening services, and Jim Chinworth and Rhonda Pittman Gingrich coordinated the five morning gatherings.

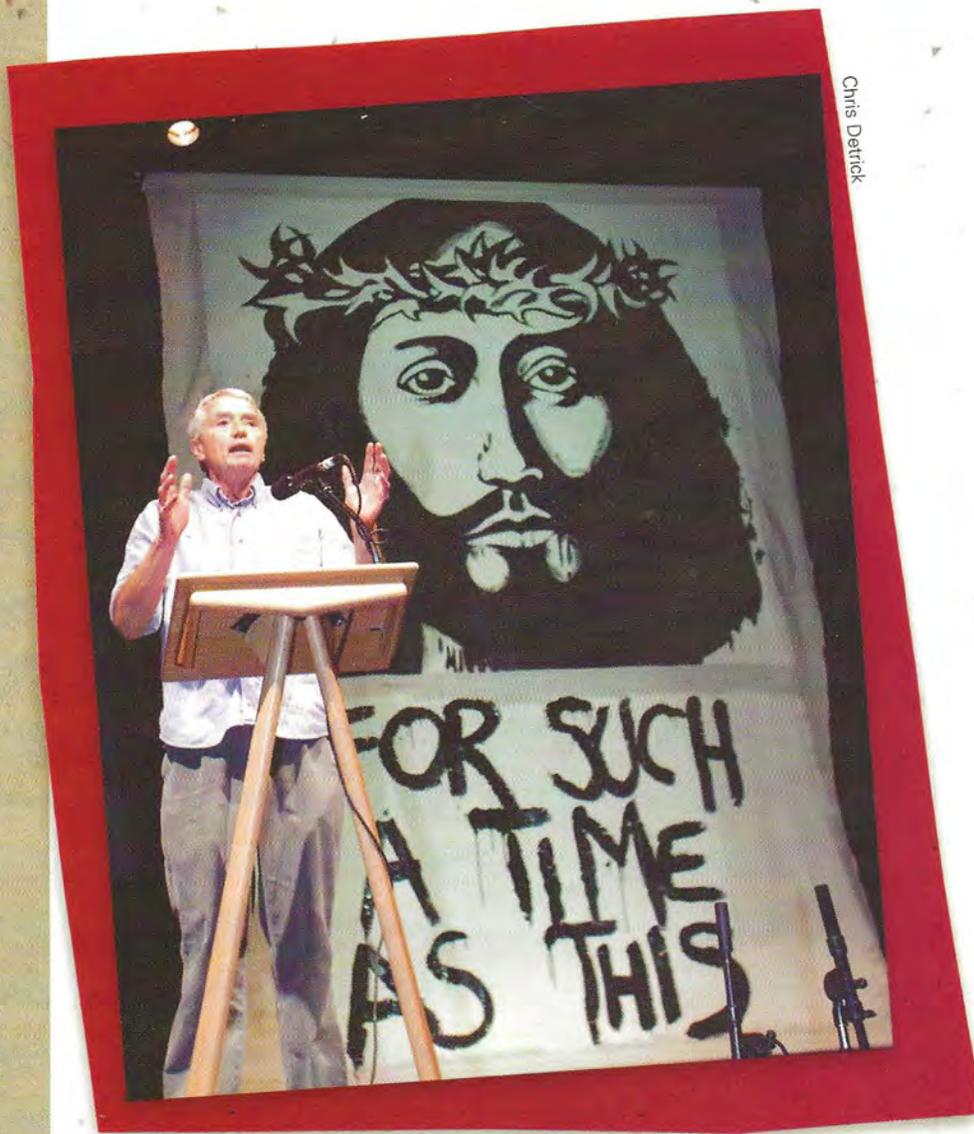
Speakers ranged from high-power and high-volume to softer and more reflective, but each displayed their commitment to Christ in his or her own way. Each was also greeted by a traditional NYC "Preach It!" wave rippling across Moby Arena.

Some other striking worship moments included a massive painting of Jesus created by 2002 Annual Conference moderator Paul Grout, a newly created drama on forgiveness by Mennonite comedy team Ted & Lee, and a commissioning service for the current Brethren-Volunteer Service unit.

Youth speech contest winners Hannah Serfling and Amy Rhodes preached to their peers, while Puerto Rican Brethren Jimmy Diaz spoke in Spanish via a translator.

Each service also included a time of spiritual "centering" guided by Glenn Mitchell, one of four spiritual directors present at NYC to help youth explore a "hunger for God."

Lively music, led by Joseph Helfrich and Shawn Kirchner, provided the heartbeat for worship, ranging from world beats to hymns to contemporary pieces, including the popular theme song "For Such a Time as This" created by the Bremen (Ind.) youth group.



Chris Detrick

Paul Grout stands before hand-painted banner of Jesus.



Chris Detrick

Lee Eshleman and Ted Swartz (a.k.a. Ted & Lee) "wrestle" with forgiveness.

Left to right, from top: Susan Boyer, Jim Myer, Paul Grout, Becky Baile Crouse, Hannah Serfling, Amy Rhodes, Jimmy Diaz, Deanna Brown.

AGES, MUSIC, & MORE

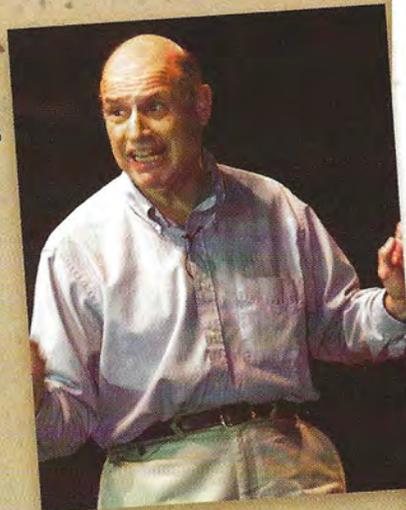


Melissa Lyons

"(I liked) the music, the really great music."

Noah Beam
Pleasant Hill, Ohio

Chris Detrick



Tony Campolo, who lives near Philadelphia, brought some Baptist fire to NYC.

TONY CAMPOLO Preaching it with passion

No one can accuse Tony Campolo of being dry and unexciting.

As Matt Hoffman of McPherson, Kan., put it, "When Tony Campolo came and talked, it got me pumped up."

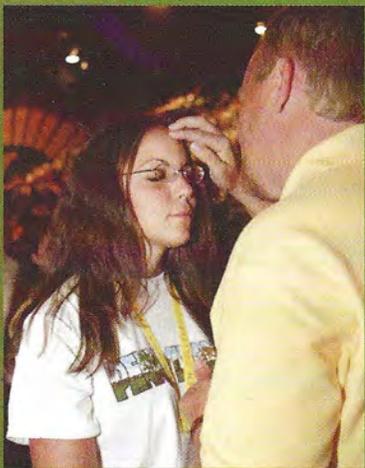
That feeling seemed to prevail among many NYCers, set abuzz by Campolo's high-voltage, nearly hour-long Wednesday night talk filled with humor, stories, and challenges.

"Let Jesus fill you, change you, invade you, live through you...", he said. "You can be Jesus for somebody."

He urged youth to be friends to the friendless and to be instruments through whom God can work in the world.

Campolo closed by inviting youth to signal a commitment to give their lives over to Jesus, one of several commitments to Christ and the church youth were invited to make at NYC.

Chris Detrick



Dave Steele anoints a youth Saturday night.

Worship speakers



"Do not leave here without letting God overwhelm you."



"To be complete, and sense the call of God for us, that's the challenge."



"It is not about YOU. It's about God."



"We have to know in our hearts that Christ is our peace."

"God is preparing us, right now to be leaders in our own time."



"We have the opportunity to step outside our comfort zones and ... save lives."



"Seek the power of the Holy Spirit, and you will find courage."



"I am deeply grateful that you are the church."



Around the world

in 80 (or so) workshops

School might be off for the summer, but the early afternoons at National Youth Conference were dedicated to education.

Each of the four full days of the conference, youth could choose from about 50 workshops on a wide swath of topics related to the church and other areas of life.

Chris Douglas, coordinator of Youth/Young Adult ministries for the General Board, called the workshops an "important part of the NYC experience."

Popular topics included everything from a workshop on gang violence titled "Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun" to one on proper backrub techniques. Several others explored various art forms such as drawing and theater, and members of a clowning workshop later performed in worship.

Some were held outdoors, such as one on "Holy Play" that demonstrated creative game ideas, others featured the international guests present at NYC, and still others looked at issues like spirituality or dating or racism. One day was devoted entirely to workshops on vocation (see sidebar).

In addition, advisors could choose from about a dozen additional daily workshops designed especially for them.

Even with some youth and advisors out on scheduled hiking trips and service projects each afternoon, many of the workshops were full to overflowing, with people spilling out into the hallways.

Most of the speakers came from within the denomination, although some NYC guests like Ted & Lee and Ken Medema also shared their insights, and ecumenical experts Paul Robertson and Rick Lawrence led keynote sessions for advisors.

Brethren speakers included local pastors and youth advisors, Brethren Volunteer Service workers, staff from Brethren agencies, Brethren colleges faculty and staff, and the 2002 Annual Conference moderator and moderator-elect.



Chris Derrick

A number of workshops proved so popular that crowds spilled out into adjacent hallways.

VOCATION DAY
Getting down to business

Wednesday at NYC focused on vocation and calling, part of a Lilly Grant "Theological Exploration of Vocation" initiative received through the Brethren colleges. Workshops for the day—more than 50 in all—were led by professionals in a variety of different careers. The leaders shared the challenges and joys their jobs brought to living out their faith.

Wednesday speakers Tony Campolo and Jim Myer also addressed issues of calling, with Myer advising that "being responsive to the call of God at this point in your life is about the most important thing you can do." A video shown in worship surveyed the career goals of some NYCers.



Tony Tevis

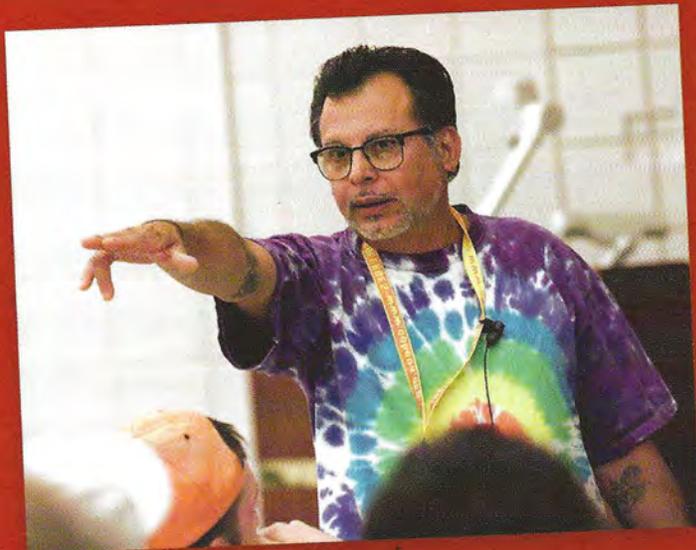
Bridgewater College chaplain Robbie Miller shares about his ministry.



Patience Hamawald

Rachel Stevens
McPherson, Kan.

"God is calling me through prayer and everything I do every day."



Chris Detrick

Gilbert Romero leads a workshop on gang violence.



Walt Wiltschek



Above, Rachelle Burkhead and Amanda Sgro of Decatur, Ind., try their hand (and face) at clowning during a workshop led by Hannah Wilson and Victor Thomas. Left, South/Central Indiana District co-executives Ron and Harriet Finney lead an advisor workshop on the "Six Thinking Hats" decision-making method.

Fun in the sun joins

night-time tunes and to

Sessions are an important part of National Youth Conference, but NYC isn't all sitting, either.

Late afternoons provided a time for an assortment of recreation options like volleyball, hiking, and swimming, while late-evening hours offered a choice of entertainment through concerts and games.

Many NYCers headed to the mountains after small-group sessions each day, traveling on buses to Estes Park for a choice of hiking trips. Medical staff urged everyone to drink plenty of water to combat the altitude and warm weather.

Frisbee golf, tennis, ultimate frisbee, soccer, and basketball were other popular free-time choices—although some chose quieter alternatives like board games, browsing the exhibit hall, or catching up on some much-needed rest.

After all, many of them wanted to make it to the midnight curfew, taking in energetic music or sharing their own gifts at open mike sessions in Lory Student Center.

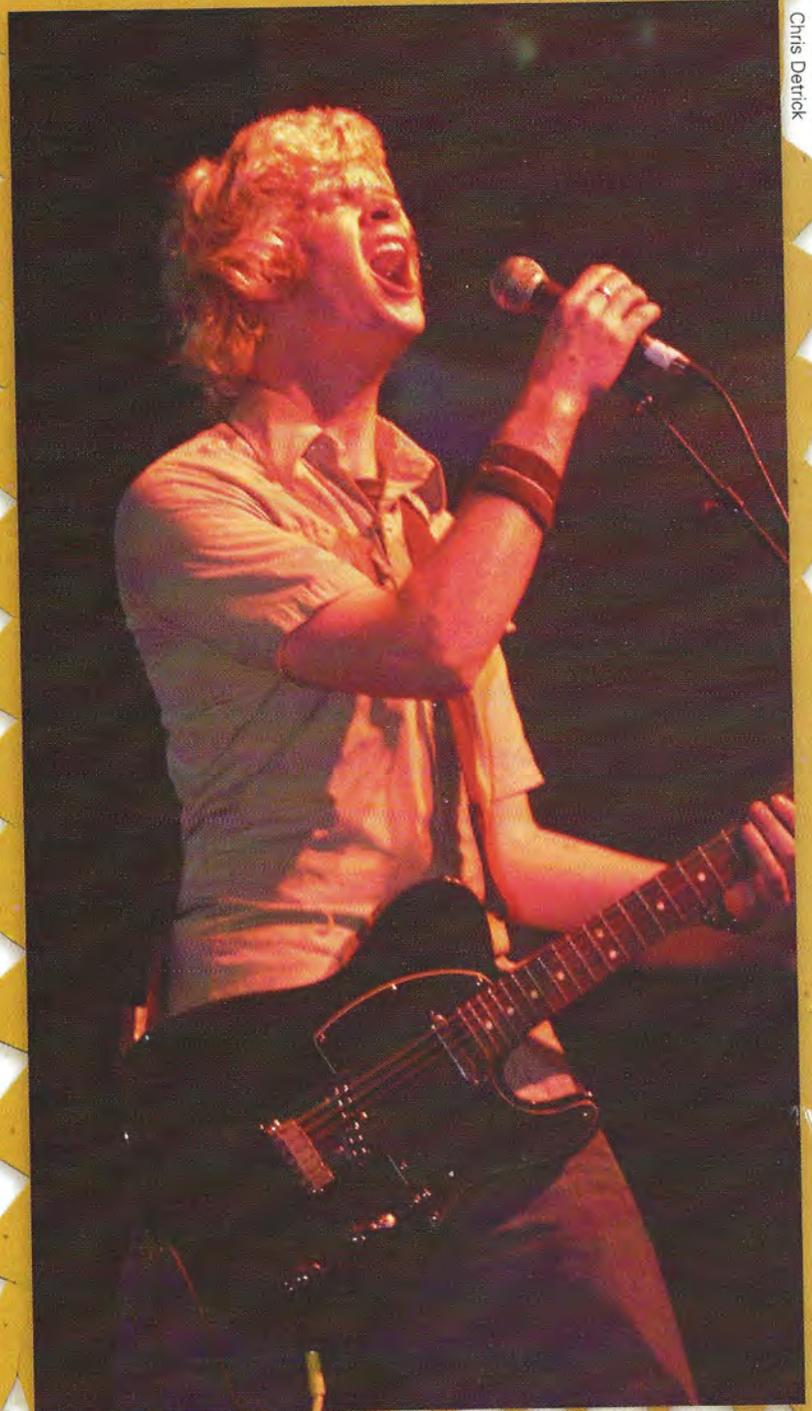
David Kinnick and his band performed Christian pop/rock music on Tuesday, while swing dance was offered in Moby Arena.

On Wednesday, popular Manchester College band Mutual Kumquat packed the ballroom in Lory and set youth dancing on the floor below. Other options were the musical "Godspell" performed by Western Pennsylvania youth and worship with the Dominican Republic youth worship team.

Christian rock band Relient K played in Moby Thursday as youth flocked to the stage to dance and sing along. A BVS photo scavenger hunt and a Puerto Rican worship service rounded out the night.

Ted & Lee drew laughs as they presented their New Testament drama "Fish Eyes" Friday, while the Brethren contemporary Christian band Wake-Up Call also played, and coordinators led a Taizé worship service.

Saturday night featured the stories and improvised songs of blind musician Ken Medema.



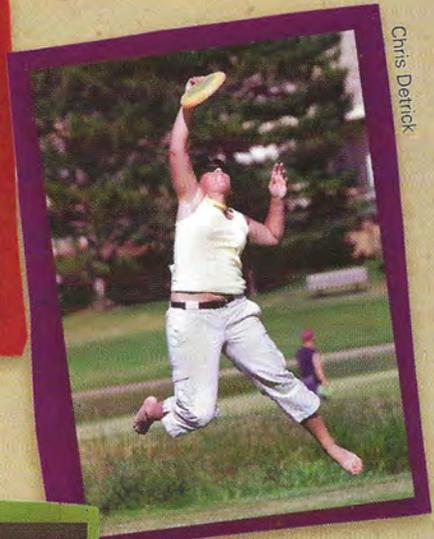
Christian pop-rock band Relient K got NYCers jumping.

lent



Chris Detrick

Athena Gibble of Jacobus, Pa., takes in the awesome view of the Rockies while hiking.



Chris Detrick

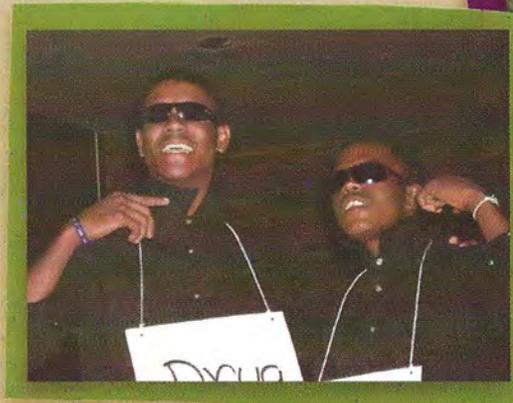
Natalie Keller, of Eaton, Ohio, grabs a frisbee out of the air while playing with her friends during an all-conference cookout/picnic Tuesday evening.

"If I had to pick one (favorite) activity, it would definitely be swing dancing."



Tamara Ricketts
Fort Wayne, Ind.

Melissa Lyons



Walt Wiltschek

Members of the Dominican Youth Worship Team use song and drama in a late-night worship experience.

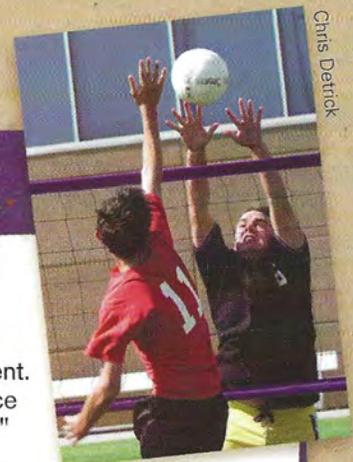
BUMP, SET, SPIKE
Volleyball teams go for gold

NYCers again flocked to grass courts on campus for volleyball, with 64 teams filling out the brackets for a two-division tournament.

A competitive division was offered to those who had experience playing in a competitive atmosphere in school, while "jungle ball" was offered to less-experienced players.

Finals were played Saturday, with all four finalist teams coming from Pennsylvania.

In the competitive division, Hempfield (East Petersburg, Pa.) beat Lancaster (Pa.) in two games for the title. In the jungle ball finals, Myerstown (Pa.) topped New Fairview (York, Pa.) two games to one. All teams received certificates, while winners got a new volleyball.



Chris Detrick

Shane Haldeman, right, blocks the ball for Hempfield during the finals.

YOUTH DIG DEEP TO SHARE BC

Youth chose to participate in a multitude of service projects at NYC, ranging from working with the disabled and clearing pathways in parks to visiting retirement homes and building houses for Habitat for Humanity.

About 1,500 people participated in the projects, and coordinators Stan and Ted Noffsinger praised the youth and advisors for following through on their commitments.

Of those involved in the projects, about 450 worked with Habitat on three houses in Loveland, Colo., during the week, putting up walls, trusses, and roofing. A dedication service was held on Saturday afternoon, with the families who will live in the houses attending.

"I never would have thought we could have accomplished as much as we did," Janna Scott of Westminster, Md., said after working on one of the Habitat homes.

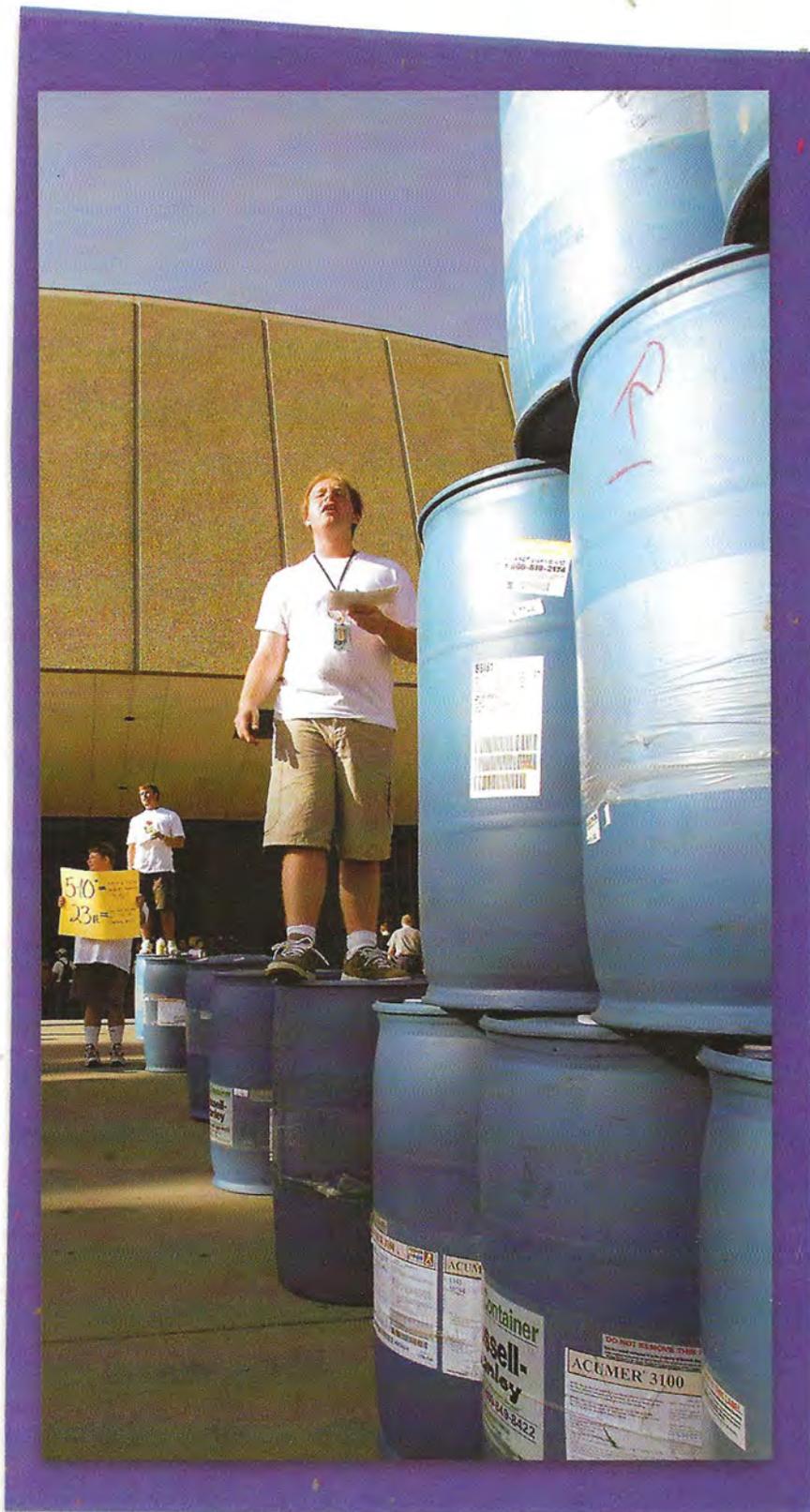
One of the bus drivers who took a group to a project site even stayed with them for an hour to contribute her time to their project.

Special offerings at the evening worship services were also well-supported, assisting the Dominican Republic (\$9,406), medical clinic boxes (\$32,778 plus hundreds of boxes of supplies), food pantries (2,570 pounds of food), and the NYC Scholarship Fund (more than \$15,000).

In addition, the first-ever NYC 5K Walk/Run invited participants to get sponsors to benefit Habitat for Humanity. More than 600 people took part, and \$27,000 was raised.

Brethren Witness held awareness events before worship each morning, covering topics including landmines, global awareness, oil usage and global warming, and US military spending.

The summer Youth Peace Travel Team—sponsored by the General Board, On Earth Peace, and Outdoor Ministries Association—facilitated the events, which drew strong interest. More than 750 shoes were gathered Wednesday to symbolize landmine victims.



Chris Detrick

Carle Gaier shares statistics about US oil usage and global warming.

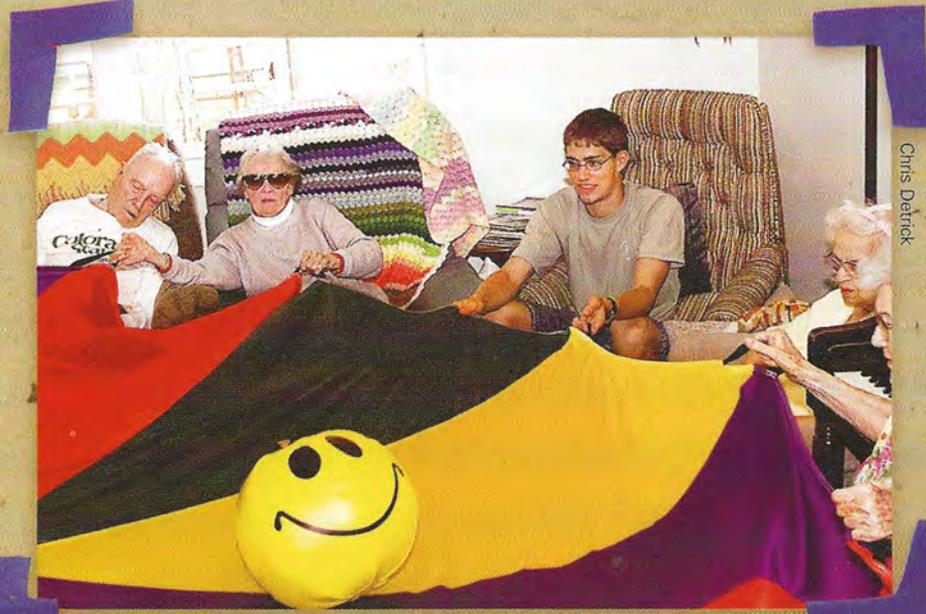
TH TIME AND MONEY



Patience Hammawald

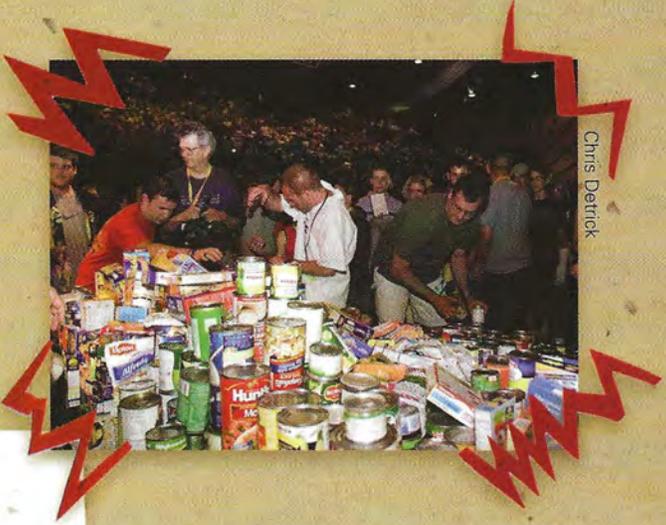
Dustin Boswell
Uniontown, Ohio

"God is calling me to help other people... whenever and wherever I can."



Chris Detrick

Chris Marchant, of Akron, Ohio, plays a parachute game at Elderhaus Senior Day Care Center in Fort Collins.



Chris Detrick

PRAYERS FOR PEACE Youth witness at missile silo

On a hot Saturday afternoon near the close of NYC, about 250 people spent an hour on a dirt road in the middle of the Pawnee National Grassland in northern Colorado. The purpose: to hold a worship service and demonstration at a nuclear missile silo.

This silo housed a Minuteman 111 intercontinental ballistic missile with many times the firepower of the Hiroshima bomb. The group began with a time of worship and music, followed by brief remarks from several Brethren and a scripture reading by members of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

At the conclusion of the service, each person blew a single grass seed toward the missile silo, carrying hopes for God to bring peace.



Charlie Wysong

Jessica Eller of Lafayette, Ind., shares comments at the silo vigil.



Chris Detrick

Above: Volunteers stack a pile of canned and boxed food items brought forward by youth and advisors for Friday night's offering. Left: Jordan Bowman of Mt. Sidney, Va., and Aaron Lahman (right) of Glendale, Ariz., race down the stretch in the NYC 5K. Bowman won in a close finish.

People MAKE NYC POSSIBLE, AND ME



The number of people it takes to screw in a light bulb varies depending on the joke, but when it comes to NYC there's no question: It takes a lot.

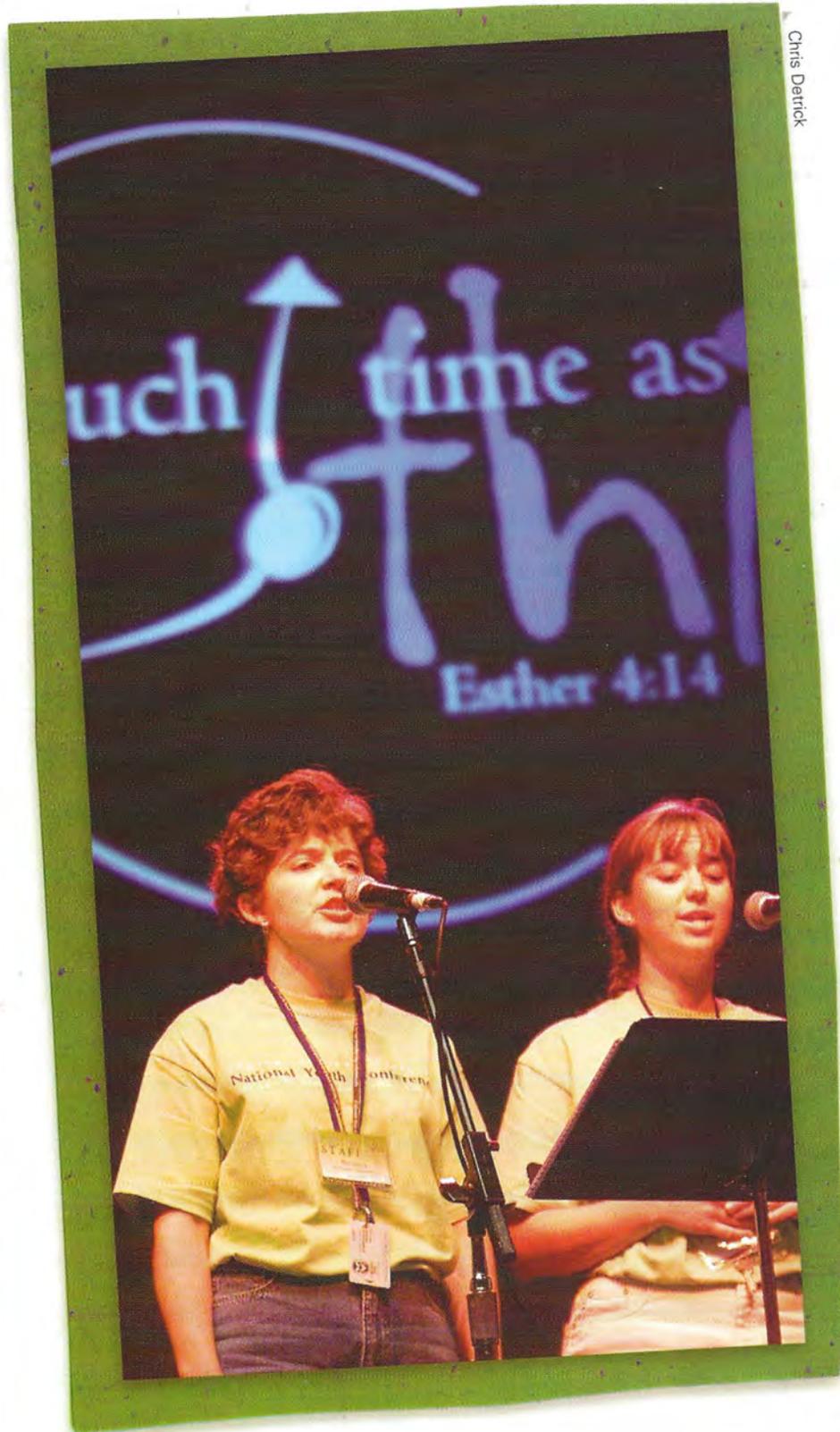
To pull off a conference of such large size and scope, it takes hundreds of small-group and workshop leaders, dozens of volunteer youth workers, doctors and nurses, translators, many other staff and volunteers, worship and music coordinators, and more.

Orchestrating all those efforts are the NYC coordinators, a role filled this year by the trio of Becky Ullom of Wiley, Colo.; Luke Croushorn of Nokesville, Va.; and David Young of Dunmore, W.Va.—all Brethren Volunteer Service workers. They work in the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office for more than a year prior to NYC, pulling together all the details with the help of the National Youth Cabinet and its adult advisors.

Youth/Young Adult Ministry coordinator Chris Douglas, who has been overseeing NYC since doing her first one at Estes Park, Colo., in 1986, said all the work is well worth it. The event is important not only for the youth who attend, but for the church as a whole.

"There are different challenges each time," Douglas said, "but I'm always moved by what an incredible privilege it is to work with this many of our denomination's youth, and to work with all the National Youth Cabinets I've worked with, and the BVSers in my office."

Douglas gave high praise to the thousands of youth and advisors who came from all across the country and beyond for this year's NYC, saying the group was more positive and created fewer problems than "any time I remember." Her final assessment: "I think it's been a terrific NYC."



Chris Detrick

At left, former NYC coordinators Rhonda Pittman Gingrich and Joy Struble help with singing.

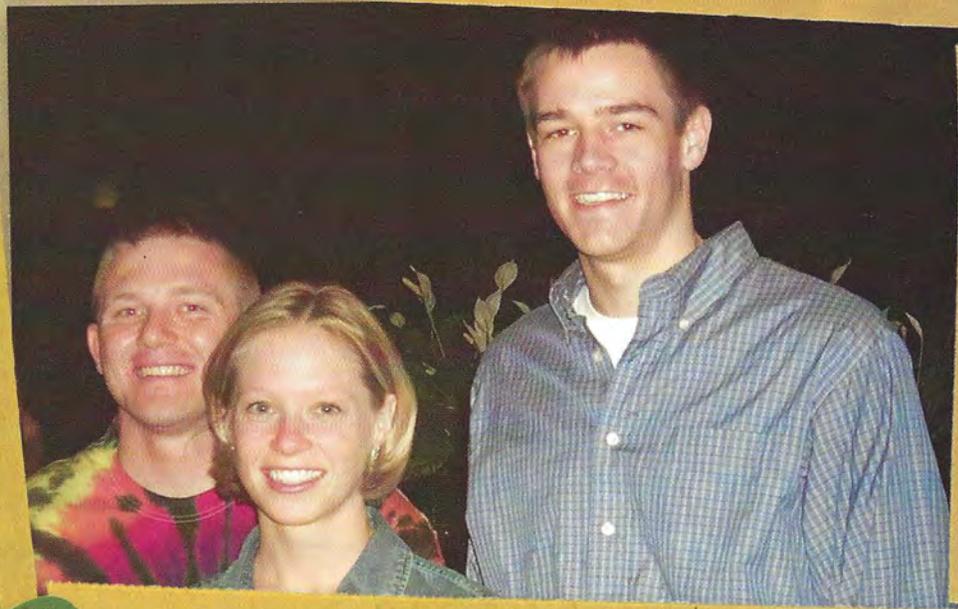
MORABLE

"The people... accept you for who you are here."



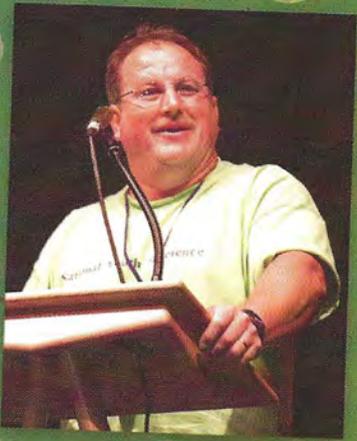
Melissa Lyons

Ashleigh Chadwick Ridgely, Md.



Walt Wietschek

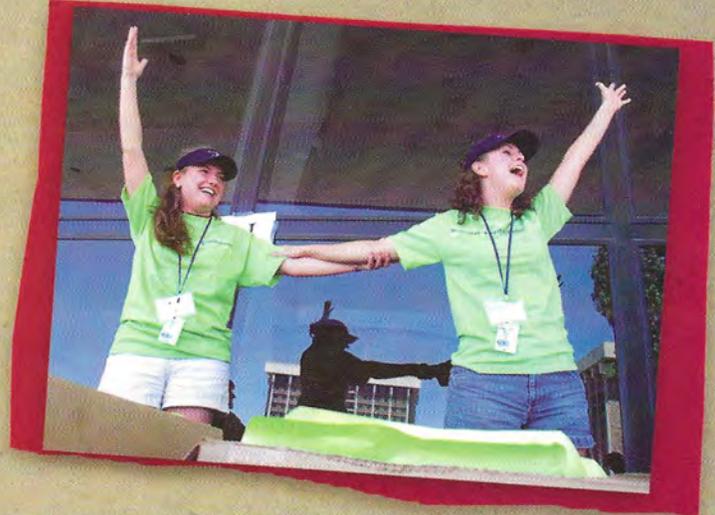
NYC 2002 coordinators Luke Croushorn, Becky Ullom, and David Young smile at NYC's end.



Chris Detrick



NYC dean Steve Van Houten of Akron, Ohio, received big ovations, even when he had to dole out discipline to NYCers.



Chris Detrick

Youth workers Julie Sink and Cindy Laprade of Virginia devise a creative signal for the "H" table at registration.

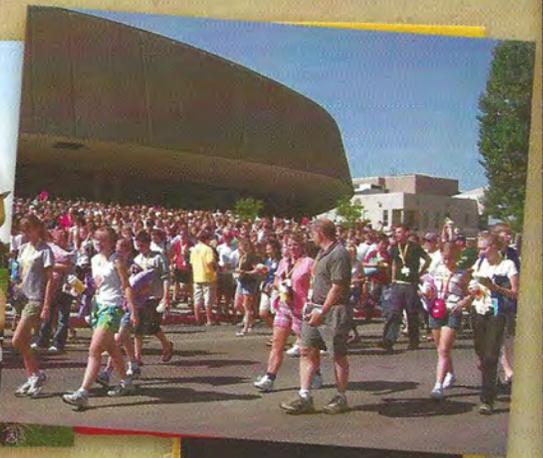
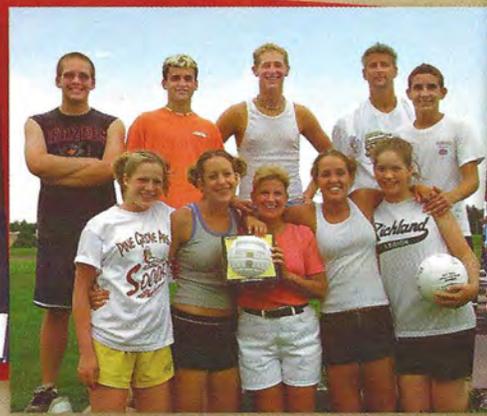
A TASTE OF NIGERIA He knows all about youth



Chris Detrick

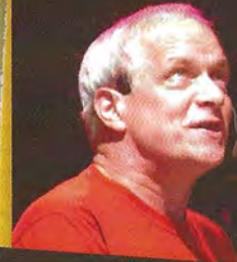
Mbode Ndirmbita had some idea what to expect when he came to National Youth Conference in Colorado. After all, he had planned the equivalent to NYC in his native Nigeria. The first chairman of the Nigerian youth conference, Ndirmbita said NYC in the US isn't very different from the one in Nigeria. Both contain workshops, speakers from different denominations, Bible studies, drama, and music. A large number of youth attend the conference, held annually. He estimates attendance there is just as large or larger than the US one. He says youth are very important in the Nigerian church, holding some church board positions. "Youth have a vision for the church," he says.

Mbode Ndirmbita, ordained in the Nigerian church, leads a workshop.



"Who knows but that you have come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

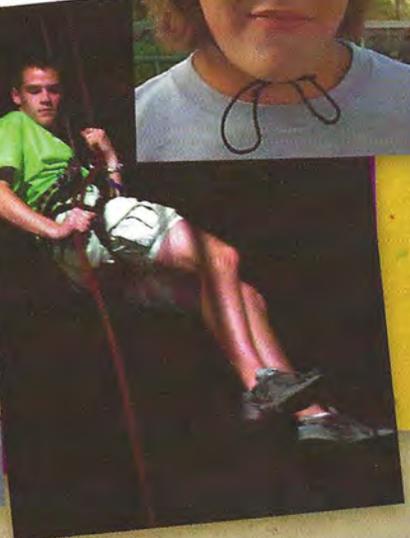
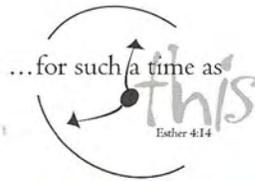
Esther 4:14



There is, perhaps, only one bad thing about NYC: It ends. Participants head back to their scattered homes anxious to hang on to the experience and take that energy and life into their home churches.

How can they do that? Speaker Deanna Brown told them not to give up, and to share their vision even when others don't understand. Closing worship speaker David Radcliff urged NYCers to take risks and "pray to God for focus you need to stay true to the call" amid the distractions.

These faces, these people, these ideas of NYC are part of the church—for such a time as this.



(continued from page 10)

What difference does it make that here Jesus is instructing his followers about receiving, rather than giving?

The difference it makes is that you and I usually find it much easier to give than to receive. One of the blessings of being a pastor is the great number of wonderful people you get to know. I can't think of another vocation that provides such an opportunity to meet with, to work and play with, to live with such folks. Church people are good people. True, they can occasionally be stubborn and picky and controlling and whiny and self-centered and sometimes downright nasty. But, hey, all those things are the exceptions, not the rule.

I mean it when I say a pastor is very fortunate in being surrounded by good people. And right there is the problem. You see, good people, especially church people, are giving people. They are generous people—generous with their time, their energy, their abilities, their financial resources. Brethren people are especially generous. We have a reputation as people who specialize in service, in giving of ourselves.

Most of us know how to give. We enjoy giving. Most of us don't enjoy receiving. Most of us don't know how to receive.

Why? Maybe because when you and I are the givers, we are in the "up" position. Giving to somebody in need is a good thing, of course. But it carries with it the danger of making us feel superior, self-righteous, proud of our generosity. This is a spiritual danger Jesus recognized.

"It's through what he himself is, plus what he receives, that a person becomes a complete entity."

—Dietrich Bonhoeffer

For instance, consider the parable of "the Good Samaritan" in Luke 10. Most people think this parable is about giving, about how we should help someone who needs help. But it's really about receiving, not giving.

Remember that the people listening to Jesus tell this parable were Jews. Jews hated Samaritans. How do you think they reacted when Jesus told them that a Samaritan saved the life of a Jew? Could they imagine themselves in the place of the victim being cared for by someone they despised? Can you and I imagine ourselves in such a circumstance?

One of the ways we Brethren have learned about the importance of humility and service is through the washing of feet when we meet for the love feast. Of all the worship rituals of our church, footwashing is my favorite. I love its simplicity. I love the togetherness we feel as we participate in it. It's a beautiful ritual.

What was Simon Peter's reaction when Jesus knelt to wash

his feet? "Lord," Peter said, "You will never wash my feet." Jesus answered, "If I do not wash your feet, you have no part of me" (John 13:8). Peter needed to learn how to receive.

Dale Brown has written this about the footwashing: "Each one should be open to being served as well as to serve in order to combat the sins of self-sufficiency, pride, and the striving for power. For this reason each person should have his or her feet washed" (*Church of the Brethren: Yesterday and Today*, ed. Donald F. Durnbaugh, Brethren Press, 1986, pp. 69-70).

So, yes, when we wash feet we are learning about the importance of serving. But not just me serving you. Also, just as importantly, about you serving me. I need to learn how to receive.

Receiving can make us feel dependent. And most of us prefer to feel independent.

Lately I've been reading the letters that Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote and received during his imprisonment. Bonhoeffer was a pastor in Germany during the last years Hitler was in power. Arrested for his resistance to the Nazi regime, he eventually was sent to a concentration camp where he was executed. While in prison and suffering from his loss of freedom, he wrote these words: "The wish to be independent in everything is false pride. ... It's through what he himself is, plus what he receives, that a person becomes a complete entity."

I've had people in the congregations I've served say to me, "I'm going to the hospital next week." So I ask, "Would you like me to share that during Sunday worship and include prayers for you?" And sometimes the answer is, "No, I really don't want anyone to know about this."

That answer always makes me sad. The people who give that answer are saying "no" to cups of cold water that could be given to them. Thoughts, prayers, cards, and visits they might have been blessed by will not come to them. All because they haven't learned how to receive.

One of the characters in a novel by Herbert Tarr (*The Conversion of Chaplain Cohen*, 1963) says, "A parent's love isn't to be paid back, it can only be passed on." The same is true of God's love for us, love that comes in countless ways—from family, friends, church. We receive it, knowing we can never repay it. But we receive it gladly, joyfully.

And then, by God's grace, we may pass it on. **✠**

Kenneth L. Gible is a writer and Church of the Brethren pastor living in Greencastle, Pa.

Christian voices coming

Churches take a major step toward ecumenical unity

by Kevin Eckstrom

RNS—Ever since the modern ecumenical movement took root 50 years ago, the two largest Christian groups in the United States—Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants—have been missing from the table.

That may change after a recent high-level meeting in Chicago at which Catholic, evangelical, and mainline Protestant leaders formed what is being called “Christian Churches Together in the USA” and agreed to work for greater unity among major US Christian churches.

Representatives of the 23 groups ranged from the Episcopalians and United Church of Christ on the theological left, to Roman Catholics and the African Methodist Episcopal Church in the center, to the Salvation Army and Korean Presbyterian Church on the right.

“We celebrate the unique traditions, gifts, and charisms of our respective faith communities,” said a joint statement adopted at the April 4-6 meeting. “We also acknowledge that when our differences create unnecessary divisions, our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is distorted.”

If the 23 groups can agree to form a new organization, it would signal a seismic shift in American church relations. Most leaders said a “new something” could emerge within five years, perhaps sooner.

For years, evangelicals and Catholics have been suspicious of the liberal-leaning National Council of Churches, and NCC-member bodies have felt their influence to be diminished by the growing clout of Catholics and evangelical bodies.

The Rev. Bob Edgar, the NCC’s general secretary, began the discussions two years ago and made it clear he was

willing to sacrifice the venerable NCC in order to attract Catholics and evangelicals to a bigger ecumenical table. An initial meeting was held last September in Baltimore.

At the Chicago meeting, which was intentionally kept quiet, Edgar said all sides agreed that the time had come to bury past grudges and work together on common issues of concern, such as poverty, saving the environment, and fighting pornography.

“If the Russians and the Americans can live and work together in outer space, why can’t Christians find a way to work together down here?” Edgar asked.

Under the loose framework of an initial mission statement, the new body would be bound by traditional Christian beliefs in the Trinity, salvation through Jesus Christ, “common prayer, speaking to society with a common voice,” and “promoting the common good of society.”

Previous attempts to speak with a common voice, however, have been problematic. In 2000, a planned statement on marriage between the NCC, Southern Baptist Convention, Catholic bishops, and the National Association of Evangelicals was shelved when Edgar withdrew his support for fear that it could be used against gays and lesbians.

This time, Edgar said, the groups are focusing on areas of agreement, not disagreement.

“We’ve searched the New Testament for 2,000 years for something that we can agree on, and it’s one sentence, and we’re not sure which sentence it is, but we’re pretty sure it has the word ‘poor’ in it,” he said.

Bishop Tod Brown of Orange, Calif., the lead ecumenical

together

liaison for the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, said the need for a wider ecumenical table is clear.

"There is no broad-based Christian churches voice in this country, and I think we (Catholics) have our voice, and the NCC has a voice, and sometimes there are some evangelical voices, but there isn't any gathering that represents most or all of those groups."

With Brown's and Baltimore Cardinal William Keeler's participation, the Catholics are clearly on board. The evangelicals, however, may be a harder fish to catch.

Commissioner John Busby, the national commander for the Salvation Army, is one of two negotiators trying to bring the traditionally conservative evangelicals on board. He said initial reactions have been positive, although some groups "certainly have reservations."

Organizers also hope to include fast-growing Pentecostal churches and "parachurch" ministries such as Habitat for Humanity and umbrella groups representing independent megachurches.

Busby said everything in the new organization is tentative, in an effort to make it accessible to other churches that have not signed on yet. "The safest thing for us to do is take it one meeting at a time and look at concerns as new people join us, and try to deal with those one at a time."

Church leaders, however, are decidedly optimistic and feel a sense of momentum. Elenie Huszagh, a Greek Orthodox laywoman who serves as president of the NCC, said the meeting "was the first step in telling people that this is real."

The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, the top elected official at the Presbyterian Church (USA), said the group "turned a major corner in Chicago."

"The question now is not if, but when and how, we go forward," he said. 

Communiqué

Christian Churches Together in the USA

Here is the joint communiqué for Christian Churches Together in the USA, a fledgling ecumenical group of evangelicals, Pentecostals, Catholics, and mainline Protestants.

CHICAGO—As Evangelical, Orthodox, Pentecostal, mainline Protestant and Roman Catholic church leaders, we write to all Christians in the United States to share our longing for an expanded Christian conversation in our nation. In Baltimore on Sept. 7-8, 2001, we met to pray, to listen, and to seek the guidance of God on whether all who confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the scriptures can talk together about how to share with the world our common confession of Jesus Christ. We continued this prayerful conversation in Chicago on April 4-6 and sensed the Holy Spirit leading us to new possibilities.

We are Christians who long for greater unity. It is our longing which most clearly points us toward "something new" as a possibility for the churches in the United States. We celebrate the unique traditions, gifts, and charisms of our respective faith communities. We also acknowledge that when our differences create unnecessary divisions, our witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is distorted. We offer our lamentations and longings with prayerful expectation that the Holy Spirit is moving us toward a new expression of our relationships with one another and our witness to the world.

We lament that we are divided and that our divisions too often result in distrust, misunderstandings, fear, and even hostility between us. We long for the broken body of Christ made whole, where unity can be celebrated in the midst of our diversity.

We lament our often diffuse and diminished voice on matters critical to the gospel in our society. We long for a more common witness, vision, and mission.

We lament how our lack of faithfulness to each other has led to a lack of effectiveness on crucial issues of human dignity and social justice. We long to strengthen the prophetic public voice of the Christian community in America.

We lament that none of our current organizations represents the full spectrum of Christians in the United States. We long for a place where our differences could be better understood and our commonalities better affirmed.

In Chicago, we began to see a vision of a new life together. This vision has led us to

(continued on page 26)

(continued)

provisionally call ourselves "Christian Churches Together in the USA." With excitement we began to sketch the outlines of a new level of relationship and action that offer a common witness for Christ to the world.

This common witness will be visible through our:

- Celebrating a common confession of faith in the Triune God
- Seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit through biblical, spiritual, and theological reflection
- Engaging in common prayer
- Speaking to society with a common voice
- Promoting the common good of society
- Fostering faithful evangelism
- Seeking reconciliation by affirming our commonalities

and understanding our differences

- Building a community of fellowship and mutual support

We invite all churches who confess Jesus Christ as God and Savior according to the scriptures to the glory of the one God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit to join us on this journey. We have only just begun to explore how to walk together. The questions for conversation, the ways to talk together and the paths to take, all remain to be fleshed out by those whom, we trust, will join us on this difficult and essential journey of faith and obedience. We cannot know the details of the way, but we long to allow the Holy Spirit to answer our Lord's prayer to the Father, "that they may all be one... so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21).

Participating groups

African Methodist Episcopal Church, American Baptist Churches USA, Armenian Orthodox Church, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Christian Reformed Church in North America, Church of the Brethren, Episcopal Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Evangelicals for Social Action, Greek Orthodox Church, International Council of Community Churches.

Korean Presbyterian Church, Moravian Church in America, National Council of Churches, Orthodox Church in America, Pentecostal-Charismatic Churches of North America, Presbyterian Church (USA), Reformed Church in America, Roman Catholic Church, Sojourners/Call to Renewal, The Salvation Army, United Church of Christ, United Methodist Church.



Brethren are "in on the ground floor" of togetherness

The Church of the Brethren has been "in on the ground floor" of the Christian Churches Together movement through the work of Judy Mills Reimer. As general secretary of the General Board, she is the one designated by Annual Conference as the "ecumenical officer" of the church, and has enthusiastically filled that role as a participant in this organizing effort. Reimer has been in all the organizing meetings for the new group, and sits on its steering committee. "We want to talk and walk together as Christians," she said.

In an interview she said she hopes the new group will be viewed positively by Church of the Brethren members who have been dissatisfied with the denomination's membership in the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. Some of those members wanted the Church of the Brethren to join the National Association of Evangelicals, a move Annual Conference turned down. Now the idea of bringing all these groups together is being approached "with fresh eyes and ears and energy," Reimer said.

Craig Alan Myers, pastor of the Blue River congregation Columbia City, Ind., keeps an eye on the ecumenical movement for the Brethren Revival Fellowship. He is skeptical of the new group. "There is no bold thinking 'outside the box' in this initiative," he said. He claims the National Council of Churches is "calling the shots" and said it is "telling" that neither the National Association of Evangelicals nor the Southern Baptists have signed on yet. "The thrust for ecumenism has faded away," Myers said, "and it is not likely to be seen again for some time."

Despite detractors, the new group is determined to bring Christian groups together. Already 13 evangelical voices have committed to attend the next meeting of the group, at Fuller Theological Seminary in California, Jan. 27-29, 2003. While evangelicals are being courted, the National Council of Churches is keeping a low profile. Even the word "ecumenical" is sometimes avoided in describing the group, because some Christians find the very word offensive. So far there has been little concern with dollars, structure, or "faith and order" issues.

Instead, Reimer said, participants are concentrating first on merely finding a way to speak with one voice as Christians when unity is important, such as following the events of Sept. 11. "As followers of Jesus, we can walk together," she said.—Fletcher Farrar

Fifth End-of-Life Study Guide

Since 1997 the Association of Brethren Caregivers has published resources for end-of-life decision-making. This series of materials, sponsored by Lafiya: A Whole-Person Health Ministry of ABC, includes:

- Annual Conference Statement on End-of-Life Decision-Making and Resolution on Organ and Tissue Donation
- Choosing Death: A Study Guide on Euthanasia
- Choosing Death with Dignity: A Study Guide on Death, Bereavement and Burial
- Prolonging Life: A Study Guide on Aging and Life-Prolonging Technology

Each Study Guide is available for \$2.50. Visit ABC's on-line store to order.

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GOD'S INFINITE JUSTICE

A theological reflection on Sept. 11

by Virginia Wiles

Paul declares that he did not come to Corinth either in power or in wisdom. Instead, he writes, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2).

Reflecting on Sept. 11, it would have been easier had Paul's words been "Jesus Christ, and him resurrected." We could have talked together about how God's response to the crucifixion was resurrection, not retaliation. I could have talked with some force about how the resurrection was God's act of peace in the midst of violence. These things are true. But Paul speaks in this text only of crucifixion. What does he mean when he says he decided to preach only this: "Jesus Christ, and him crucified"? How is that good news?

According to Paul, Christ's death was his ultimate identification with humanity. In his death we see the image of every violence, every humiliation. In his death we know our own deaths. Through his humiliation we know our own humiliation. We share his death. Thus do we recognize that God chooses what is weak, the lowly and despised. God chose the crucified Christ.

We grieve those lives lost on Sept. 11, 2001. We grieve for their families, for their friends and colleagues. We grieve for a nation stunned in pain. And so we should. But for those who know Jesus Christ and him crucified, our grief does not turn to a retaliatory anger. Righteous indignation cannot compensate for this grief. For in those thousands of losses, in each multiplied ripple and wave of anguish, we meet the depth of our poverty in spirit. We know in our depths Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

Christ is our righteousness and sanctification and redemption (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ is the righteousness of God. In him is expressed and accomplished God's passionate desire for peace. But to know Christ—and thus to know God's righteousness—is to know his crucifixion and to know our own deaths. We cannot seek for peace apart from knowing our own death, apart from confronting our own complicity

in violence, apart from recognizing that we, too, are "poor in spirit." We can only be peacemakers if we mourn.

Plan for peace

Jesus says, "Blessed are the poor in spirit [those who know humiliation], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." And then he says, "Blessed are those who mourn. . . . Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness. . . . Blessed are those who are merciful. . . . Blessed are the peacemakers."

It is not a battle plan that either Washington or Al Qaeda is likely to follow. But for those who name Jesus the crucified as Lord, it is the only plan for peace that we have. First, we acknowledge that we are creatures, not the Creator; we know our own poverty of spirit; we confront the weakness of our strength and the folly of our wisdom; we preach Jesus Christ, and him crucified. Only then, when we know our own poverty, are we truly able to mourn. Such mourning, deep and unspeakable as it is, will lead us to a ravenous and tender hunger for God's righteousness, for clear evidence of God's shalom-making activity in our midst, for God's infinite justice.

And, our expression of this justice? Mercy. For in God's economy, mercy is not the restraint of justice; it is the expression of justice. Mercy is justice making peace. And blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons and daughters of God.

"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." We proclaim Jesus Christ, and him crucified. ❧

This is an excerpt from *Peace: God's Infinite Justice*, by Virginia Wiles. It is one of the Perspectives series of essays by Brethren on faith issues that confront Christians today. They are published by Brethren Press and useful for study, personal reflection, and group discussion. Other titles available so far are *Evangelism and Service*, *Globalization, Patriotism and Faith*, *Universal Restoration* and *Understanding Islam*. Order from Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.

Virginia Wiles is a member of First Church of the Brethren in Chicago and teaches New Testament at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

Boycott isn't the Brethren way

What a wonderful world we live in! Even for those of us who were unable to attend National Youth Conference, we could live through the daily events via the excellent reporting provided us through the wonder we know as the COB Newline. Many thanks to all who labored tirelessly so we at home could feel the enthusiasm of the Church of the Brethren as it gathered in Colorado. From the reports, it appears the Church of the Brethren, which many feel is almost dead, is alive and well. I believe we have a wonderful future ahead as we find new ways to share God's love with all creation.

But I was saddened to read of the boycott by several dozen persons led by the Southeastern District of the speech of Susan Boyer, pastor of the Manchester Church of the Brethren. I understand the boycott was to protest the action of the Manchester congregation which gave approval to allow same-sex covenant services to be held in the church. While I believe that boycotts have their place in making a statement about how I feel, I have not found it a useful tool when I

have differed with a sister or brother in the faith. I believe that open sharing of my position or concern and raising questions about another's view or belief is how Jesus wants us to deal with our differences. Boycotting often closes, rather than opens, dialog with those who have beliefs different than mine.

I do not know if the leadership of the Southeastern District engaged the leadership of NYC or Pastor Boyer about

their concerns before the boycott. If not, I would encourage them to do so as soon as possible. Although we have diverse beliefs, let us not stop looking for more acceptable alternatives than boycotts to share our feelings about controversial issues. The future of the Church of the Brethren demands we dialog openly with one another.

D. Miller Davis
Westminster, Md.

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“There was no place that I could go or any situation that I would face that God wasn’t already there, clearing out the path before me.”

From dialog to decline

There is a link between the two hot topics addressed at Annual Conference (ordaining homosexuals, and a name change for our denomination), and recent reports about the continuing decline in membership in our church.

We are smack dab in the midst of a real dichotomy. Our strength—our openness to listen to other points of view—has also become our greatest weakness. By now we are aware that there are some things that we as a diversified denomination will never come to agreement on.

I am afraid that this continuing dialog will accomplish little of value, but may ultimately decimate our already declining denomination. This is of serious concern to me. The battle may be won, but the war lost.

Mary Lou T. Hall
Bedford, Pa.

Gay is not okay

I’m concerned that the Church of the Brethren is succumbing to the belief that only some of the scriptures are to be followed. The church has taken the position that gay is okay.

It is my understanding of the scripture as found in Romans 1:28-32 that a homosexual lifestyle is no different than a heterosexual individual’s lusting after a member of the opposite sex. My God has condemned such acts as not acceptable behavior.

Leviticus 18 condemns the homosexual lifestyle. How then can the church support the ordination or licensing of anyone who displays a homosexual manner of life?

John H. “Mike” Coleman
Telford, Pa.

From Karen Jones’ family

The following is an open letter to all members of the Church of the Brethren.

It is with a sad but joyful heart that I greet you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. On behalf of myself and the entire family we want to thank you for the thoughts and prayers offered for us in the passing of our beloved sister, daughter, and aunt, Karen L. Jones. The tragic accident that occurred in Louisville on June 27 has forever changed our lives and leaves an

emptiness that only God’s love can fill. However, knowing that we were being prayed for by literally thousands of people brought great comfort to us and we could feel God’s power and work through those prayers. We also appreciated all the notes of encouragement as well as the visits from those who altered their travel plans home from Conference in order to be with us.

A few years ago Karen used these words in a devotional she wrote based on Psalm 139: 1-10, 17-18: “I wasn’t alone! There was no place that I could go or any situation that I would face that God wasn’t already there, clearing out the path before me.” May her own testimony bring you comfort and encourage your hearts in the days ahead as we continue to serve our risen Lord who provides for his children “strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.” Amen.

Ruby Mader
Windber, Pa.

The opinions expressed in Letters are not necessarily those of the magazine. Readers should receive them in the same spirit with which differing opinions are expressed in face-to-face conversations.

Letters should be brief, concise, and respectful of the opinions of others. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items read in the magazine.

We are willing to withhold the name of a writer only when, in our editorial judgment, it is warranted. We will not consider any letter that comes to us unsigned. Whether or not we print the letter, the writer’s name is kept in strictest confidence.

Address letters to Messenger editor, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Note: Some have expressed concern over the dangerous traffic patterns and irregular pedestrian lights in Louisville near the conference center. If you were at Conference and share this concern you are invited to write and express that concern to: Coalition for the Advancement of Regional Transportation, Suite 200, 222 South First St., Louisville, KY 40202. CART is a non-profit group working for change in this city to make the streets and sidewalks safer. Perhaps your letter will aid them in this attempt and prevent another tragedy from happening. —Ruby Mader

Prime 238-acre Iowa farm for sale. It is superb farmland, in family 100+ years, located near Grundy Center and 1/4 mile from the Ivester COB. This will likely sell fast, but the children (and the Ivester community) hope for an able farm family for whom proximity to the Ivester community is an added attraction. House, farm buildings; 224 tillable acres. If this interests you, contact Jerry Lage, realtor, at 515-382-6596.

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Alaska Anyone! A tour is being planned to Alaska July 9-22, 2003. Participants may include the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference at Boise, Idaho, on their way or do only the Alaska part. We will fly to Anchorage, Alaska, and then tour by bus for eight days. This will be followed by four days cruising the inner passage, with a final day in Vancouver and the Butchart Gardens. For a brochure, please write to Jim & Faye Myer, 234 Keener Rd., Lititz, PA 17543.

Travel with a purpose—(Bohrer Tours, Sebring, Fla.) 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 3651 US Highway 27 S. #62, Sebring, FL 33870; tel/fax 863-382-9371, cell 863-201-3847; e-mail rdwbobh@strato.net.

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CLASSIFIED ADS

This month's Turning Points include all listings received prior to July 29 and not previously published. Please send information to be included to Verneda Cole, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 247; vcole_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published.

New Members

Annaville, Pa.: Richard Dietz, Ruth Dietz
Antioch, Rocky Mount, Va.: Stacy Myers
Baugo, Wakarusa, Ind.: Alan Schrader, Souksakhone Sengchan
Big Swatara, Hanoverdale, Hummelstown, Pa.: Jimmy Hess, Doug Knipple, Jr., Doug Knipple, Sheri Knipple, Chris Knipple, Dorothy Mitchem, Charlton Zimmerman, Kay McCabe, Susan Shaver, Michael Shaver, Carolyn Parmer, Katie Parmer, Leroy Geesaman, Evelyn Geesaman
Blue River, Columbia City, Ind.: Larry Rice, Barbara Rice, Cora Myers, Isaiah Kreider, Katherine Shively
Community of Joy, Salisbury, Md.: Elizabeth Emmert
Donnels Creek, North Hampton, Ohio: Jacob Rohrer
Douglas Park, Chicago, Ill.: Valerie Whitfield
Easton, Md.: Rebecca Walbridge, Sara Urry, Ryan Tarr, Herb Webb, Lon Cesal, Rose Cesal, Jennifer Stichberry
Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio: David Stamper, Floyd Marion
Franklin Grove, Ill.: Rebecca Gant, Carissa Novak, Whitney Kessel
Frederick, Md.: Brian Mullinix, Richard R. Baker, Kristin O'Toole, Eileen Conley
Friendship, Linthicum, Md.: Keith McDowell
Long Green Valley, Glen Arm, Md.: Lillian Reichart
Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa.: Tom Stinedurf, Diane Stinedurf
Modesto, Calif.: Carole Follis, Mary Pieczarka, Ann Weaver, Jim Weaver, Stefani Weaver
Mohican, West Salem, Ohio: Tim Guerin, Aaron Welch, Liz Welch, Eric Veigl, Crystal Veigl, Zachary Hottel
New Paris, Ind.: Emily Bauer, Andy Branum, Amber Cripe, Amy Hernley, Bill Hollowell, Crystal Hollowell, Mike Lambright, Penny Lambright, Helen Peterson, Curtis Reimer, Deanna Reimer, Jessica

Smeltzer, Jordan Smeltzer, Jacie Smeltzer, Ken Toole, Barb Toole
Palmyra, Pa.: Doug Lefever, Beth Lefever, Daniel Barlet, Styles Conrad, Tim Forney, Adam Myers
Papago Buttes, Phoenix, Ariz.: Salinda Border
Roxbury, Johnstown, Pa.: Brian Reitnauer, Philip Reitnauer
Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Denny French
Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Tristinia Losh
Wetly, Smithsburg, Md.: Don Hays
Wilmington, Del.: Tim Burke, E. Jane Kauffman, Steve Kauffman, Richard Jackson
Woodbury, Pa.: Chris Gotshall

Wedding Anniversaries

Barnhart, Merle and Willet, Phoenix, Ariz., 50
Bradshaw, Robert and Arlene, Waterloo, Iowa, 55
Cline, Wendell and Janie Hinkle, McGaheysville, Va., 60
Dysle, Richard and Twila, Paris, Ohio, 50
Fehr, Ben and Velma, Englewood, Ohio, 50
Gillin, Wilbur and Kathleen, Johnstown, Pa., 65
Grasser, Russell and Audrey, Elton, Pa., 50
Gross, Don and Carol, Springfield, Ohio, 50
Heisey, Enos and Jane, Palmyra, Pa., 60
Hershberger, Jim and Doris, Martinsburg, Pa., 50
Hess, Clarence and Martha, Robesonia, Pa., 55
Juday, Donald and Margaret, New Paris, Ind., 55
Kimpston, Howard and Martha, Waterloo, Iowa, 50
Lehman, Charles and Joyce, Ronks, Pa., 50
Metzler, Harold and Peggy, Martinsburg, Pa., 50
Miller, Dale and Lucille, Lewisburg, Ohio, 55
Reinhold, Carl and Laura, Hummelstown, Pa., 50
Richards, Art and Evelyn, Boonsboro, Md., 70
Snyder, Bill and Ann, Sebring, Fla., 55
Starkey, William and Daisy, Easton, Md., 50
Stiver, Robert and Marge, Goshen, Ind., 60
Theobald, Wayne and Eloine, Vicksburg, Mich., 50
Walters, Robert and Marilyn, Phoenix, Ariz., 65

Weimer, Eugene and Luann, Brookville, Ohio, 50
Young, Lloyd and Ruth Anna, Albion, Ind., 55
Zumbrun, Ted and Margaret, Columbia City, Ind., 65

Deaths

Alfred, Norwood Garber, 86, Fishersville, Va., July 9
Bachman, Susan, 96, Phoenix, Ariz., May 24
Badger, Helen, 88, West Salem, Ohio, June 24
Bice, Gertrude V., 91, Martinsburg, Pa., July 19
Bollinger, W. Joyce, 98, South Whitley, Ind., June 19
Bowman, Arden L., 64, Hagerstown, Ind., June 27
Buchanan, Charles Joseph, 92, Mount Jackson, Va., July 11
Castle, Charles, 77, Jefferson, Md., Feb 11
Cooper, Virginia, 89, Frederick, Md., March 5
Cripe, Virginia O., 88, Mount Zion, Ill., July 13
Dearing, Melissa Ellen, 92, New Lebanon, Ohio, June 22
Dinges, Hazel Marie, 91, Luray, Va., July 4
Droneburg, Donald, 69, Frederick, Md., April 16
Eble, Genevieve, 94, Payette, Idaho, Feb. 22
Eichelberger, Robert J., 90, York County, Pa., June 22
Etzler, Edna, 95, Frederick, Md., April 24
Fake, Esther, 88, Somerset, Pa., June 10
Felix, Betty, 82, Pittsburgh, Pa., June 16
Fisher, Stella, 90, Boones Mill, Va., June 12
Flora, Lena M., 88, Bridgewater, Va., June 21
Frost, Nick, 47, Tipp City, Ohio, June 22
Furry, John, 91, Lima, Ohio, July 15
Gaerte, K.P., 57, Avilla, Ind., Jan. 1
Getz, Maurice, 91, Lancaster, Pa., April 8
Gillin, Donald, 85, Johnstown, Pa., April 27
Gindlesperger, Blanche, 82, Johnstown, Pa., July 1
Glick, Jeffrey Paul, 34, Bridgewater, Va., June 27
Good, H. Willard, 82, Waynesboro, Pa., March 25
Good, Ruby Bowman, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., July 15
Grossnickle, Naomi, 85, Frederick, Md., March 30
Gump, George, 100, Churubusco, Ind., Sept. 20, 2001

Hamrick, Richard, 66, Frederick, Md., June 9
Harnish, Roy W., 81, Hagerstown, Md., June 30
Hildebrand, William, Sr., 97, Frederick, Md., Feb. 11
Hinkle, Betty Hedrick, 77, Old Fields, W.Va., June 18
Horner, Randy, 52, Roaring Spring, Pa., June 29
Huber, Gerald D., 87, Bluffton, Ohio, July 5
Ilyes, Robert J., Sr., 70, Seven Valleys, Pa., June 29
Johnson, Betty, 95, Glendale, Ariz., April 28
Kimmel, Lloyd, Jr., 95, Frederick, Md., March 2
King, Nettie, 90, Phoenix, Ariz., March 5
Koogler, Glenn William, 94, Mount Sidney, Va., July 12
Lambert, Lola Mae, 92, Franklin, W.Va., June 11
Lindamood, James N., 65, Fulks Run, Va., July 12
Lohr, Stanley Milton, 89, Bridgewater, Va., June 26
Martin, Art, 68, East Petersburg, Pa., April 18
Mentzer, Mary "June," 74, Waynesboro, Pa., March 25
Miller, Esther Gene, 75, New Paris, Ind., June 17
More, Louise, 82, Churubusco, Ind., April 20
Morris, Dorothy Marie Raynes, 75, Grottoes, Va., June 25
Mote, Mary Catherine, 92, Troy, Ohio, June 18
Myers, Nelson David, 81, Broadway, Va., July 12
Neff, Mildred, 92, Goshen, Ind., May 21
Oller, E. George, Sr., 69, Smithsburg, Md., July 8
Oren, Ruth E., 95, Greenville, Ohio, June 21
Paxson, Leslie, 102, Davidsville, Pa., June 15
Persons, Helen E., 79, Omaha, Neb., July 12
Phenix, Philip Henry, 87, Stanley, Va., July 15
Rindels, Gwen, 85, Preston, Minn., May 27
Ritchie, Winnie Mae Whetzel, 91, Bergton, Va., June 13
Schoppers, Gerald, 70, Preston, Minn., Oct. 31, 2001
Schroeder, Charlotte, 66, Council Bluffs, Iowa, June 18
Seitz, Lucille, 87, Dayton, Ohio, June 28
Shenk, James Carlton, Sr., 90, Stanley, Va., June 10
Slottag, Fredrick A., 46, Chicago Ill., March 22
Smith, Ben, 84, Johnstown, Pa., May 19
Smith, Charles Franklin, 75, Dayton, Va., June 30

Snoke, Lenora, 96, Decatur, Ill., June 19
Southard, Betty, 91, New Oxford, Pa., June 5
Suter, Mary, 94, Boonsboro, Md., May 15
Syme, June, 79, Fruitland, Idaho, Feb. 24
Thomas, M. Pauline, 88, Ringgold, Md., June 8
Trenary, Eva, 75, Olathe, Kan., May 29
Trump, Virgie, 92, Frederick, Md., May 21
Turner, Patricia Biller, 69, Harrisonburg, Va., June 3
Williams, Grace G., 80, Martinsburg, Pa., June 18
Wine, Everette Julian, 74, Dayton, Va., June 20
Wine, Joseph Benjamin, 88, Timberville, Va., July 5
Winegarden, Hilda, 77, Mesa, Ariz., July 11
Wright, Floyd Lewis "Pete," 65, Hagerstown, Md., June 17
Yoder, Eunice, 81, Gridley, Calif., July 16
Younkins, Fred H., 88, Brownsville, Md., Jan 6
Zeigler, Jay, 88, Churubusco, Ind., April 15

Licensed

Bahn, Duane Allen, Codorus, Loganville, Pa., June 23
Garrison, Gabriel Shane, Peace Valley, Mo., June 2

Ordinations

Wheeler, Myrna L., Pomona, Calif., June 23

Placements

Dodd, Paul, pastor, Bethany, Greenwood, Del., July 15
Garrison, Gabriel S., youth minister, Peace Valley, Mo., June 2
Kaucher, Howard L., from interim to team pastor, Myerstown, Pa., July 1
Kline, Joel D., from pastor, Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind., to pastor, Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill., July 1
Lengel, Dean M., from interim to team pastor, Myerstown, Pa., July 1
Powers, Thomas S., pastor, Antioch, Rocky Mount, Va., July 7
Ramirez, Frank R., from pastor, Elkhart Valley, Elkhart, Ind., to pastor, Everett, Pa., July 22



Thy kin-dom come

During our church's current discussion of homosexuality it will be important to talk not just about homosexuals but to them, and to listen to what they have to say. That should be no chore; some of the most committed Christians I know are in this group. In many of their voices I hear pleas for relationship and belonging, for justice and fairness, and for a live-and-let-live welcome to all who love Jesus. Who wouldn't want that?

Matt Smucker of Chicago, the gay young man ordained by the Michigan District days before Annual Conference voted against ordination of homosexuals, is as open about his Christianity and his calling as he is about his sexuality. But nobody has asked. Though there has been a swirl of publicity about his case, few besides reporters have called to talk to him. He heard that one Standing Committee member who voted for the measure against ordination had expressed concern about his well-being and was planning to call him, but the call never came. "I love preaching," he adds. "But I don't know if anybody wants to hear me."

That's okay with him for now. He sees himself in the role of the woman at Bethany who anointed Jesus with very costly ointment (Matt. 26:6-13). "The disciples get all upset around her, but she just quietly does her ministry," Smucker says. "I'm hanging tight. I'm not really in on a lot of the discussions about me. Part of my ministry now is a ministry of presence. Walking with integrity in spite of conflict inspires hope in people."

After Manchester College he went to Bethany Theological Seminary four years ago "fighting God tooth and nail" but feeling called. Then came licensing to the ministry, his job in the fundraising office of Chicago Theological Seminary, then ordination June 9 at the Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Kalamazoo, Mich. "One of the headlines called me an 'Unintentional pioneer.' I didn't want this. I didn't think it was ever going to happen. But this is part of my walk of faith. Doors keep opening for me and I walk through."

Smucker says he is "very disappointed" in the Annual Conference decision. "They didn't walk into the diversity of people's opinions and get them to talk. No learning happened. It perpetuates the silence. We need to learn that we don't have to agree on every point of our theology. God invites all of us to the table through our love of Jesus. It's not about purity, or who can come to the table. It's what we do once we're around the table."

In remarks at his ordination service, Smucker described the wider church as being thrown by a storm of controversy into a rough sea. Though the safety of land is not far away, it is clinging to a snag of dead wood, unwilling to risk the swim to shore. "This is where the church finds itself," he said, "trapped in a confusing moment, holding on to the past, looking to the future, unable to let go and start swimming."

In her address to the Brethren/Mennonite Council luncheon at Annual Conference, Lisa Pierce of Minneapolis played on the Conference theme, "Thy kingdom come." Jesus was suggesting a complete reversal of the injustices of empire and kingdom, she said. "We need fresh language to help us understand the radical nature of Jesus' vision and how strongly it differs from the world in which we now live," Pierce said. The language she suggested is "kin-dom." Her prayer is for kinship, a web of loving relationships.

Pierce says she "fell in love" with the Church of the Brethren as a student at McPherson College and as a member of the McPherson congregation. She was licensed for ministry in 1990. After graduation in 1991 she became more open about her homosexuality, and that summer she and her partner celebrated their wedding in a Kansas state park. They moved to Minneapolis. Then feeling distant from the Church of the Brethren, she allowed her ministry license to expire. In 1997 she received a master of divinity degree from United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, an ecumenical seminary connected with the United Church of Christ. She and her partner are now active members of the St. Paul Mennonite Fellowship, though she says, "I deeply miss the creative tension of the Church of the Brethren tradition and theology." She works for a peace group, Women Against Military Madness.

In her speech she said the community of gays and lesbians and their straight allies have an important role to play in the church and in the unfolding kingdom. "We can share our experiences of seeking justice even when the cost is high. We can share our experiences of building kinship in creative, life-giving ways. We can learn to place authority in God and God's yearnings above all human institutions. We can urge the broader community to expand its understanding of justice until all are free.

"And we can pray, 'Thy kin-dom come.'"

—FLETCHER FARRAR

"They didn't walk into the diversity of people's opinions and get them to talk," says Matt Smucker. "We need to learn that we don't have to agree on every point of our theology. God invites all of us to the table through our love of Jesus."

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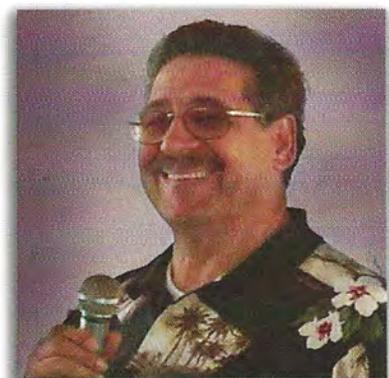
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You, too, can say, 'Send me.' How? Go. Give. Pray.

World Mission Offering, October 2002 Church of the Brethren General Board, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120

Among 113 Church of the Brethren mission and service workers are, top row across: Julia Hapke, Hutchinson, KS. Eli Bainbridge, Monterey, MA. Laura Kreider, Washington, DC. Second row: Mervyn Kettering, Nairobi, Kenya. Rebekah Helsel, Jos, Nigeria. Cal Carpenter, Olympia, WA, and Udo Summerhoff, Lancaster, PA. Bottom row: Sara Cook and Hope Woodard, Belfast, Northern Ireland. Marcos Inhauser, Sao Paulo, Brazil. Guillermo Encarnacion, Dominican Republic.