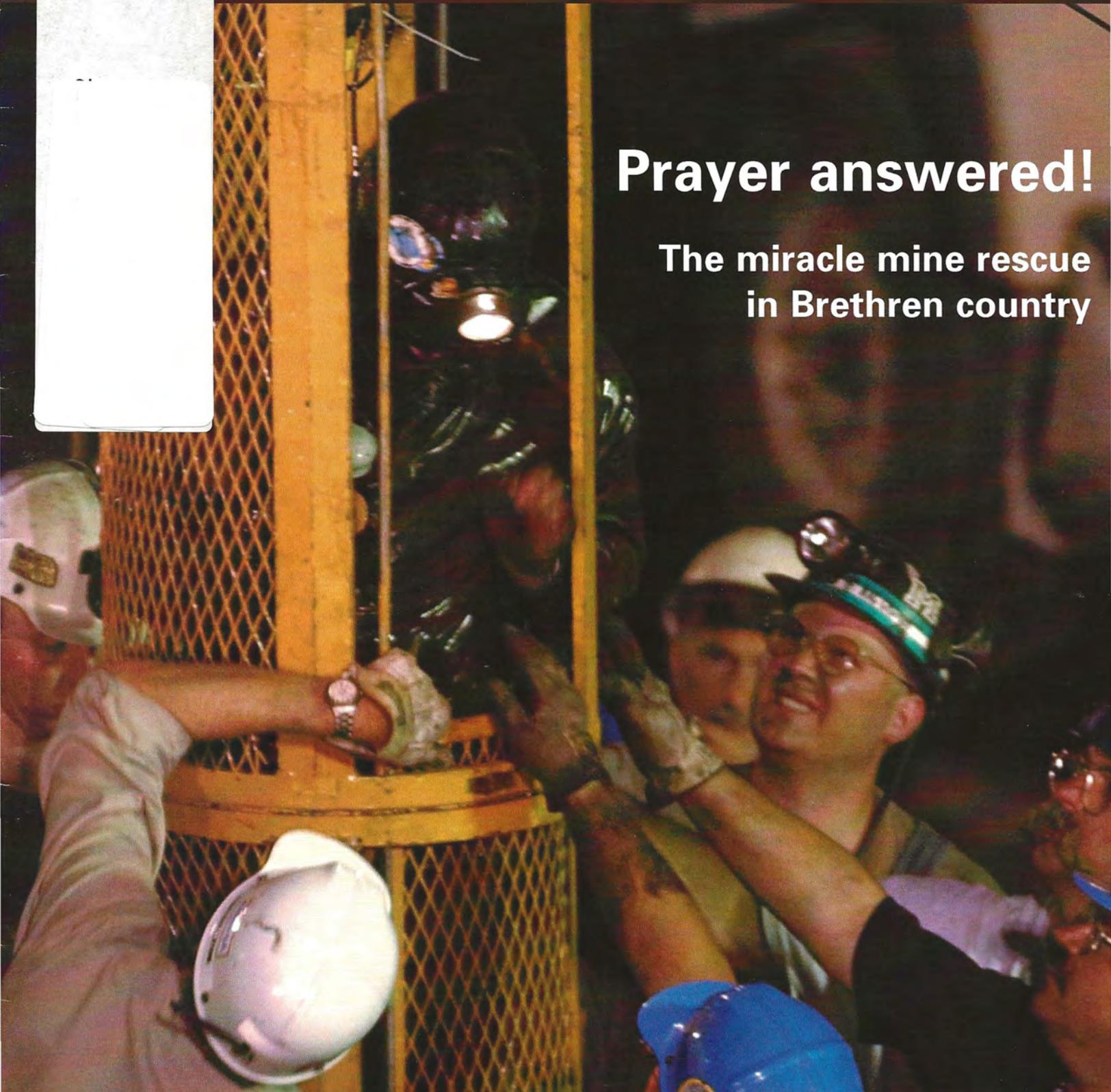


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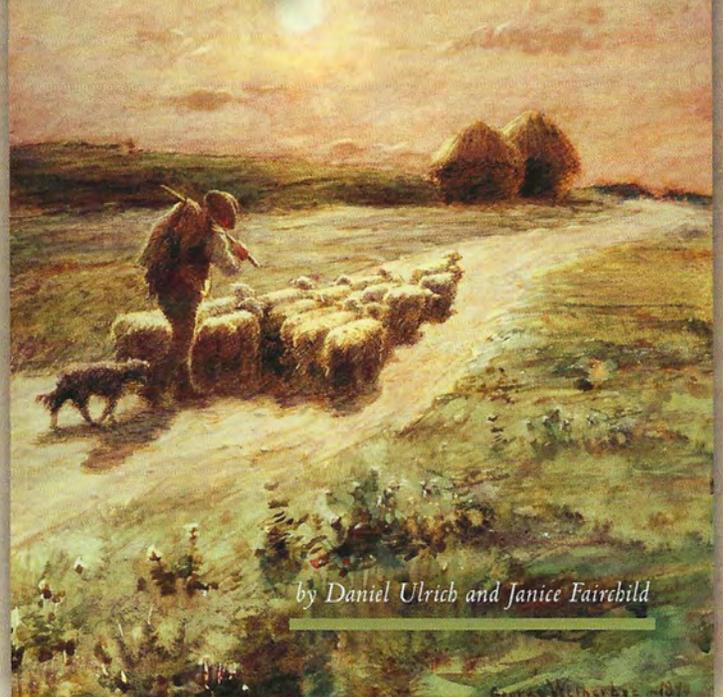
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ONTHECOVER

In the early morning hours of July 28, as the nation watched in wonder and relief, nine coal miners were pulled one by one through a rescue shaft from the mine where they had been trapped 240 feet below. In the cover photo rescuers welcome the fourth miner to the top. He is John Unger, member of the Maple Spring Church of the Brethren, Jerome, Pa. His faith, and that of his family and church community, is an inspiration to all whose prayers were answered. Photo is by Reuters America, Inc.



Eight of the nine rescued Pennsylvania miners at a community service for prayer and thanksgiving.

10 Voices for an Open Spirit

A news special report on a new group formed to promote "progressive" voices within the denomination while it seeks dialog with those of other viewpoints.

12 Miracle rescue

For three days in July, the eyes of the nation were on Somerset County, Pa., where Church of the Brethren member John Unger and eight others were trapped in a coal mine. Brethren in the area came together around the miners, and saw their prayers answered in many ways.

22 National Older Adult Conference

"Retirement" was stricken from the vocabulary of participants at this year's NOAC Sept. 2-6. Speakers urged older adults to stay active and engaged. "God wants all of our energy to be given to his kingdom."

26 A Thanksgiving reflection

Janis Pyle reflects on the meaning of the Thanksgiving table and other tables, past and present, in her life.

DEPARTMENTS

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FROM THE PUBLISHER



When the General Board held a special dinner recently to celebrate more than 50 years of partnership between the Church of the Brethren and Church World Service (see p. 6), an inspiring moment of the evening was recognition of the person who has raised more money in CROP Walks than anyone else in the country. Each year Konrad Bald, who lives not far from Elgin, Ill., sets a simple goal: to raise more money than the year before. Last year he raised more than \$20,000.

After receiving the applause of those gathered at the dinner, the long-time walker told about being the speaker for a group in a wealthy neighborhood in Chicago. They told him they had set a goal for the group to raise \$20,000 for CROP. Konrad's response to them: "You have set your sights too low."

His own testimony shows that the money is there, that people will give if asked. That sentiment was expressed during General Board meetings this past month, where board members were confronted by a looming deficit caused in part by the weak economy. (While giving by congregations and individuals doesn't quite keep pace with cost-of-living increases, the biggest problem right now is reduced income from investments and bequests.)

Board members spoke from the heart about their desire to avoid cuts, wanting instead to believe that God would faithfully provide. Out of all the ministries of the General Board, out of all the people around the world who are ministered to by the General Board, how could they turn their backs on anyone? they asked.

In other words, have we set our sights too low? Can the members of the Church of the Brethren defy current economic trends and give more money every year to the worldwide ministries of the church?

At the Church World Service dinner, guests were reminded of Brethren involvement in the birth of the organization. The first CWS office was housed for a short time in a dorm room at the old Bethany Seminary on Van Buren Street in Chicago. One of its offices is located in Elkhart, Ind., because Brethren provided land there. Back when the world was repairing itself from the ravages of war, the Brethren made a witness far larger than our size would indicate.

Today the winds of war swirl again and people in many countries, including our own, live in fear. When we are tempted to turn inward and protect what we have, God calls us to transform fear into faith. God asks that our giving flow out of gratitude rather than duty. God asks that we set our sights higher.

Wendy McFadden

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Suzann Bosler

Largest BVS unit in a decade has 31 volunteers

Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 251 participated in orientation at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., Sept. 15 to Oct. 5, with the largest group of volunteers since 1991. Those 31 volunteers have now been assigned to projects around the nation and world.

Front row: Sue Grubb (staff); Stephanie Bostwick from Strausstown, Pa., to Washington City Church of the Brethren Nutrition Program for the Homeless, Washington, D.C.; Amber Wilson from Yoder, Ind., to Friendship Day Care Center in Hutchinson, Kan.; Sam Bowman from Boones Mill, Va., to Camp Courageous, Monticello, Iowa; Lisa Hreha from Moon Township, Pa., to Hospitality House Ministries, Wenatchee, Wash.; David Berscheminski from Schifferstadt, Germany, to Tri-City Homeless Coalition, Fremont, Calif.; Dot Ramser, Brunswick, Ohio, to Brethren Woods and Emmaus Community.

Row 2: Megan Smith from Elizabethtown, Pa., to Casa de Esperanza de los Niños, Houston, Tex.; Lindsay Ochess from Athens, Ohio, to Casa de Esperanza de los Niños, Houston, Tex.; Heidi Gross from North Manchester, Ind., to Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Elgin, Ill.; Kevin and Tina Horst from Ephrata, Pa., to L'Arche Community, County Kilkenny, Ireland; Tim Showalter from Harrisonburg, Va., to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C.; Jason and Kathryn Cote from Hebron, N.H., to Hopewell Inn, Mesopotamia, Ohio.

Row 3: Jodi Good from Annville, Pa., to Community Mediation Center, Harrisonburg, Va.; Amy Shifflette from Columbus, Ohio, to Kuca SEKA on the Island Brac, Croatia; Jodie Fahnestock from Salisbury, N.C., to District 4 Human Resources Development Council, Havre, Mont.; Rebecca Blocksome from Ranson, Kan., to Mladi Most, Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Marilyn Reish from Harrisonburg, Va., to Catholic Worker House, San Antonio, Tex.; Claire

Micklin from Kalamazoo, Mich., to Su Casa Catholic Worker House, Chicago, Ill.; Rahel Diem from Muir, Switzerland, to Bridgeway, Lakewood, Colo.; Elizabeth Stover from Quinter, Kan., to Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA), San Francisco, Calif.

Row 4: Sarah Merola from Annapolis, Md., to Mladi Most, Mostar, Bosnia-Herzegovina; Sebastian Aichele from Riedlingen, Germany, to Jubilee USA Network, Washington, D.C.; Tony Banout and Julie Kult from Brookfield, Wis., to a CPR community in Guatemala; Dorothy Haner (staff); Janelle Flory from McPherson, Kan., to German Peace Fellowship, Minden, Germany; Stefan Sulk from Hoyerswerda, Germany, to Catholic Worker House, San Antonio, Tex.; Karen Roberts (staff); Brian Haag from Greenville, Ohio, to Trees for Life, Wichita, Kan.; Genelle Wine (staff); Jaime Eller from Merritt Island, Fla., to Youth and Young Adult Ministries, Elgin, Ill.; Mark Barwick from Lanham Md., to Pax Christi, Brussels, Belgium.

75 years of ministry in Richmond, Ind.

The Richmond Church of the Brethren in Richmond, Ind., will celebrate 75 years of ministry in November. The anniversary will commemorate the day when 31 charter members founded the congregation Nov. 9, 1927. Recently, the congregation has enjoyed a period of growth leading up to its anniversary. The congregation has chosen the theme "Honoring the Past, Anticipating the Future" for this celebration.

The congregation plans to celebrate its anniversary throughout the rest of the

year and into 2003, starting with an afternoon of remembrance beginning at 2 p.m. Nov. 9 and a special worship service at 9:30 a.m. Nov. 10. Guests, including former pastors, will be invited to join in worship, and will be recognized for their service to the congregation.

Stern siblings revisit McPherson

Twenty-four members of the Stern family visited the McPherson College campus Sept. 19 to participate in a private performance of the Theatre Department's season



opener "Bus Stop." The showing was the end to a three-day sibling reunion which brought together 12 of the original 13 siblings.

Eight of the thirteen attended McPherson College, and five of their spouses attended as well. Including children and grandchildren, McPherson residents Doris Stern Tyler and Miles Tyler estimate more than 20 members of the extended family attended McPherson College.

"It's fun for them to have a chance to come back on campus," said Rick Tyler, professor of speech and theatre and son of Doris and Miles. "Some of them hadn't been back since they graduated."

"Father never had much of an education, but he did go to Bethany Seminary," said Doris. "Education was very important to our parents so they really wanted us to go to school."

Despite the wide age-spread between siblings—the oldest now 86 and the youngest 50—there was a time when four of the siblings were all at McPherson College at the same time.

Since graduating from McPherson College, many of the Stern siblings have developed careers in education and pastoral ministries. Five of the brothers have been pastors in the Church of the Brethren and several, including Doris and Miles, have done mission work overseas in Nigeria, Argentina, and Hong Kong. In total, the siblings have traveled to 63 countries. —Janelle Flory

Circle of Peace plans milestone festivities

Circle of Peace, a Church of the Brethren since 1892, is completing the first phase of a three-phase building project that when finished will provide a 400-seat sanctuary, an administration

Circle of Peace, under construction.



The children of Richmond Church of the Brethren include, seated on floor: Christopher Schultz, Nwadi Ekwealor, Aidan Wilhelm, Eze Ekwealor, and Daniel Ekwealor. Seated on pew, from left: Joanna Shively, Ben Shively, Noah Shively, Emma Rohrer, Sophie Wilhelm, Rachel Ulrich, Jonathan Ulrich, and Ruthanne Ekwealor.



courtesy McPherson College

Members of the Stern family gathered at McPherson College Sept. 19. More than 20 members of the extended family attended McPherson College, in addition to eight of the thirteen Stern siblings.

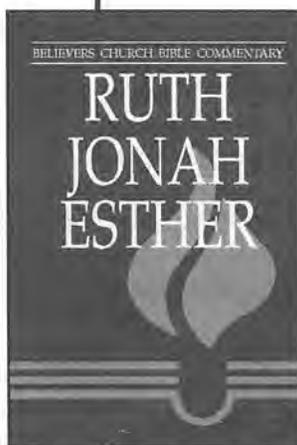
and education building, and a fellowship center, all in southwestern mission-style architecture. Currently meeting in a high school auditorium, the congregation is eagerly anticipating this long-awaited accomplishment following the 1999 sale of their previous church building to the Salvation Army for a Korean congregation. Formerly the Glendale Church of the Brethren, the congregation voted in May 2000 to become Circle of Peace to more adequately reflect their presence at their new location on 5 1/2 acres in Peoria, Ariz. Ground was broken for the project in November 2001. As this year's work progressed, members and friends

volunteered time and muscle to help with some of the labor, saving in excess of \$30,000 on the building costs. It is expected the first of the three buildings will be ready for occupancy in December. Arrangements are being finalized to have a Montessori school use the facilities during the week. In commemoration of this milestone event in the history of Circle of Peace, a weekend of festivities is planned for Mar. 1 - 2, 2003. The weekend promises to be a "commencement" — a graduation from past achievements and an inauguration of a meaningful future for the congregation and the community it seeks to serve.

—Sue Snyder



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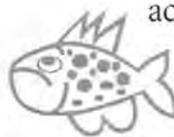


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"You all have a sense of peace and justice in this group which I find very powerful."

—Marty Richards
speaking at National Older
Adult Conference

**Brethren and CWS
celebrate partnership**

The Church of the Brethren and Church World Service took time to celebrate on Oct. 1, lifting up an important partnership that has lasted for more than 50 years.

Church World Service executive director John McCullough

was the guest of honor at the event, held at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., but he, in turn, used part of his address to honor the denomination for its work.

"I want you to know that this evening I stand to honor you," McCullough said, "and to say thanks be to God for the workings of the Holy Spirit in

your lives and in your church." He expressed thanks for the "genius and compassion" of the Brethren that was instrumental in launching Church World Service in 1946.

McCullough, who also visited and held discussions with General Board staff during the day, shared from his own experiences in the former

General Board grants will aid massive CWS appeal for Africa

A combined \$100,000 has been allocated from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund and Global Food Crisis Fund to address food shortages resulting from drought conditions in the southern African nations of Zambia, Lesotho, Malawi, and Zimbabwe.

The World Food Program called the southern Africa crisis the "most severe and urgent dilemma facing the international community at the moment," according to a Church World Service (CWS) report. About 13 million people are estimated to be at risk of starvation this winter.

"You can ride through miles and miles of countryside and see that everything has died,"

CWS International Response Consultant Ivan DeKam said in a release.

The funds will support relief efforts including providing seed corn and drought-tolerant crop packs, meal and food-for-work programs, small-scale irrigation, canal building, micro credit, and animal projects. It will support a larger CWS appeal that is seeking an initial \$500,000 in relief. Local CWS partners are assisting with distribution.

DeKam, who has been assessing needs in Malawi, said that "A common roadside sight is a woman with a baby on her back and bundle of maize on her head—picked up from a food distribution point."



Valt Wiltschek



Visitors from Cuba. The Rev. Dr. Reinerio Arce, left, president of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC), and his wife, Dr. Patricia Ares Muzio, enjoy an Elgin, Ill., park with Church of the Brethren General Board general secretary Judy Mills Reimer.

Walt Milschick

Cuban visitors affirm unity in Christ

The Rev. Dr. Reinerio Arce, president of the Cuban Council of Churches (CIC), and his wife, Dr. Patricia Ares Muzio, visited the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., on Sept. 26, expressing thanks and emphasizing unity in Christ.

"It has been very significant, the help the Brethren have given to the Cuban church," Arce said. "I want to reaffirm we are very happy that God has given us the opportunity for sharing this relationship with the Church of the Brethren, and solidarity between our people. For many years, the bridge between our peoples has been the churches."

The couple was traveling to several US denominations dur-

ing the trip, coordinated by Church World Service. The General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office hosted them while in Elgin, with a lunch, visits and discussion, and afternoon reception. Arce had also visited the offices along with other CIC officials in October 2000.

Their 2002 tour included a stop in Washington, D.C., where they joined with government representatives, business leaders, Cuban-Americans, and others to dialog about Cuba and the effects that the ongoing US embargo has there.

Brethren involvement in Cuba began 100 years ago and has continued to varying degrees over the years with visits in both directions, shipments from meat canning projects, and sister-church relationships.

MMPC holds conversations, plans exploratory trip to Haiti

The General Board-sponsored Mission and Ministries Planning Council (MMPC) convened Sept. 8-10 in New Windsor, Md., discussing proposals before it and holding another round of mission conversations.

The council began with an orientation for new members and a review of its work, then dedicated much of the next day to conversations with area Brethren who have an interest in the denomination's mission work. Nearly 30 people attended. It was the sixth conversation time held since 1998, and the third under MMPC.

During the rest of the meeting, the council considered several proposals that have already come and heard updates on other issues. It set a November date for an "exploration visit" to Haiti; an exploration visit to *Compañeros en Ministerio* projects in Tijuana, Mexico, is being negotiated.

MMPC also decided to cancel its planned West Coast meeting and conversations scheduled for January due to the present tight budget situation, and instead to meet in conjunction with the Inter-Agency Forum and the Council of District Executives in late January in Daytona Beach, Fla., where many MMPC members will already be present. The fall 2003 meeting will be Sept. 7-8, again in New Windsor.

Zaire, Bosnia, and elsewhere to illustrate the ministry and purpose of Church World Service. The organization has grown to become the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of 36 denominations, reaching more than 80 countries.

He noted "a real imperative" for the church to bring people together around "a common table" and talk about the many issues weighing on today's world, discussing those needs and "finding the way out."

"We need to be present and do what we can, even with our meager resources," McCullough told the audience of about 55 Brethren and CWS staff, area pastors, and other guests. "It's a real privilege to be united in this ministry together."

Other highlights of the event, sponsored by the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office, included greetings from general secretary Judy Mills Reimer, dinner, music by New Gospel Sounds of the Chicago First Church of the Brethren, and recognition of the nation's top CROP Walk fundraiser—Konrad Bald of Barrington, Ill.

Church World Service check. Global Mission Partnerships director Merv Keeney, left, Brethren Service Center director Stan Noffsinger, and general secretary Judy Mills Reimer present Church World Service executive director John McCullough with a check for \$100,000. The money, from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund and Global Food Crisis Fund, will aid drought and famine relief in southern Africa.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Nov. 1-2 Brethren Historical Committee meeting, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; **Shenandoah District Conference**, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 1-3 Illinois/Wisconsin District Conference, Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 3 Junior High Sunday

Nov. 8-9 Virginia District Conference, Bonsack Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.

Nov. 10 National Donor Sabbath

Nov. 14-16 Ministry of Reconciliation practitioner workshop, Camp Mack, Milford, Ind.

Nov. 15-16 Evangelism Connections training conference, Philadelphia, Pa.

Nov. 18-20 Sabbath Retreat for Church of the Brethren youth pastors sponsored by General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministries office, Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministries Center, Sharpsburg, Md.

Nov. 22-24 Bethany Theological Seminary "Exploring Your Call" discernment event for youth, Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa.

Nov. 23-24 Brethren Benefit Trust board meetings, McPherson, Kan.

Dec. 5-19 Brethren Witness Faith Expedition to Nicaragua

Dec. 8 Christmas offering emphasis

BVS milestone unit marks 250 orientations and counting

Brethren Volunteer Service in August held its 250th orientation unit since the program began in 1948. Unit 250 took place in cooperation with Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) Aug. 18-28 at Roxbury (Pa.) Holiness Camp.

Eight volunteers were in the milestone unit, all of them members of the Church of the Brethren. *Top row:* Caleb Long of Welsh Run, Mercersburg, Pa.; Kerry Brubaker of the Cocalico congregation, Denver, Pa. *Bottom row:* John and Ruby Shenk (staff); Laurie Byers and Louann Wenger of the Upton (Pa.) congregation; Karen Miller of White Branch, Hagerstown, Ind.; Crystal Miller, Fred and Lois Myers also of the Upton (Pa.) congregation.



Volunteers from this unit were placed either in the Dominican Republic, teaching English to members of the Dominican Church of the Brethren, or in Lewiston, Maine, to serve at Good Shepherd Food Bank and Lewiston Area Mission School.

Event marks 30th anniversary of BVS work in Northern Ireland

The Forthspring Community Center/Springfield Road Methodist Church in west Belfast was a fitting venue on Sept. 6 for the 30th anniversary "thank you" celebration of Brethren Volunteer Service presence in Northern Ireland.

One of the "peace lines" separating Catholic and Protestant areas of the city lies directly adjacent to this church where a current BVSer works with youth, and another BVS worker

lives in an ecumenical community on the other side of the wall. BVS was also first invited to come to Northern Ireland 30 years ago by a Methodist pastor working in a similar community center/church just a few streets away.

That pastor, the Rev. Harold Good, was one of the speakers at the event, attended by about 50 people. Good shared his memories of then-BVS Europe director Dale Ott's visit in late 1971 and subsequent arrival of the first BVS volunteer, Ken Smith, in the spring of 1972.

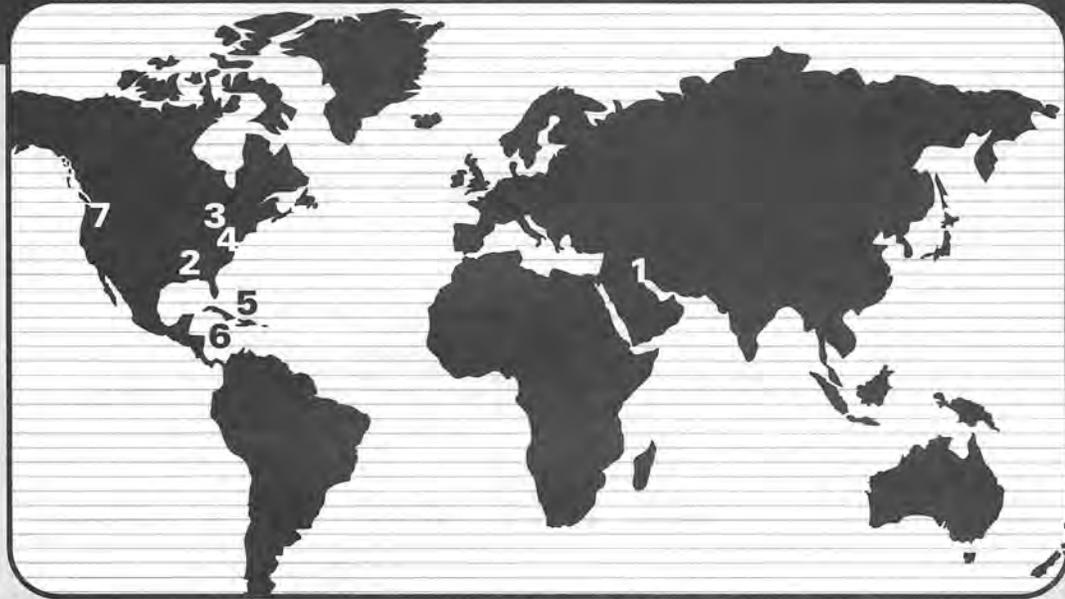
"You've made a huge contribution to the lives of so many people here and to our overall situation," Good said. "By your coming here you've encouraged us, by helping us to realize we are a part of a great world family who are concerned about justice, peace, and people."

Ott and Dr. David Stevens, general secretary of the Irish Council of Churches, also spoke, as did current project director Tanya Gallagher and former BVS Northern Ireland worker Elaine Campbell. Current BVS worker April Angel sang two songs, and another current BVSer, Sara Cook, used input from other volunteers to thank the organizations for allowing BVS workers to join them in their journeys.

Brethren Volunteer Service workers in Europe, including the large contingent from Northern Ireland, met in Germany this summer for their annual retreat. Bottom row (left to right): Janell Dolby, Ashleigh Arledge, Sarah McLaughlin, April Angel. Middle row: John Adams, Sara Cook, Julie Moreau, Natalie Dutrow, Steve Dodge, Hope Woodard. Top row: Mike Horner, Rosita Huston, Kelly Degan, Eric Benner, Pete Dobberstein.

Kristin Flory





Personnel moves

Lester Boleyn, a General Board Congregational Life Team Member for Area 3 (Southeast) based in Cumberland, Md., has announced his retirement effective Dec. 31.

Boleyn has served the General Board through a variety of positions for more than 16 years, beginning as a missionary in Nigeria in 1968. After time in the pastorate, he returned to facilitate a Bible translation project in Sudan from 1988 to 1998. Boleyn has been a Congregational Life Team member since April 2000.

Donna Forbes Steiner has announced her resignation as associate district executive of Atlantic Northeast District effective Dec. 31 as she retires from formal ministry. Steiner has served in this position for the past six years.

Brethren Benefit Trust announced on Aug. 9 that it had terminated the employment of **Claudia Sheets**, manager of human resources and general office services as "part of a plan to reduce operating costs because of stock market declines and a reduction in revenue." Sheets had been with BBT since November 1999.

Karen Roberts accepted a one-year, temporary position as Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) orientation coordinator effective Sept. 3, working from the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

The Northern Ohio District Board's executive committee on Aug. 9 approved a plan for interim district leadership, calling **Carl Cawood** to serve as interim district executive and **Clyde Fry** as interim associate district executive.

Pacific Southwest District has called **Richard Hart** to serve as interim district executive following the retirement of executive Gene Hipskind. Hart, a member of the Pomona (Calif.) Fellowship Church of the Brethren with more than 30 years of educational administration experience, began on Aug. 1.

He will be assisted by a team of individuals handling pastoral placement issues and working with congregations who are seeking pastors. Ataloo Woodin is working in northern California, Willard Ressler in southern California, and Jim Merrifield in Arizona.

- 1. Iraq.** The Middle East nation remains a focus of activity for Brethren as talk of war continues. The Church of the Brethren in September again encouraged Brethren to voice opposition to a war with Iraq, issuing a "prayer and faxing" action checklist and several "talking points" for discussion. The Brethren Witness office has made resources available, and numerous petitions have been circulating.
- 2. Louisiana/Mississippi.** Five Disaster Child Care teams were called into action by the Church of the Brethren General Board's Emergency Response/Service Ministries (ER/SM) office to respond to damaging strikes by Hurricane Lili and Tropical Storm Isidore on the US central Gulf Coast. Two teams served in Mississippi before moving to southern Louisiana, and three other teams joined them there to serve in several cities and towns.
- 3. Fort Wayne, Ind.** Charles Anderson of the Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren was named as one of five finalists to receive the 2002 Jefferson Award, a national award for those who do significant public service work in their communities. Anderson has given more than 25 years of volunteer service in Fort Wayne and was nominated for his work with Habitat for Humanity.
- 4. Washington, D.C.** The Washington City Church of the Brethren planned a major fall event in the shadow of Capitol Hill: a 2002 Peace Lectureship featuring the Rev. Al

Herring, a former Manchester College professor now serving at the University of Louisville (Ky.). The topic was "Peacemaking in a Post 9-11 World: Learning to Coexist."

- 5. Dominican Republic.** The General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund has allocated \$55,000 to support the work of Jeff and Peggy Boshart as community development consultants in the Caribbean nation. Their work includes helping villages organize to be more effective in pursuing economic development projects and enhancing food security. The grant will fund their work through Feb. 1, 2003.
- 6. Honduras.** An \$18,000 grant from the Global Food Crisis Fund will support the work of the Christian Commission for Development in rural and chronically poor Honduran communities. The funds will help provide flocks of hens for food security and income, and will support a first-ever fruit tree project.
- 7. Pacific Northwest.** Don Vermilyea's "Walk Across America," sponsored by the General Board's Brethren Witness and Brethren Volunteer Service offices, reached the north-western corner of the country this fall. Vermilyea spent several weeks in Seattle before heading to Wenatchee and other points in interior Washington. He hoped to be in Idaho by November and wants to press on through the winter if guaranteed housing for each night is available.

New group promotes 'progress

Voices for an Open Spirit also wants dialog and

by Walt Wiltschek

A new movement is taking shape in the Church of the Brethren, causing some to cheer and others to sound the alarm.

Called "Voices for an Open Spirit," the movement had its genesis in the mind of Jim Lehman, a member of the Highland Avenue

diminishing," Lehman says. "It seemed the time had come to . . . begin to come together and be sure the voice of openness and progressivism continues to be heard."

Lehman wanted to hold a gathering at the 2002 Annual Conference in Louisville, Ky., but he knew that Conference couldn't give official sanction to an unrecognized interest group.

"Being open to homosexuals is not the only issue or even the most basic issue. The bottom line is that a spirit of openness and inclusion be strengthened and encouraged in the denomination."

Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill. Lehman says he first started thinking nearly a decade ago that something was needed on the liberal side of the church to lift that voice and to support those congregations.

Events this year at the Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., and elsewhere—causing tensions within districts especially over the issue of homosexuality—led Lehman to sense that "maybe now is the time."

"It was actually because I felt the progressive spirit in the denomination has been steadily

Lehman's solution was to rent a hotel meeting room on his own and send out brochures inviting people to attend the late-night session. He says more than 200 came.

Much of the discussion at that meeting focused on the homosexuality issue, since the query on the licensing and ordination of homosexuals had dominated the Annual Conference business session that afternoon, with 70 percent of delegates voting to not recognize any such licensings or ordinations.

Lehman says, however, that while being open to homosexuals is a "triggering issue" for the new network, it is "not the only issue or even the most basic issue." The bottom line, he says, is that "a spirit of openness and inclusion be strengthened and encouraged in the denomination."

But leaders of Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF), long known for giving voice to the more conservative elements of the denomination, disagree.

Several BRF leaders attended the Annual Conference gathering and came away saying that Voices for an Open Spirit was "a new, essentially one-issue subgroup," according to a statement on the BRF website.

Lehman repeated the process of organizing a meeting at National Older Adult Conference in September, during an evening when anyone who wanted to pull together an informal gath-



Walt Wiltschek

A large group gathers at National Older Adult Conference as Jim Lehman introduces his vision for Voices for an Open Spirit.

ive' voices econciliation

ering was permitted do so. The Voices for an Open Spirit session packed a large ballroom.

Lehman has created an e-mail listserve to facilitate discussion and updates, with nearly 350 names as of late September, and has worked with others to build a website at www.voicesforanopenspirit.org. He also has a mailing list of about 140 names.

Now that the groundwork has been laid, though, he says the future of the movement is not up to him. A retreat is planned Nov. 22-24 at Camp Mack in Milford, Ind., and Lehman says Voices will "take on a stronger and clearer sense of purpose after that meeting," including whether or not it will become an ongoing organization. Lehman says he expects it will.

In the meantime, e-mail and print channels have been buzzing with activity. Some Brethren on the Voices listserve have said they are "tired" of trying to dialog with conservative brothers and sisters. BRF chairman Craig Alan Myers, meanwhile, compared Lehman's idea of a joint worship service for the denomination's most liberal and conservative groups to "Elijah holding a joint worship service with the priests of Baal and Ashtoreth on Mount Carmel."

Lehman says he recognizes that the two foci of the Voices movement to date—strengthening the progressive voice among Brethren and also building bridges across the existing divides in the denomination—may sometimes be at odds. He calls it a "creative tension" that he doesn't want to lose.

More significantly, he says that he hasn't heard voices calling for separation, and he hasn't given up on seeing reconciliation occur.

"Nobody got up (at the summer meetings) and made a speech for separation," Lehman says. "They all indicated they weren't interested in pulling out. They want to stay in and work at dialog and bridge-building."

With an assortment of queries already lining up for the 2003 Annual Conference in Idaho, those bridges will likely need to span some troubled waters in the year ahead. **ZL**

Walt Wiltschek is manager of news services for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

2003 TOURS

JAMAICA SERVICE TOUR (January 24 - February 2)

JAMAICA SERVICE TOUR II (February 2-11)

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)

ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 11-23)

CHINA (June 15 - July 1)

MAJESTIC CANADIAN ROCKIES (July 7-20)

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE TOURS:

#1 - SOUTH AFRICA and BOTSWANA (July 29 - August 19)

#2 - GHANA, IVORY COAST and BENIN (July 29 - August 19)

#3 - ETHIOPIA and ZIMBABWE (July 31 - August 19)

#4 - TANZANIA and KENYA (August 1-19)

#5 - ZIMBABWE (August 1-19)

#6 - ZAMBIA and ZIMBABWE (July 31 - August 19)

#7 - KENYA and TANZANIA (August 1-19)

#8 - ZIMBABWE (August 8-27)

GERMANY and SWITZERLAND (October 9-23)

2004 TOURS

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 6-26)

PARAGUAY, BOLIVIA and PERU (March 23 - April 8)



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Miner miracle

In Brethren country, PA stands for 'Prayer

by Fletcher Farrar



Answered'

BIG "MIRACLES"
HAPPEN IN TINY
PLACES
WELCOME BACK ON TOP

RANDALL DRIVE

Sign at the entrance to the village of Queecreek, Pa., site of the Queecreek mine.



Wednesday July 24, 4 p.m.

Doug Custer starts his shift at the Quecreek mine.

July 24, 8:50 p.m.

Call on mine radio: "We're getting out of here, right now!"

July 24, 11 p.m.

No sign of John Unger's group

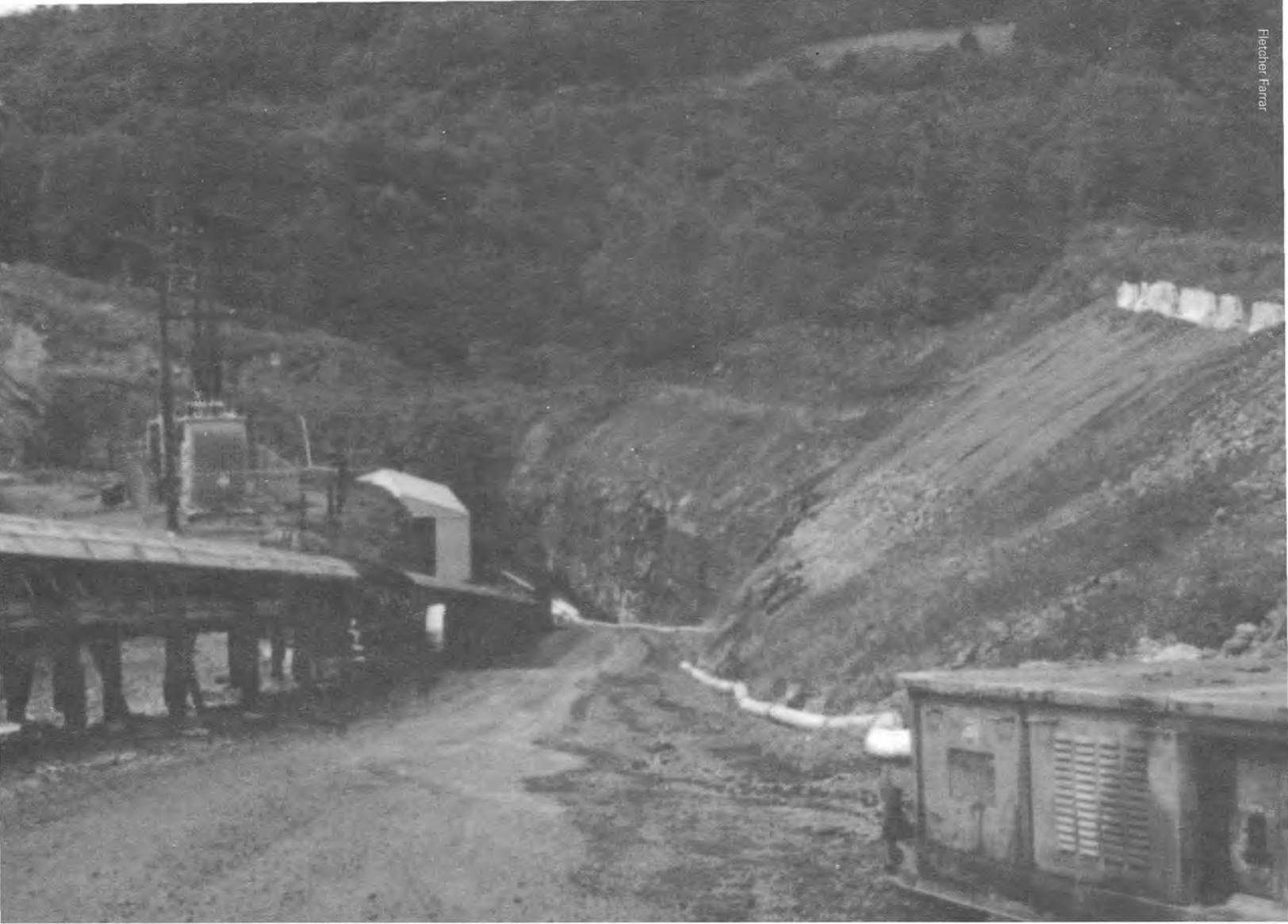
The Saturday religion page of the *Somerset Daily American* leaves no doubt that this part of western Pennsylvania is Brethren country. Even in small type the listings for area Church of the Brethren congregations takes up a full six inches—22 churches in all. In nearly every hamlet of these coal-rich Alleghenies, Brethren pioneers planted a congregation as an enduring legacy of faith.

It was here in Somerset County in the early 1980s that Zella Gahagen sold her "mountain" of coal to a British mining company, yielding some \$10 million for a charitable foundation to benefit the Church of the Brethren General Board and other Brethren agencies.

But mostly in more quiet ways this legacy of faith has sustained a people for 150 years as they face the daily chal-

lenges of family and church life. Those challenges have been mounting in recent years, with the Johnstown steel mills closing down, the dairy industry consolidating, driving many small producers out of business, and the coal industry withering, cutting jobs and benefits. There are half as many coal miners now as there were when Zella Gahagen sold her mountain to benefit the church's ministries.

Yet twice in one year's time this quiet Brethren country has drawn national attention. The first event came tragically on Sept. 11, 2001, when the hijacked Flight 93 crashed into a coalfield near Shanksville, just two miles from "Zella's Mountain." At the parking lot by the crash site is a makeshift memorial to the 40 victims, a sponaneous collection of flags and prayers and scrawled remembrances of Todd Beamer's famous last words, "Let's roll!"



*Above: A month after he was rescued, John Unger, right, revisits the mouth of the Quecreek mine with Dave Rebeck, mine superintendent.
Below: Cathy and Doug Custer, members of the Beachdale Church of the Brethren. Doug has been a coal miner for 25 years.*

July 24, 11:30 p.m.

Sue Unger receives the bad news that John is trapped

Thursday, July 25, 3:30 a.m.

Doug Custer relays the news to families that drilling has started on an air shaft

July 25, 6 a.m.

First hopeful development: drilling had holed through

Sue Unger begins calling family

And then in July this year national TV trucks rolled into the parking lot at the Somerset Wal-Mart, raising their antennas to beam to the nation news of another potential tragedy 10 miles from the crash site. "Nine coal miners are trapped 240 feet underground. Rescue efforts have begun." For three days in July, Somerset County galvanized the prayers of a nation, while the quiet faith of Brethren here became a witness to the world.

On Wednesday, July 24, Doug Custer started his shift at 4 p.m. at the Quecreek mine just outside of Somerset. "It was a typical day, nothing fancy," he recalls. About 10 till 9 the shuttle car operator took a call on the mine radio and relayed the message: "We're getting out of here right

"I thought I was ready to meet my maker. I had a little flashback and saw my wife's face. Then I had to put one foot in front of the other and head for higher ground."



July 25, 8:30 a.m.

Sue's pastor and friends arrive for support

Community chaplain leads group prayer circle at Fire Hall

July 25, 11:30 a.m.

Rescue workers hear tapping giving an indication that the miners are alive

July 25, noon

Miners facing toughest time bent over at the waist with water to their chins

now. The water's on its way."

"Oh good," Doug thought. "We've got an early quit."

The crew of nine started riding out on the "man-trip," something like a three-wheel golf cart, all wondering where the water was. Then Doug saw and heard it. "The water came gushing, roaring. It sounded like Niagara Falls." They baled off the man-trip and made their way on foot. The gushing water rose to 30 inches high in a 48-inch tunnel. At one point the current knocked him down and he lost his glasses.

"I thought I was ready to meet my maker," said Doug. "I had a little prayer. I had a little flashback and saw my wife's face. Then I had to put one foot in front of the other and head for higher ground." Finally they got past the rising water and were able to ride in another golf cart about a mile to safety. Doug thought the other miners, who had warned his group by radio, would be out first, because they had been at a higher elevation. "By 11 o'clock we knew it was bad. We knew they weren't coming out. But we knew they had been mining uphill, so there was a chance."

After the dramatic rescue three days later, signs around town would proclaim "Nine for nine!" But at Beachdale Church of the Brethren, where Doug Custer and his wife, Cathy, are regulars, the signboard includes the first group of miners who got out because they had been warned: "18 Alive. Answered prayer. Praise God!"

"I knew the men were coming out. I never ever, ever, lost faith"



Fletcher Farrah

About 11:30 p.m. the phone rang at the home of Sue Unger, who has recently taken a job as part-time secretary of the Maple Spring Church of the Brethren in the town of Jerome. Slowed by multiple sclerosis, Sue was not able to get to the phone in time. But the machine recorded a message from the state police that there had been an incident, and that she should call the mine. But the police left no number.

Mines change names frequently nowadays, as new companies form to subcontract with coal owners to extract the coal in a certain place, then go out of existence. Sue couldn't think of the name of the mine where her husband, John, was working now. After searching the yellow pages, she finally found the Black Wolf Mining Co. and called. "They said my husband was trapped in the mine. They wanted to meet with us at the Sipesville Fire Hall. They didn't know what to tell us."

Doug Custer had been asked to be the liaison between the families at the fire hall and the mine. The first job was to piece together from the families the names of the miners left below. Then Doug would relay news from the rescue operation. "He knew how to talk in wife language instead of coal talk," says Cathy Custer. At 3:30 a.m. he was able to relay the news that drilling had started for a six-inch air line to where GPS coordinates said the miners ought to be. About 2 1/2 hours later the drilling had "holed through," a first hopeful development. Later that morning rescue workers heard tapping from below. The miners were alive.

"I told the families to have faith and hope and to keep praying," Doug Custer said. "I told them the miners are probably huddled around like cows trying to stay warm." One wife was worried whether the men had water to drink, another whether they had light. Doug reassured them all.

As families gathered at the fire hall, some were concerned at first that Sue Unger had nobody with her for support. She had waited until 6 a.m. to begin calling people—her sister, Pat Shaffer, her married daughter, Vicky Desort, then her son, Stephen. At 8:30 a.m. her pastor, William Wenger, and another good friend arrived, and the three had prayer together. Then word spread throughout the church community. By evening more than 50 Maple Spring people had come to the fire hall to support Sue and pray for John.

Thursday morning a community chaplain set the tone at the fire hall by leading the entire group of families in forming a prayer circle and asking the Lord's help. "I was amazed at how much prayer was a heavy focus of all that happened at the Sipesville Fire Hall," said William Wenger. Larry Black,

Left: Sue Unger, at her desk at Maple Spring Church of the Brethren. Though her husband was trapped, she helped lift the spirits of others during the ordeal. Right: A rescue worker listens for tapping from the trapped miners.





Rescue workers remove drill bit from rescue hole at the Québec mine.

July 25, 6 pm.

A drill rig large enough to bore a rescue shaft begins drilling

Friday, July 26, 1:30 a.m.

Drill bit gets stuck and breaks 100 feet down. New equipment is brought in and begins drilling new shaft at 11 a.m.

July 26, 8 p.m.

Broken bit recovered and drilling resumes at first shaft

pastor of the Beachdale congregation, spent much of his time at the fire hall, and led the entire group in prayer. The family of one of the miners asked him to do their loved one's funeral service, should one be needed. "I said I wouldn't even talk that way," Black recalls. "I told them to keep thinking positive."

Pennsylvania Gov. Mark Schweiker, who had become governor when Tom Ridge was named chief of homeland security, arrived at the fire hall, then became a continuous presence until the ordeal ended. Even the governor read scripture and led the families in prayer.

Cathy Custer hadn't known Sue Unger before the vigil, but she noticed a woman with exceptional serenity. "She was amazing to watch," Cathy said. "That first night she said she felt a calmness come over her, and everybody could see it."

Sue recalled later: "I knew the men were coming out. Some of the other families didn't have positive attitudes, but I told them, 'You have to have faith.' I never ever, ever, lost faith."

Meanwhile, down below, the water continued to rise. At noon on Thursday was the worst time. John Unger and the others were bent over at the waist with water lapping at their chins. "You can't imagine what it was like," John says. He figured they had about an hour to live. One of the younger miners who knew John to be a churchgoer asked him if he could go to heaven without being baptized. "I said yes, I think God is good to all good people, whether you've been baptized or not."

After the young miner recounted the exchange later on national television, John Unger's theology of baptism became the subject of local debate, with even the wife of one of the miners taking him to task publicly. But John was unfazed. "Somebody's at the end of the line and you're going to tell them they're going to burn in hell because they haven't been baptized? I still think I gave him the right answer."

As water was being pumped out of the mine, pressurized air forced in through the first drill hole pushed down on it from above. The water began to recede. They sat in a cold, dark, cramped space, talking all the time to keep their minds on track. They passed around a sandwich found in a floating lunchbox, but John didn't take a bite. "This is one time I was glad I was a fat boy." They all wrote farewell notes to their families, sealed them in a lunchbox, and awaited their fate.

A drill rig large enough to bore a rescue shaft arrived and began work Thursday afternoon, but at about 1:30 a.m. Friday morning the drill bit got stuck and broke about 100 feet down. New equipment was brought in and drilling began on another shaft about 75 feet from the first.

"When they started a new hole, Doug almost despaired," Cathy Custer recalls. Her husband had had very little sleep. "He threw his hands up in the air and walked off, all in the sight of the miners' wives, who were at the rescue site then looking to him for guidance." Cathy went after him and they

John Unger and the others were bent over at the waist with water lapping at their chins. "You can't imagine what it was like,"

John says. He figured they had about an hour to live.

sat in their car to talk about God. "We knew God had a hand in this," Cathy recalls. She told Doug, "When this is all over we'll know there was a reason this is happening." There was a downpour of rain but soon the sun came out. By 8 p.m. Friday the broken bit had been recovered and drilling resumed on the first rescue shaft. Later they learned that had the drilling gone faster there would not have been time for the water to be pumped low enough so as not to endanger the miners when the shaft punched through.

Sue Unger said the only time she became uncomfortable at the fire hall was when authorities announced each family had to limit its guests to 15. The Maple Spring group that had assembled around her had begun as a Sunday school class, Friends in Faith, but over the years had become much closer than most families. A month later, more than a dozen of them got together in the church basement to process their experience together.

"Why did we all go to the fire hall? There was free food, and after all, we're Brethren," said Tim McDonald, with a grin. "Really though, we couldn't go home. We felt like something bad would happen if we left." After the limit was imposed, the group moved to a Sipesville friend's porch within sight of the fire hall, then took turns borrowing others' nametags to get back inside to see Sue.

The Sipesville Church of the Brethren opened its doors to anyone who wanted to pray, and the Beachdale congregation, as well as other area churches, held special prayer services. "On that Friday night we had a prayer service here at Maple Spring," recalls Barb Korber. "Our pastor asked us to pray for 1) rescue of the miners, 2) strength and encouragement for the rescuers, and 3) that others will be brought to Christ through this." Several said during that worship service they experienced a new sense of peace and assurance.

The support group wasn't just in Sipesville. Roma Hemminger's son called six or seven times from Okinawa, where he is in military service. A member of the group kept in touch from Central America. Tom Korber was driving across South Dakota helping his daughter move. From separate vehicles they conversed by walkie-talkie: "Dad, do you think John has enough to drink?" The 11-year-old daughter of one of the families busied herself and others during the waiting

July 26, evening

Community prayer service held at Maple Spring church that evening

Saturday, July 27, 10:20 p.m.

Drill breaks through into the mine chamber

July 27, 10:50 p.m.

Phone line lowered into mine. All nine miners are alive!



Sunday, July 28, early morning

Miners lifted out of mine one by one

Monday, July 29

Miners released from hospital and keep a busy schedule for the next month

Sunday, August 4

John Unger attends Maple Spring church to thank friends and God

time by planning a party for "Uncle John" when he got out.

The group was asked what advice they would give others living through a crisis.

"Never underestimate your church family," said one.

"Read the Bible, pray, and have fellowship with other believers," came another answer.

Someone else chimed in, "And have Sue Unger around to keep your spirits up."

At 10:20 p.m. Saturday the drill in the first rescue shaft broke through into the mine chamber and 30 minutes later a phone line was lowered down. Smiling rescue workers began to give thumbs up signs and hug each other. Gov. Schweiker went to the fire hall and announced all the miners were alive. "Nine for nine!"

"The crowd roared," says Cathy Custer. "It could be compared to the announcement of God's return. And the words you heard in that roar were, 'Praise God.'"

The families were called together to make a quick decision. They could watch on television as each of the miners came to the surface, but only if they gave permission for live coverage to the nation. "Everybody has been watching and praying with us all along," Sue Unger reasoned. "It's only fair they get to see the end." The other families agreed. Early Sunday morning one by one the miners were pulled to the surface and emerged from the round yellow cage, live on national TV.

All the miners were taken to the hospital for checkups and observation. Sue Unger, her children, and her pastor were all rushed to the emergency room where they were reunited with John. Church friends came by the hospital next day.

"We love you John and we're so happy to see you," one told him. "But don't you ever do that again."

When his church buddies came to visit, John boasted, "Did you know Gov. Schweiker shook my hand?" When the men laughed, a puzzled John Unger asked why. "He hugged your wife every time he came into the fire hall."

From the time they got out of the hospital that Monday for a month the miners kept a hectic schedule. NBC's Stone Phillips came to the Ungers' house to interview the group. All nine were taken to Pittsburgh where President Bush met with them for 45 minutes privately, then lauded them as heroes at a public event. They were guests of honor at a Pittsburgh Steelers practice, and at a NASCAR race in Tennessee. The Disney Co. signed them to a movie deal for \$150,000 each.

Larry Black, pastor of the Beachdale congregation, worried about how the miners would hold up after the attention stops. "They haven't had time to reflect on what they've been through," Black said.

Despite his hectic schedule, on Aug. 4, the Sunday after the rescue, John Unger was at the Maple Spring church to thank his friends and thank his God. "I really didn't think I would see you again," he told the congregation, "but you



Above: After this wire service photo received wide circulation in newspapers across the country, friends posted a copy on the church bulletin board with the caption: "President gets to meet John Unger."

Opposite page: Doug Custer, right, embraces a rescue worker when they learn their comrades are alive and well. A TV reporter said Custer was squinting from the bright lights, but it was because he'd lost his glasses in the mine.

look pretty good to me."

What happened in Somerset County was everywhere described as a miracle, but this miracle's dimensions go well beyond the rescued men.

For example, the experience brought the close-knit Maple Spring group closer still. Two of the women closed a phone call between them with, "I love you." At a get-together after the rescue even one of the men said to another, "I love you, brother." He was answered by, "I love you too."

One church member said he saw people coming together who hadn't spoken to each other in years.

At Maple Spring's community service while the men were still trapped, one man vowed to come back to church if the miners made it out alive. Weeks later, he hadn't missed a Sunday since.

One of John Unger's co-workers said he wanted to start coming to church, but didn't know where to go. "You can come with me," John said.

So the message from the hills of western Pennsylvania is that God is active in the world. "God still does do miracles," John Unger says. "We are miracles."

Fletcher Farrar is editor of MESSENGER.

DON'T RETIRE. BE ON

This year's National Older Adult Conference draws record energetic crowd

fire

photos and story by Walt Wiltschek

Shhh! Don't mention the word "retirement." At this year's National Older Adult Conference in North Carolina, speakers urged Brethren to strike it from their vocabulary.

American Baptist author and evangelist Tony Campolo may have voiced it most forcefully. Speaking in his usual passionate style, Campolo said, "I'm here to preach against retirement. Jesus preached against it." He cited Jesus' parable of the man who

filled up his barns for the future only to discover he wouldn't get to enjoy his bounty.

Instead, Campolo called the record 1,140 NOAC participants—representing 21 of the 23 districts—to engage in visiting and other volunteer work, to be prophetic voices and write letters to the church, to work for social change and model a Christian lifestyle for younger generations.

"Do not disengage!" he said, citing the example of the active elderly in Asia.

"We're called to commit ourselves to the ministry of the church."

Other speakers during the Sept. 2-6 event, sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers, echoed and added to those thoughts as they addressed aspects of the "While We Run This Race" theme.

They suggested retirement not as a time of

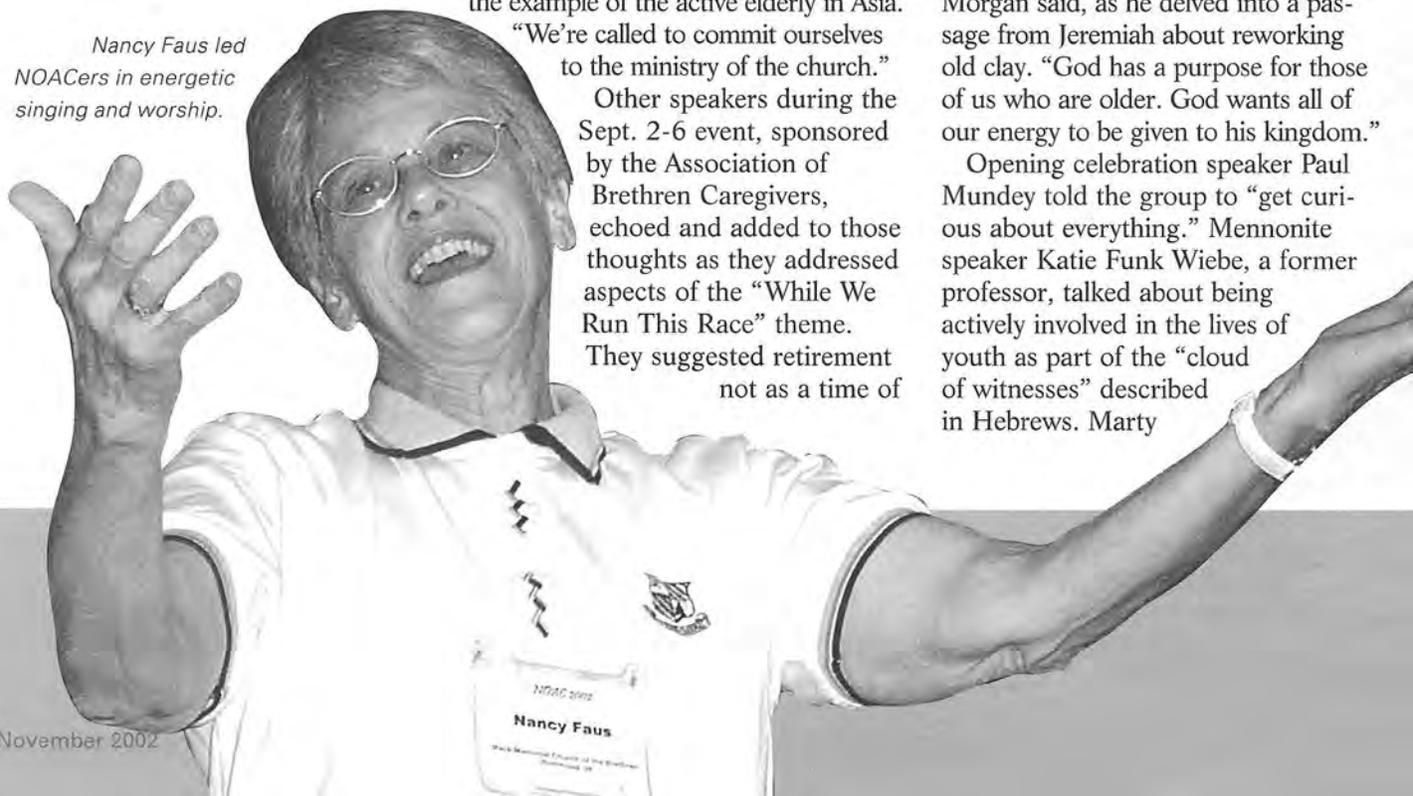
leisure but as a period of unique ministry to edify church and community.

Prolific author Richard Morgan even coined a word for it as he spoke at an evening celebration. He said older adults should not be "retired" but "re-fired" with zest and passion for a new calling. While many older people give in to the temptation to "whine, recline, or decline," he told the 50-and-over crowd instead "to shine!"

"I do not like the word 'retirement,'" Morgan said, as he delved into a passage from Jeremiah about reworking old clay. "God has a purpose for those of us who are older. God wants all of our energy to be given to his kingdom."

Opening celebration speaker Paul Munday told the group to "get curious about everything." Mennonite speaker Katie Funk Wiebe, a former professor, talked about being actively involved in the lives of youth as part of the "cloud of witnesses" described in Hebrews. Marty

Nancy Faus led NOACers in energetic singing and worship.





More than 100 people gathered one morning for a photo of everyone who attended all six NOACs since they began in 1992.

Richards asked how the gifts and riches of aging can be shared with others and emphasized the need to tell stories. And Bible study leader Bob Neff described the need to hand off values to the next generations, like runners in a relay race.

Closing speaker Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm of Bethany Theological Seminary summed it up on the final morning, recounting the blessings she has already received from older adults running the race before her.

They follow in the footsteps of the motley crew of heroes and heroines of the faith described in Hebrews 11, she said. And just as those biblical role models were often peculiar people, she said the church needs older adults to model a "peculiar faith" today, setting an example and continuing to bless those who follow on the journey.

"We can't do this alone," Wilhelm said. "We need each other, each and

every odd one of us. . . . We need one another to find the way ahead."

In addition to the words of speakers, music also filled much of the week: several singings of the theme hymn "Guide My Feet," anthems by a large NOAC choir, afternoon entertainment from Appalachian artists and Brethren folksingers, and a late-night campfire sing-along.

Two of the evening celebrations were also dedicated to music, with performances by Anabaptist group Ministers of Music from Lancaster County, Pa., and Brethren musicians Joseph Helfrich and Shawn Kirchner, who were music coordinators at this year's National Youth Conference (NYC).

Several people noted a number of ties between NOAC and NYC, as many of this year's NOAC speakers had also spoken at NYC in the past, and Campolo spoke at this year's

NYC in Fort Collins, Colo.

A large group of NOAC participants provided an additional tie-in. They had all attended National Youth Conference in 1958 when it was held at Lake Junaluska, and now had returned to the same site 44 years later.

"Do not disengage! We're called to commit ourselves to the ministry of the church."

The group assembled for a photo one morning, part of a stream of group photos that also included Brethren Pension Plan members, those who had attended NOAC all six times it has been held, and NOAC attendees who were age 90 and older.

Ruby Witter of North Manchester, Ind., earned the honor of being the oldest NOAC participant, at age 96, but Naomi West of Bridgewater, Va., also had a special moment, celebrating her 95th birthday during the conference.

SOME "OLD ENOUGH TO KNOW BETTER" SIGN PEACE PETITIONS

Just hours after Tony Campolo's admonition to work for social change, one group of National Older Adult Conference participants had already swung into action.

About two dozen people attended an interest group titled "Old Enough to Know Better: Peace Activism in the Golden Years" that same afternoon. Sponsored by On Earth Peace (OEP), the session featured a panel followed by general discussion. The spark to act came quickly.

"People were pretty on board and wanted to do something," said Walt Moyer of Elizabethtown, Pa., one of the panel members.

OEP co-director Bob Gross worked with the group to draft a petition calling for the US to seek non-military options against Iraq. A few revisions later, the group went to work.

"We had copies made, and then went out and 'hit the streets,'" Moyer said. "Very few people refused."

Jan Thompson of Mesa, Ariz., found a similar positive response. Thompson heard about the effort and volunteered to help.

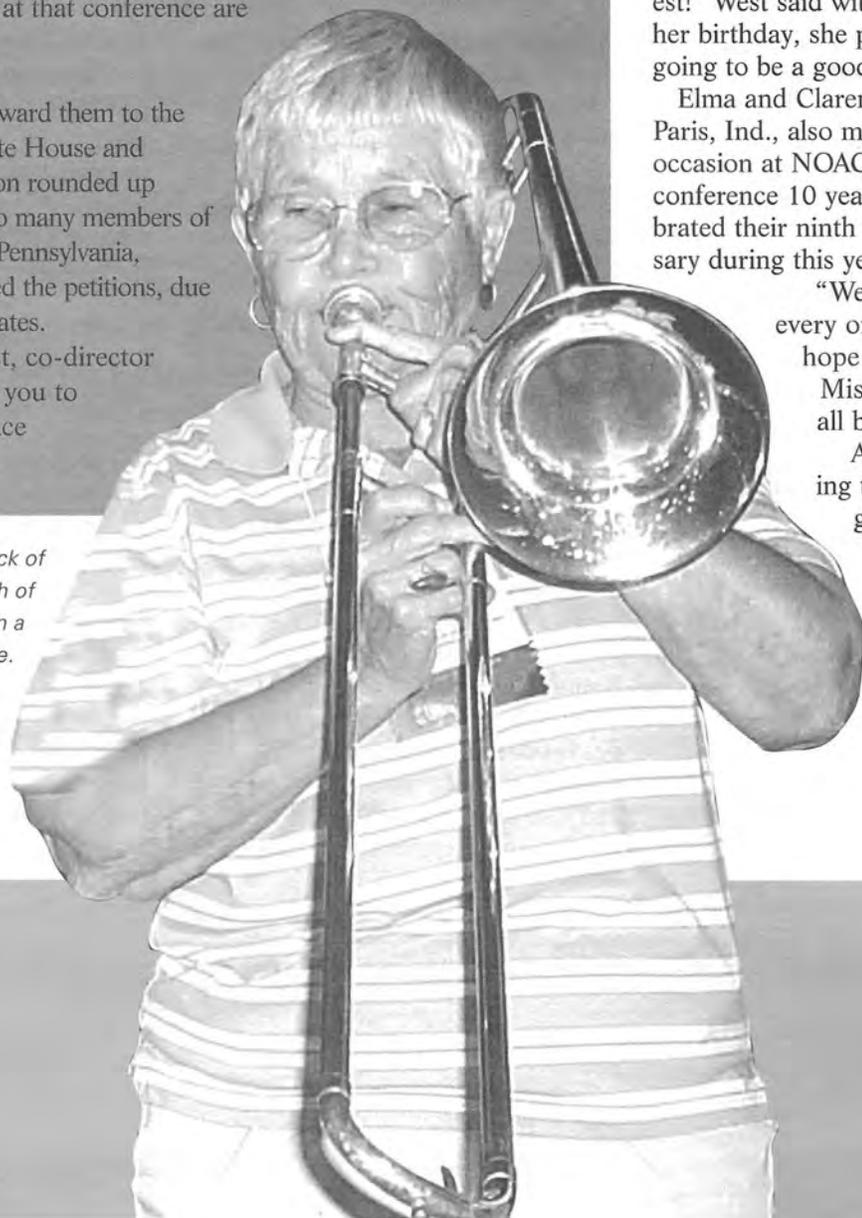
"Someone came up and said, 'We're starting a petition,' and I said, 'Give me some!' " Thompson recalled. "Many people were sending the petition around."

By the time the conference was over, the group had collected 867 signatures from a conference with 1,140 attendees. Thompson said he wasn't surprised at the strong response since "most of the people involved at that conference are some of the core constituents of the Church of the Brethren."

OEP staff then gathered the petitions to forward them to the US government. Copies were sent to the White House and Secretary of State Colin Powell, and Thompson rounded up donations to cover the cost of sending them to many members of Congress. Senators and representatives from Pennsylvania, Maryland, Virginia, Ohio, and Indiana received the petitions, due to the large number of Brethren from those states.

In a follow-up letter to an OEP action list, co-director Barb Saylor said, "I . . . encourage each of you to write similar such letters. Our voices of peace need to be heard."

Trombonist Doris Coppock of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren performed in a brass ensemble.



"A number of people have asked me how I old I am, and I have to be honest!" West said with a laugh. As for her birthday, she proclaimed, "It's going to be a good one."

Elma and Clarence Mishler of New Paris, Ind., also marked a special occasion at NOAC. They met at the conference 10 years ago and celebrated their ninth wedding anniversary during this year's gathering.

"We've been here for every one of them, and we hope to continue," Elma Mishler said. "They've all been great."

At other times during the week, interest group workshops on a host of current topics, numerous recreation options, hand-crafts classes, informal gatherings, shopping at



Roy Valencourt of the New Paris (Ind.) Church of the Brethren visits with speaker Katie Funk Wiebe, right, after her presentation.

the Brethren Press bookstore, and a service project filled the schedule.

More than 600 school kits and health kits were gathered or assembled for the service project at NOAC, easily topping the 2000 total of 372 kits. About 40 people per day participated. Service project co-coordinator Gerry Graybill of New Oxford, Pa. (one of about 340 NOAC participants from Pennsylvania), called it "an excellent response."

Paul Wampler of Manassas, Va., starred in the NOAC golf tournament, registering a hole in one and joining Priscilla Wampler, Wil Nolen, and Joyce Nolen on the winning team. George Baker of Tyrone, Pa., and Art Hall of Oregon, Ohio, won the horse-shoes tournament, while Don and Nancy Mack of Bradford, Ohio, claimed the shuffleboard crown.

Two other NOAC attendees won a big prize: Margaret Lindower of South Bend, Ind., and Phyllis Eller of La Verne, Calif., won free regis-

trations to the next NOAC after their correct entries in the ABC 50th anniversary quiz were selected in a drawing.

For many at the conference, another big draw was ice cream—especially since it was free. The Fellowship of Brethren Homes, Bethany Theological Seminary, and the Brethren colleges sponsored ice cream socials for friends and alumni on successive nights, pulling in big crowds of dessert-seekers. The Lake

Junaluska Assembly's cafe was opened on the final night of the conference to satiate any remaining hunger for frozen dairy products.

Those wanting another taste of NOAC ice cream will have to wait two more years. The biennial event returns to Lake Junaluska Sept. 6-10, 2004. 

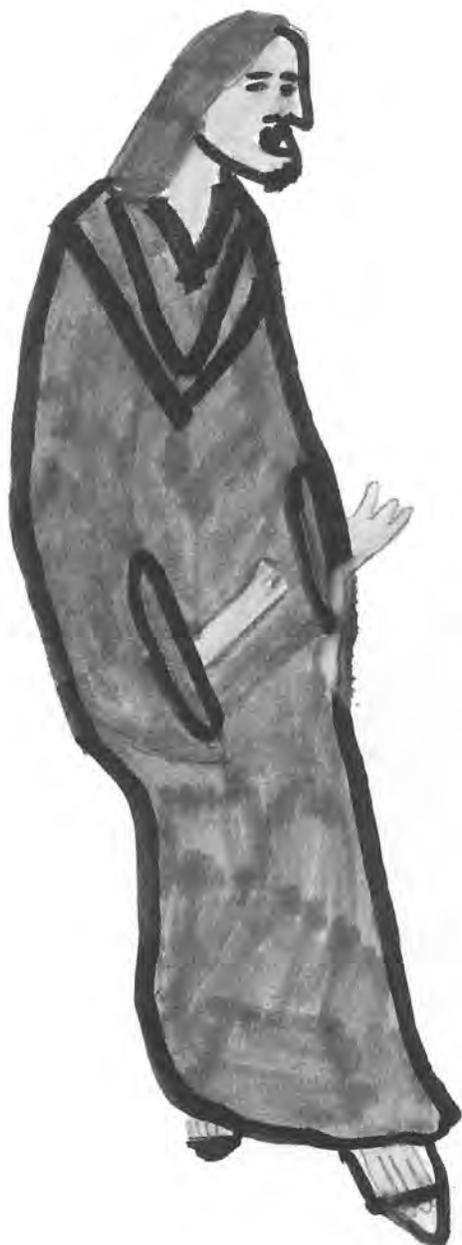
Walt Wiltschek is manager of news services for the Church of the Brethren General Board and provided daily web coverage of NOAC for www.brethren.org.



Glenn Timmons of Elgin, Ill., right, dishes up some free ice cream for Larry Gibble of York, Pa., at an evening social sponsored by the Fellowship of Brethren Homes.

Banquets great and small

A Thanksgiving meditation on tables



by Janis Pyle

For me, this has been the Year of the Table.

As I look forward to Thanksgiving and visiting one of my favorite tables—my sister Janet’s heirloom walnut table back in Iowa heaped with steaming turkey, stuffing, mashed potatoes—I offer a retrospective on what I’ve learned about the power (and potential!) of tables in my global travels this year.

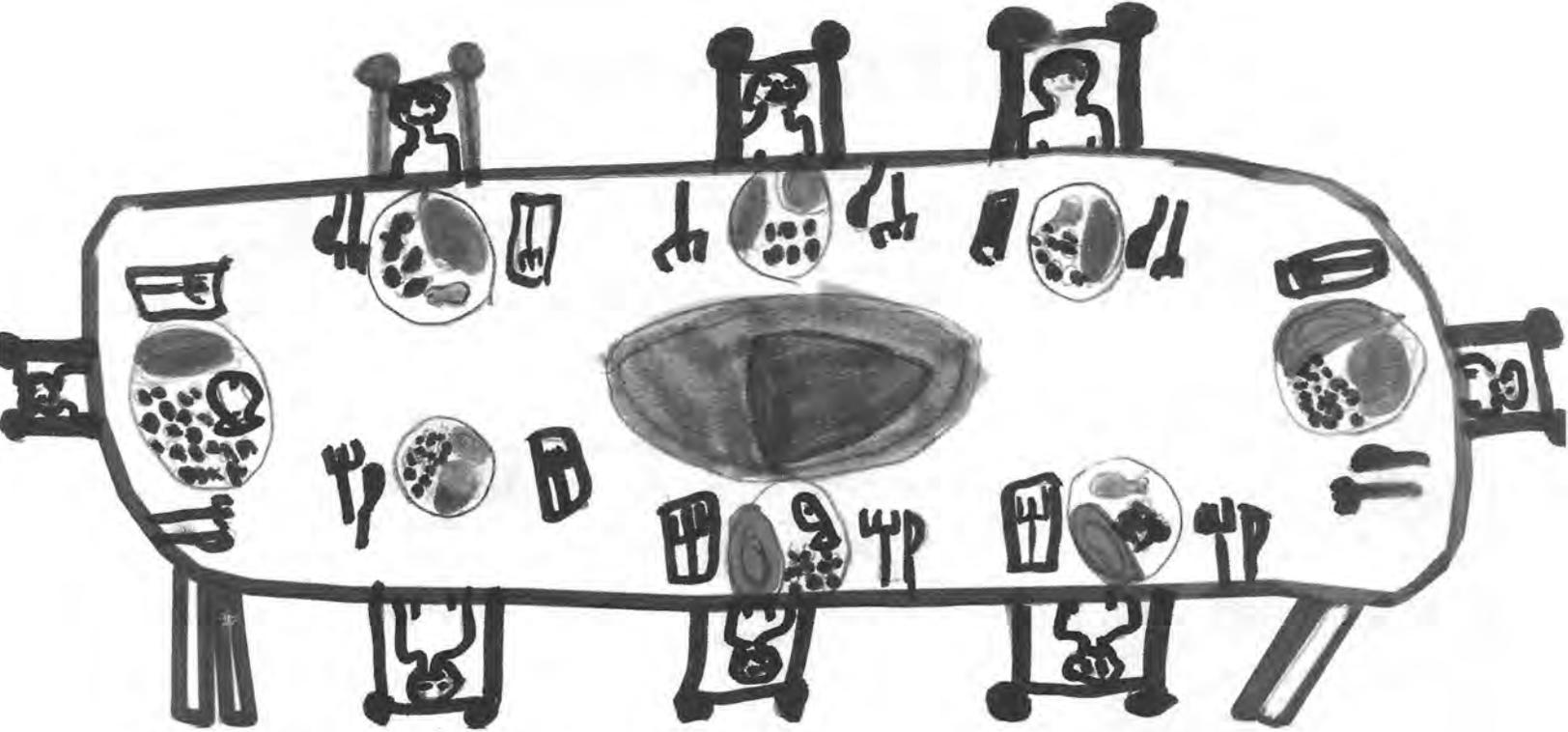
I’ve come to understand that table time is often the only stillpoint in a hectic day. Whether the occasion is a fast food break between colleagues to mend fences, a poignant farewell luncheon, or a gala banquet, the stage is set. Stories can be told, perspective gained, and lives changed.

Tables past. Last October, before I moved to Elgin, my sister Jill from suburban Denver visited me in Iowa. It was just after Sept. 11. Because both of our parents and all of our grandparents are gone, we understood that one way the World Trade Center tragedy survivors would feel the loss most would be in the empty places at their tables. Leafing through stacks of albums with relatives, we concluded that many of our family’s happiest moments were over tables—birthday parties, holiday dinners, and backyard picnic tables. We felt the power of tables to bind and nurture.

And also to heal. Jill and I, who had major differences to iron out since childhood, pulled an all-nighter in a Perkins Restaurant in Ames, Iowa. We spent nine hours straight in one booth just talking. Finally, morning light and understanding broke between us. A blessed table, that one.

Tables present. When I review the past year, a parade of tables passes before my eyes:

- A late-night feast of chicken and goat by lantern light in Lui, southern Sudan, while General Board member Roy Unruh pointed out constellations in the Southern Hemisphere.
- A mid-afternoon snack of fresh oranges served on a quiet porch in Jos, Nigeria, during a visit among the Nigerian churches.



- A dinner theater prime rib meal prepared and served by developmentally disabled adults while attending an ecumenical group meeting in Toronto.

- A breakfast of tea and toast overlooking English gardens at a foreign missions house in London with Paul Grout, 2001 Annual Conference moderator, and his wife, Dorothy.

Future tables. From my travels, I have come to understand the community-making value of tables. But it was a group of children who helped me see the full inclusive power, potential, and promise of tables for the future. At each place setting at the Cross-cultural Dinner at Annual Conference in Louisville this summer was a placemat drawn by a child from a Church of the Brethren congregation. Each placemat answered the question: If God gave a banquet, what would it look like? The children's drawings featured green, black, brown, purple, blue, red, and yellow stick children eating and dancing. Some even included animals around the table. Jesus himself presided at a table in one memorable picture (see illustration). The drawings gave full place to children, women, and men as well as persons of all races and creeds. The Cross-cultural Dinner was blessedly raucous with laughing, singing, hallelujah-shouting people sharing good food, fellowship, and song. At the event, Toma Ragnjiya, president of EYN (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria—Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), nudged me to remind me that the world will end in a Great Banquet Table. "Hallelujah. Amen," I said. 

If God gave a banquet, what would it look like?
The children's drawings featured green, black, brown, purple, blue, red, and yellow stick children eating and dancing. Some even included animals around the table.

Janis Pyle is coordinator for mission connections, Global Mission Partnerships, for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

Artwork is by Nathan Thomas, 10, of Eagle Creek Church of the Brethren, in Forest, Ohio.

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LETTERS

Adios

I read your editorial in the September issue of MESSENGER. I was totally incensed by the piece of diatribe espousing your personal agenda, which, by the way, the leading best seller, the Bible, says is sin and an abomination that God will not tolerate. I cannot adequately express my outrage at this article and MESSENGER.

Our congregation subscribes to MESSENGER because of my urging. Everyone is unhappy with the magazine, and I will advise the church to discontinue our subscription. It is handed out to the members after Sunday morning worship, and has gotten to the point that I am ashamed of this magazine and feel that I need to apologize beforehand to the church for it. I will no longer place myself in this position.

We have subscribed to MESSENGER for nearly 40 years, but all I can say is "Adios."

Phillip J. Graeber
Green Mountain, N.C.

Love neighbors, even in church

Thank you for the thoughtful September editorial by Fletcher Farrar. I encouraged my youth/young adult children to read it also. They have heard so much of the other side, that of ridiculing and cruelty. It was refreshing to read such a compassionate Christian perspective.

Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as ourselves, including our neighbors in Iraq and Afghanistan, and yes, even in our own churches and communities.

Kathleen Fry-Miller
Fort Wayne, Ind.

The king is missing!

The problem with praying "Thy kin-dom come" is inherent in that phrase: the "king" is missing! Yes, it's lovely to conceive of the church as all brothers and sisters, but in a true family there need to be parents. Brothers and sisters left alone too long will soon ignore rules their parents have set and get into trouble. By getting rid of the "king" in "kingdom," we fall prey to fulfilling Kierkegaard's observation: "Is this not what men want, to be free from under the eyes of God?"

The same philosopher also said, "The test is this: to love the Savior more than your sin." A high school English teacher, I love dialog and will talk to anyone about anything. But all our words, however well-intentioned, inclu-

sive, and politically correct, cannot carry the authority of His Word. Instead of dialoging with each other, perhaps we should do as the Brethren of old did and gather each other around the Word for our instruction.

Charlene Rauch
Harleysville, Pa.

Gatekeepers silence gifts

Thank you. I have just read your September editorial, "Thy kin-dom come," and find it to be very interesting and am so glad that you took the time to speak with both Matt and Lisa.

I am very happy that you were willing to put this in print in our denominational magazine. I am very much aware that there are many people who do not agree with me that we homosexuals can be homosexual and Christian. God's gifts to people are given and His children do too much questioning as to what gifts should be used.

I know that both Matt and Lisa have much to offer to the ministry of Christ. We silence too many people by being good gatekeepers. I wonder if we today would be any more accepting of Christ than the people of Bible times, who we condemn for not recognizing Jesus as the Special One.

Daniel J. McRoberts
Caledonia, Mich.

Beyond 'live and let live'

The editorial in the September MESSENGER lends support to the idea that in our current debate over homosexuality we should "live and let live" those who love Jesus. "Who wouldn't want that?"

- In John 8, religious leaders bring a woman who was caught in the act of adultery. When Jesus addresses the woman, he does not say "Live and let live," but rather "Go and sin no more."

- In Mark 10, Jesus meets the "rich young man." When the man inquires about eternal life, Jesus questions his wealth. He does not say, "Live and let live," but rather, "Go, sell all your possessions. . . then come, follow me."

- We might also add the many examples of persons who had sins forgiven, illnesses healed, loved ones raised from the dead. "Live and let live" is not the Jesus way.

I do, however, agree with Brother Fletcher in that we need to speak to one another. Too many of us, on all sides of the issue, are failing to see that those with

“We will stay until the blood and the tears and the living waters flowing from the side of our Savior wash away the pain, the wounds, and our divisions. Meanwhile, we wish only to journey with you—simply, peacefully, together.”

whom we disagree are people that Jesus loves dearly. Perhaps the following might help us begin to speak to one another.

- Can we work together to find the place where we can confront one another when we sin (as in Matthew 18:15-20) but avoid “casting stones” in an ungodly manner (as in John 8:1-7)?

- Can we move beyond using worship services as places of protest over issues, as was done at Annual Conference and National Youth Conference? What does it say about us when people on opposite ends of the homosexual debate end up expressing their disagreement in such similar fashions?

- Can we hold each other accountable on our selective treatment of sin? Numerous scriptures classify homosexual behavior as outside God’s plan. We are right to call it sin. But what about heterosexual sin? Or gluttony, greed, bitterness, unforgiveness, gossip, factions, lack of attendance in worship, how we use our time, etc.?

There is a sign in our church that reads, “Jesus sees us as we can be, but loves us as we are.” My prayer is that each of us would seek to live out both ends of that statement.

Tim Harvey
Stuart, Va.

From Kalamazoo

Twenty years ago an invisible sign hung over Skyridge Church of the Brethren in Kalamazoo, Mich. The same invisible sign hung over almost every church in America. We did not need to worry about a modern Martin Luther tearing it down, as it was invisible. The sign said, “Homosexuals not welcome, but if you come anyway, please stay in the closet. If you can’t do that, at least repent and live alone. Do not, under any circumstances, agitate us with your pain. This we proclaim in the name of our Lord and

Savior, Jesus Christ.” No one ever questioned: Should not what we do in the name of our Lord be positive? Things like preaching the gospel, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick and imprisoned, standing with the poor, working for peace, feeding His flock?

Now in the spring of this year, a young man stood before us. He was our friend, for he has said many beautiful things in our presence. He said, “I want to be more like Jesus,” and “I find healing as I envision Jesus holding me in my hurt and in my pain.” Matthew Smucker had recently completed Bethany Theological Seminary. His voice is strong and beautiful, both for singing and preaching. His heart seems to welcome everyone into God’s presence. He feels called to minister to God’s people. Now, Skyridge church was being asked to recommend for ordination the first openly gay minister in the history of our denomination. We did not have an agenda or want confrontation. It simply felt like the only just action open to us. We arose and tore down the last remnants of our invisible sign.

We know the majority in our denomination do not agree with our decision. Just as many of our denomination have chosen to work for peace and not participate in war, regardless of the opinion of the larger body of Christians, so Skyridge Church of the Brethren has chosen not to exclude anyone who seeks our God, or grieve God by not loving our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Please know this! It is you who are our brothers and sisters in Christ, and we will stay at the foot of the cross with you. We refuse to leave. We will stay until the blood and the tears and the living waters flowing from the side of our Savior wash away the pain, the wounds, and our divisions. Meanwhile, we wish only to journey with you—simply, peacefully, together.

Carolyn Dixon
Kalamazoo, Mich.

Flag doesn’t belong in church

How can Walter McSherry get it so wrong? [See “Letters,” July.] How does he arrive at the conclusion that when Brethren say the flag does not belong in the church that it’s because we are ashamed of the US flag and the US government?

The US flag was created because George Washington needed an easily recognized object to identify the Revolutionary Army. When the colonies became a nation, the flag became the symbol of the United States government. If the flag were only a piece of cloth, it wouldn’t matter whether it was in a church or covering a load of garbage on a truck. But if it is filled with the meaning and the respect it deserves, it belongs neither in a church nor on a pile of garbage.

The church has no flag. The time-honored symbol of the church is the cross. So just how far would you get if you tried to mount a cross behind the podium of the US Congress?

It’s all a confusion and conflict of symbols. If the cross doesn’t belong in Congress, the flag doesn’t belong in church. And for the same reasons!

Jim Martin
Palmyra, Pa.

Integrity and leadership

Being a lifelong member of the Church of the Brethren (43 years), I finally feel the need to speak out on a few “integrity” issues I have with those at the denominational level. First, a review of the August edition of the MESSENGER.

Starting with the flag issue at Annual Conference, why was this even brought up by Paul Grout, especially to the point of suggesting making motions to suspend business because of it? Thank goodness that the body of attendees recognized that this was a non-issue and chose to move on with the more important business of

Conference. I can't believe Paul Grout's explanation that he was "not sure what to do." That's not typical of Paul Grout. My belief is that he was looking to invent an issue, and that's unacceptable.

Also in the MESSENGER was the article that proclaimed they were in search of the answers to the drilling issues within ANWR. As is typical of the mainstream media too, David Radcliff professed to be searching for the answers and then only presented one side of the story. Where

were the interviews of native Alaskans supporting the drilling? According to David there are many who do. Why didn't David visit the Alaskan pipeline areas to examine how technology and nature can coexist? Why was there no mention that the drilling proposal limits drilling to one half of one percent of the total territory?

My problem is not over a proper debate of the issue, but with the true intentions of the writer and editors. If you wish to take a particular stand on this issue, say so up front and don't pretend that you're offering a proper journalistic piece examining both sides. That shows deception and a lack of integrity.

Finally, being one of the historic peace churches presents challenges in today's world, both within and outside of our denomination. Those people who place themselves in harm's way in order to profess their message of peace are true representatives of what a peace church should be. With people such as these, I can debate the issues of peacemaking. But I cringed at

the denomination's official response to 9/11. "Give us justice, but we want no part of making it happen" seemed to be the message from our denominational leadership. It's so easy professing to be a peacemaker from within the strongest country on earth, knowing that no matter what you say, the majority of Americans will protect your right to say it.

We need denominational leadership that's fresh and exciting, just as we need worship services that are fresh and inspirational. And we need to do it without abandoning the ideals and beliefs of the Brethren church. We need leadership without hypocrisy, who will keep us focused and present the facts accurately. We need leadership that won't talk down to its membership or assume it knows what is best. And finally, we need members who embrace our heritage and ideals, and will welcome all peoples into our circle, members who at the end of a debate can still say, "I love you brother/sister and the church we serve."

Nello Stover
Seven Valleys, Pa.

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General Secretary:

The General Board of the Church of the Brethren is seeking a full time executive to serve as General Secretary. Through leadership of staff, this individual will provide guidance to key ministries including congregational life, publishing and communications, global partnerships, service and administrative operations and ecumenical relations. Headquartered in Elgin, IL, a suburb of Chicago, the organization also operates the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, MD and has offices in Washington, DC and Geneva Switzerland.

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Individuals interested in exploring the call to this position should send inquiries to: Kirk Stiffney, General Board Search Consultant, c/o Mennonite Health Services, 234 S. Main St., Suite A, Goshen, IN 46526, fax: 219-534-3254 or e-mail: kirkstiffney@aol.com. Inquiry deadline is December 15, 2002.

This month's Turning Points include all listings received prior to September 30 and not previously published. Please send information to be included to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800 325-8039 ext. 206; jclements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published.

New Members

Ambler, Pa.: Lance Kenney, Nancy Inverso
Arcadia, Ind.: Emily Dille, Hillary Eckert, Joe Mangas, Sally Mangas
Bakersfield, Calif.: Yvonne Cokley, Jamie Dumatrait
Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Bill Forsythe, Sharon Furtado-Evans, Angela Kiracofe, Janice Kulp Long, John Long
Blue Ridge, Va.: Katherine Hogan
Carlisle, Pa.: George Bobb, Melissa Bobb, Patrick Roach, Kourtney Stone, Erin Stone
Elizabethtown, Pa.: Jay Tann
Faith Community of the Brethren Home, New Oxford, Pa.: Linda Schwab, Britta Schwab, Paul Cassel, Cleo Bortner, Hazel Bortner, Henry Raffensberger, Esther Raffensberger, John Basehore
Germantown Brick, Rocky Mount, Va.: Tracy Saul James
Good Samaritan, Brandon, Fla.: Cara Wehle, Jessica Wehle
Hagerstown, Md.: Brad Neisser, John Zinaich, Tracy Zinaich
Lewiston, Maine: Ashleigh Baillargeon, Maxwell Negley
Mack Memorial, Dayton, Ohio: Heidi Beam
Modesto, Calif.: Dennis Teal, Suzanne Teal
Monroeville, Pa.: Margi Furey, Dana Hewitt, Diana Hewitt, Marsha Webb
Mountville, Pa.: George Russo
Nampa, Idaho: Heather Towell, David Vanarsdall, David Hamilton, Darlene Garwick, Isabel Carr, Norma Lockner
Nettle Creek, Hagerstown, Ind.: Sarah Jane Wischart, Brian Wieseke
New Covenant, Gotha, Fla.: Jacki Kifer, David Lore, Jerry Pokorney
Oak Grove, Roanoke, Va.: Carol Winners, Holly Craighead, Erika Meise

Prince of Peace, South Bend, Ind.: Lisa Berthin, Mary Kate Brown, Caitlyn Emmert, Stephen Hendricks, Rob Palguta, Will Palguta, Sara Simons
Purchase Line, Clymer, Pa.: Charlotte Blystone, Nick Daskivich, Dylan Fetterman, Jenna Irwin, Megan Lutman, Samantha Rice, Sara Rae Small, Virgil Small
Rockhill, Rockhill Furnace, Pa.: Matthew Boyer
Rocky Mount, Va.: Dennis Johnson, Betty H. Johnson
Thurmont, Md.: Gary Daley, Nancy Daley, Sharon Fritz, Denton Krietz
Valley Pike, Maurertown, Va.: Christy Stottlemeyer, Katie Slayton, Kelsey Slayton, Joseph Steele, Carl Riggelman, Matthew Gochenour, William H. Garber, LaVonne S. Garber
Wilmington, Del.: James O. Eikenberry, Sue Eikenberry

Wedding Anniversaries

Abshire, C. T. and Alvera, Boones Mill, Va., 50
Altice, Jack and Becky, Wirtz, Va., 50
Anderson, Henry and Lorraine, Bridgewater, Va., 65
Bartlett, U. C. and Flossie, Uniontown, Pa., 60
Bibler, Virgil and Mim, Continental, Ohio, 50
Boyer, Harry and Ruth, Johnstown, Pa., 55
Cornish, Frank and Betty, Uniontown, Pa., 55
England, Paul and Betty, Bedford, Pa., 65
Flora, Bennie and Ruth, Rocky Mount, Va., 55
Flora, Sylvus and Martha, Rocky Mount, Va., 50
Flory, Byron and Betty Lew, Beavercreek, Ohio, 50
Gall, John and Cherie, Milford, Ind., 50
Greiner, Robert and Edna, North Manchester, Ind., 60
Heffner, Lawrence and Oneida, Knoxville, Md., 50
Hummel, Harry and Ethel, Sebring, Fla., 60
Kalp, Galen and Virginia, Stahlstown, Pa., 50
McCray, Jack and Lila, Modesto, Calif., 60
Miller, Erby and Fern, Nampa, Idaho, 60
Shank, Delbert and Mildred, Bakersfield, Calif., 50
Tracey, Richard and Betty, Timonium, Md., 60
Walker, Ernest and Glennis, Berea, Ky., 55
Weller, Roger and Dortha, Cloverdale, Ohio, 50
Woody, Carl and Avanelle, Bakersfield, Calif., 50

Deaths

Adrover, Juan, 73, Turlock, Calif., Aug. 19
Altice, Nancy Elizabeth, 44, Boones Mill, Va., June 24
Bachman, Ella, 102, Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 26
Baile, Roger L., 90, New Oxford, Pa., June 9
Beck, Ruth, 77, Everett, Pa., Sept. 14
Boyer, Ernest, 86, Carlisle, Pa., Aug. 19
Brandt, Blodwen E., 100, sLancaster, Pa., Aug. 14
Brumbaugh, Harold, 77, Martinsburg, Pa., July 26
Byers, Orin, 75, Anderson, Ind., July 6
Carothers, Charles C., II, 85, Boiling Springs, Pa., June 23
Cline, Marian, 68, Hershey, Pa., Aug. 21
Cocanour, Dorothy E., 77, Ashland, Ohio, Sept. 1
Dowty, Mary Ann, 70, Syracuse, Ind., Aug. 18, 2001
Drake, Della, 96, Nampa, Idaho, April 20
Fake, Sylvester, 89, Somerset, Pa., July 29
Ferrell, Ruth Rothrock, 89, La Verne, Calif., Feb. 17
Flora, Pauline, 88, Roanoke, Va., April 15
Flora, Wysor Divers, 68, Boones Mill, Va., Sept. 3
Freeman, Harold L., 84, Hillsboro, Ohio, Aug. 16
Getz, Bernice S., 71, Broadway, Va., Aug. 29
Gibson, Mary, 87, Wellman, Iowa, Aug. 24
Griffiths, Alma, 87, Wilmington, Del., Sept. 14
Haburesak, Bessie, 81, Boswell, Pa., Aug. 28
Heizer, Charles S., 84, Hagerstown, Md., Sept. 19
Hopping, Glyndon Allen, 64, La Verne, Calif., Jan. 6
Hostetler, Alvin J., 75, Orrville, Ohio, Aug. 22
Jacobsen, Dan, 75, Nampa, Idaho, March 15
Jones, Karen L., 51, Champion, Pa., June 27
Klungvedt, Edwin Clarence, 87, Minot, N.D., Aug. 11
Lange, Anna, 82, Milford, Ind., Feb. 26
LeCount, Ronald D., 54, Gettysburg, Ohio, Aug. 16
Long, Joseph, 89, Martinsburg, Pa., Aug. 29
Loucks, William Otis, 83, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 29
Luhrs, George, 89, Monrovia, Md., June 6
Marshall, Marjorie, 85, Everett, Pa., Sept. 5
Mitchell, Beulah, 96, Nampa, Idaho, June 26
Moser, Lester, 79, Thurmont, Md., Aug. 23
Oellig, Robert, 78, Hershey, Pa., Aug. 24
Peterman, E. Miller, 93, Harrisburg, Pa., Sept. 3
Potter, Margaret E., 83, Hagerstown, Md., July 17
Powell, Reno Seibert, Jr., 81, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 16
Pugh, Allen D., 85, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 8
Rehrig, Clarence, 81, Sebring, Fla., Aug. 28
Roberts, George, 81, Polo, Ill., Aug. 20
Robinson, Lola M., 66, Philippi, W.Va., July 11
Shields, Ruth, 77, Noblesville, Ind., Aug. 25
Snader, Ruth, 85, Lancaster, Pa., Sept. 20
Snyder, Martha, 70, Somerset, Pa., July 23
Soler, Edna, 77, Quebradillas, P.R., Sept. 1
Sweitzer, N. Emmert, 86, Seven Valleys, Pa., April 12
Theis, John J., 69, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 20
Warner, Beula, 91, Campbelltown, Pa., June 4
Weaver, Marjorie, 90, Sebring, Fla., Aug. 20
Weicht, Catherine, 88, Everett, Pa., Aug. 5
Wenger, Melvin, 88, Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 8

Rentschler, Lawrence Lee, W. Marva Dist. (Pine Grove, Oakland, Md.), Sept. 1
Risser, Gregory, Atl. N.E. Dist. (East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.), Aug. 25
Rowan, Thomas, W. Marva Dist. (Tearcoat, Augusta., W.Va.), Aug. 25
Sanchez, Pedro, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Myerstown, Pa.) April 28

Ordinations

Fitz, Brian Keith, S. Pa. Dist. (New Fairview, York, Pa.), Sept. 8
Hamilton, Andrew S., N. Ohio Dist. (Center, Louisville, Ohio), Aug. 25
Marshall, Homer H., W. Pa. Dist. (Fair-View, Masontown, Pa.), Aug. 18
Marshall, Patricia M., W. Pa. Dist. (Fair-View, Masontown, Pa.), Aug. 18
McCoy, Shelby, F., W. Pa. Dist. (Connellsville, Pa.), July 28
Sell, Janet E., Mid. Pa. Dist. (Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.), Aug. 18
Smith, Terry Gale, S. Pa. Dist. (Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.), Sept. 8
Smucker, Matthew J., Mich. Dist. (Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.), June 9

Placements

Boyer, Susan Stern, from pastor, Manchester, North Manchester, Ind., to pastor, La Verne, Calif., Sept. 1
Carl, Edward L., from pastor, Goshen City, Goshen, Ind., to pastor, Waynesboro, Va., Sept. 1
Devor, Randy, from interim to pastor, Beech Grove, Hollansburg, Ohio, Sept. 1
Glick, John W., from interim to pastor, Pleasant Hill, Grottoes, Va., Sept. 1
Laubenstein, Judith A., associate pastor, Mount Zion Road, Lebanon, Pa., Sept. 1
Oren, Kenneth, from director of family ministries to pastor, Good Shepherd, Tipp City, Ohio, Sept. 1
Ritenour, Eric R., pastor, Mount Pleasant, Pa., Sept. 15
Smeltzer, Bonnie Kline, from team pastor, Modesto, Calif., to pastor, University Baptist and Brethren, State College, Pa., Sept. 23
Thomas, Jeffrey A., from pastor, Robinson, Pa., to pastor, Tire Hill, Pa., Sept. 1

Licensed

Eisemann, Ben, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Ephrata, Pa.), Aug. 18
Leighton-Harris, Laura, N. Plains Dist. (Peace, Council Bluffs, Iowa), Aug. 25
Painter, Homer W., W. Pa. Dist. (Mount Joy, Mount Pleasant, Pa.), Sept. 15



Arrogance of power, arrogance of peace

Contrary to popular belief, members of the Church of the Brethren General Board as they go about their deliberations really do keep in mind what the folks back home will think. So it was during the October meeting, after the board reviewed a previous Iraq position paper and decided to write a new one, one member suggested: "Put some more Jesus in it."

Jesus can convince Brethren if anyone can. So, with all the other good reasons for not going to war with Iraq, the group writing the statement said this: "For Brethren the one imperative is to follow the way of Jesus. Jesus is the Lord of our lives, our example in all things. We believe that the good news of Jesus and his way of living is not an ideal that is intended for a few select individuals, but is a model for all Christians making difficult choices in a difficult world. As followers of Jesus we believe in resisting evil in all its forms, and after the manner of Jesus refuse to use violence toward these ends."

The statement also said the board is "troubled by our own government's attitudes toward the rest of the world as evidenced in a growing unilateralism, the use of war-making as a means of problem-solving, an increasingly threatening posture toward our global neighbors, and an eagerness to impose its political and economic will on others. We find these attitudes to be contrary to our own Christian values of servanthood and cooperation." The full statement, in both English and Spanish, is available on the denomination's website at www.brethren.org/Iraq.html.

One of the things that makes me proudest of the Church of the Brethren is that its leaders are unwavering on the issue of peace. Though polls show two thirds of Americans say they support the use of military force against Iraq, during General Board discussions there was consensus for a strongly worded statement against war and military force. There was a sense that this is who Brethren are, united against war.

The *Chicago Tribune* Oct. 11 carried a glowing article about the pacifist stance of the Church of the Brethren. The reporter had done her homework, interviewing several Brethren leaders, including Orlando Redekopp, pastor of the First Church of the Brethren in Chicago, and David Radcliff, director of Brethren Witness. "American patriotism does not trump our faith," Redekopp says in the *Tribune*. "We are really citizens of a global community on the basis of our faith." The article makes me proud to be Brethren.

Yet there is danger in my pride. The peace stance can become a way to parade our righteousness in the face of everyone else who is "wrong." Our anti-war statements can become salves to make us feel better,

and to feel that we *are* better than others. Statements thrown down at conservative and patriotic parishioners can be weapons of arrogance rather than instruments of peace. Only after we acknowledge that veterans and military personnel are just as much interested in the cause of peace as the rest of us, then can we move the discussion from ends to means.

And it is good to acknowledge that just because we believe what we say and we say it well, we don't always fully live our statements. For example, the General Board's statement takes aim at "weapons of mass destruction" with this: "We object to the building of these weapons anywhere, for any reasons." Yet don't some of us secretly enjoy the wealth and privilege our own nation's weapons seem to afford us?

Our peace statements, position papers, and, yes, editorials, must be offered as teaching tools and discussion starters, rather than as pronouncements of truth from on high. The General Board's statement would make good Sunday school curriculum. Discuss with the class: "We believe that peace among people will not come through foreign policy strategies such as mutually assured destruction, deterrence, or containment, but rather through cooperation between nations as global partners."

Peace is best won one-on-one, as demonstrated by Stephanie Schaudel of the Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, who in September completed a 1,235-mile bike ride from Washington, D.C., to southern Illinois. She describes her ride as "a creative and invigorating form of protest to US oil dependence" which contributes to the push for war against Iraq. She talked to many people along the way, and handed out a flier titled "No Blood for Oil," which asked the reader to consider this nation's dependence on oil, federal subsidization of energy corporations, and sales of US-made weapons to the Middle East.

She describes this exchange with a general store manager in Draper, Va., who had made a comment about the worsening economy: "That was my in. I responded with, 'The government seems to think it can solve the problem by going to war.' I saw a spark and then this man answered that yes, these are scary times, and that we shouldn't start something we can't win. He did not appear to have faith that we can win this one. Before we left I returned to the counter with two copies of our flier. The man immediately took them. Before he was halfway through reading the first side, he invited me to post one on the bulletin board on the porch outside. I added our small flier to the signs advertising trucks for sale and a state program to help the uninsured."—FLETCHER FARRAR

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“ **speakpeace:** hearing the world's cry

*Grant that we not only speak peace with our lips
but that we know peace in our hearts.*

*Keep us attentive to the world's pain;
help us to give hope to one another. Amen.* ”

Christmas Offering

bearing good news of great joy