

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2003 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Glimpses of God in the people of Sudan

CARING MINISTRIES • A CITY CHURCH REVIVED • PIED PIPER

New from Brethren Press by Geraldine Plunkett

Sarah Beth is good at solving arithmetic problems at school.

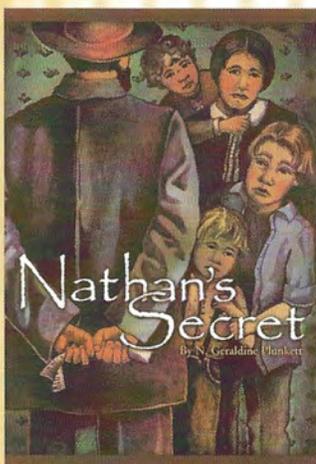
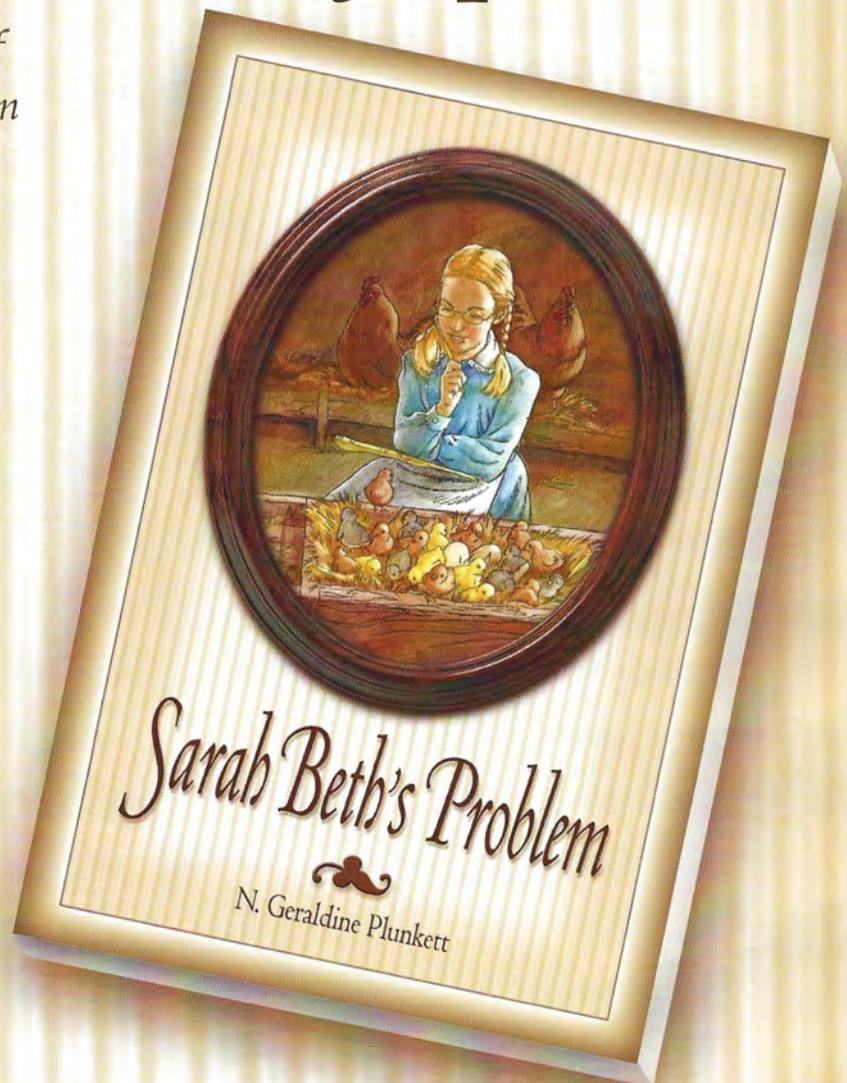
Now she has a real life problem.

With a setting of eggs and the help of Old Dominicker, the hen, can she earn enough money to buy something she has wanted for a long time?

The trouble is, the facts in the problem keep changing.

And so does Sarah Beth, as she grows in her understanding of what is really important.

Set in rural Virginia in the mid-1930s, the story depicts family, community, and church life during the Great Depression, when living simply was a matter of necessity.



Also available by
Geraldine Plunkett
Nathan's Secret
published by Brethren Press

Now Available #8550
\$7.95 plus shipping & handling



Brethren Press

Contact customer service at
1-800-441-3712
to place your order.

Church of the Brethren MESSENGER

Editor: Fletcher Farrar Publisher: Wendy McFadden News: Walt Wiltschek Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: Cedar House Group



Kernon Thomasson



Amy Beery



Fletcher Farrar

ONTHECOVER

As Brethren gather with their families for a special day of Thanksgiving this month, they might offer a special prayer for peace for the people of Sudan. Though the peace process has brought many disappointments, in late October U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell said there had been progress in peace talks between the Sudan government and the rebels in the south. He said he hoped parties could reach a peace agreement by year's end. An estimated two million people have died in the long civil war.

This month's cover article by a Church of the Brethren delegation to Sudan in July and August reports on the hope for peace in the people of southern Sudan, where the Christian church has grown tremendously in the midst of war. Their hope goes beyond the negotiations of government and political leaders to their faith in the peace of Christ.

The cover photo is by Barbara Saylor, co-director of On Earth Peace and a member of the recent delegation. The mother was one of the group's cooks during its stay at the New Sudan Council of Churches compound in Narus. The delegation often heard the prayer of mothers that their children may grow up without war.

10 ABC says farewell

After six years as executive director of the Association of Brethren Caregivers, Steve Mason is departing the agency. He looks back on the struggle to adapt to a new structure, and offers a report card on caregiving ministries.

12 New life in a city church

The Douglas Park Church of the Brethren has found new life and ministry in its inner-city Chicago neighborhood, where it began as a Sunday school mission project nearly a century ago.

18 The Pied Piper of Nazareth

Since childhood, Church of the Brethren pastor Kenneth L. Gible has been fascinated with the tale of the Pied Piper of Hamelin. Here he draws parallels with another who called girls and boys to follow him.

20 Hope for a future in Sudan

A seven-person delegation reports on its visit to southern Sudan, where the Church of the Brethren has been a long-term partner with the New Sudan Council of Churches in its struggle for peace.

26 J. Benton Rhoades remembered

Benton Rhoades served Christ by helping the world's poor through agricultural missions.

DEPARTMENTS

- 2 From the Publisher
- 3 In Touch
- 6 News
- 27 Letters
- 31 Turning Points
- 32 Editorial

FROM THE PUBLISHER



In a recent gathering, the unintended juxtaposition of two topics provided food for thought. One topic was the choice by some to make a distinction between being Christian and being Brethren. The other was a question of how ecumenical we should be and how to evaluate our ecumenical relationships.

The first was not an item of business, but rather an idea that was alluded to several times over the course of the meetings. Perhaps the caution was a good reminder to not make an idol of being Brethren. (Certainly that can happen, just as there are those who misdirect their worship and idolize the Bible or the church.) Or maybe some regard being Brethren like putting on a suit of clothes, an outward appearance that is separate from the essential person wearing the clothes.

But perhaps being Brethren is less like a suit of clothes and more an incarnation of the good news in a distinctive, even unique, way. We do not fully understand how we are the body of Christ, but God tells us that we are.

In another analogy, one Christian educator describes denominational distinctives as the container in which the faith is carried. Whether we recognize it or not, the message comes to us in a container, and we should pay attention to the container we choose.

As we ponder whether it is important to be Brethren and whether "being Brethren" should be separated from "being Christian," what are we to make of being ecumenical? Are these contradictory? How can we be different and yet be one?

The answers to these questions can't be reduced to anything measurable. Instead, the answers can come in the form of stories: When I think of being Brethren, I recall significant ways in which I am shaped more by my faith community's understanding of God than by the culture around me. I think of a sense of home and hope. When I think of being ecumenical, I see a World Council of Churches group that I am part of and whose members come from Lebanon, Cuba, New Zealand, Rwanda, Germany, and the US. Together they embody the prayer "that all may be one." Through them, the church becomes larger and the world becomes smaller. I think of an African proverb quoted by Samuel Kobia, new general secretary of the WCC: "If you want to walk fast, walk alone. But if you want to go far, walk together."

Followers of Jesus, seeking common understanding within the community of the Brethren, in communion with the worldwide body of Christ. . . . Together, with God, we should be able to walk far.

Wendy McFadden

How to reach us

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

dstroyeck_gb@brethren.org
Phone: 847-742-5100
Fax: 847-742-6103

Display advertising:

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

Editorial:

ffarrar_gb@brethren.org
Phone: 217-525-9083
Fax: 217-525-9269

Subscription rates:

\$16.50 individual rate
\$13.50 church group plan
\$13.50 gift subscriptions

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

Connect electronically:

For a free subscription to *Newsline*, the Church of the Brethren e-mail news report, write cobnews@aol.com.

To view the official Church of the Brethren website, go to <http://www.brethren.org>.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Entered as periodical postage matter Aug. 20, 1918, under Act of Congress of Oct. 17, 1917. Filing date, Nov. 1, 1984. Member of the Associated Church Press. Subscriber to Religion News Service & Ecumenical Press Service. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. MESSENGER is published 11 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren General Board. Periodical postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and at additional mailing office, August 2003. Copyright 2003, Church of the Brethren General Board. ISSN 0026-0355.

Postmaster: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

Daily Globe



Brethren family is Farm Family of the Year

"Having more isn't always better," reads the headline of the *Daily Globe* of Worthington, Minn. The article that follows profiled the Van Westen family, members of the Worthington Church of the Brethren, for being named the Nobles County Farm Family of the Year. They were recognized for being a dedicated, hard-working farm family known for its "progressive involvement in the agricultural community."

"I don't think we're anything special," says Ida Van Westen, whose clan includes her husband, Steffen, 16-year-old son, Brandon, and two daughters, Stacy, 20, and Becky, 18. "It's just our way of life."

Their farm comprises 730 acres of corn and soybeans, 35 Holstein steers, and their latest venture, a 70-head goat operation. In addition to its church involvement, the family is active in 4-H, Future Farmers of America, the Reading Community Center, and agricultural organizations.

Ida says being heavily involved in food production and their agriculture-based community has helped her children appreciate the natural world and understand the work involved in the food process. She says her children "know what work's about."

Unlike many farm families, both parents have opted to stay home and be full-time farmers instead of taking another job off the farm, according to the article. Ida says staying at home hasn't given her family wealth, but it has given the Van Westens a better world perspective.

"Having more isn't always better," she says.
—*Daily Globe, Worthington, Minn.*

The Van Westens of Reading, Minn. are, from left, Brandon, Steffen, Becky, and Ida. Another daughter, Stacy, attends South Dakota State University.

Jeanene Pifer is proud to be a bag lady

Known as "Toledo's Other Bag Lady," Jeanene Pifer—who grew up in the Lima (Ohio) Church of the Brethren and is now a member of and organist for the Heatherdowns congregation in Toledo—has more than 500 tote bags in her collection. It's blossomed into a ministry that takes her to engagements across the Midwest, including a recent show in Illinois.

"I must have been born with a love of bags," says Jeanene, who recalls, as a 3-year-old, urging her mother to buy a bag.

The collection today includes a wide variety, from department store bags to one made of seat belts to others shaped like animals and some she picked up overseas. One even has panels containing photos

of family members. Jeanene tells stories and anecdotes associated with some of the bags—she uses about three dozen in a show—interspersed with songs that she plays at a piano. At one point she dons a

coat made entirely of bags. Her goal is always that "everyone will feel better when they leave than when they came."

Jeanene is retired now, but she began the show 13 years ago while she was still teaching in the Toledo school system. "It's really been a ministry I've not had to work at," she says. "It's strictly word of mouth."

She ties in her faith with bag stories urging people to be who God has created them to be, or talking about the importance of volunteering, or sharing the background of the one bag in her collection that she made herself, while her father was dying. Jeanene concludes with a "Praise the Lord" bag containing a Bible, then wraps up the evening with a hymn. She says doing the performances is always a moving experience for her. —**Walt Wiltschek**



"Bag lady" Jeanene Pifer

Kermon Thomasson



Dan West "lived his philosophy of peace, justice, and simple living," reads the postcard that carries this portrait.

to people wherever there was need. In the 60 years since, Heifer has become a model for similar programs dedicated to addressing the root causes of hunger and poverty.

Because so many visitors wanted to know about Heifer's founder, Glen and Florence Crago, volunteer managers since 1996 of the International Gift Shop at Heifer Ranch, agreed that there should be a Dan West video. When Glen died in December of 2000, Florence requested that memorial funds be designated to Heifer. When she contacted David Sollenberger about producing a video, he was not only interested; he was eager. Ultimately the Glen Crago Memorial Fund was transferred to the General Board, to be used expressly for the Dan West video.

Jan Schrock, Dan's daughter, very soon became involved, helping to develop a story line, con-

tacting persons for pertinent information, and seeking other funding as the project grew. Additional funds have been forthcoming from Heifer International, Manchester College, and the Church of the Brethren. David Sollenberger continues to collect footage of his interviews with persons able to reflect on Dan's life and work. He requests that persons with memories, 8mm or 16mm films, or information about Dan contact him at 717-867-4187.

To be released in 2004, the 60th anniversary of Heifer International, the video will present Dan West as visionary, motivator, and peacemaker.

—Florence Crago

Soccer and the Bible team up for kids

"Team Up With Jesus" was the invitation to the children of Patrick County, Va. There seven area churches joined together on a Saturday in August to offer instruction on two topics important to children—the Bible and soccer.

The morning was divided

into two sessions. In the first session, half of the children were led in music and an age-appropriate Bible lesson, while the other half received soccer instruction from some local soccer coaches. After a mid-morning snack, the groups switched activities. The day concluded with a hot dog lunch, and each child received a T-shirt and a Bible for participating.

New Hope Church of the Brethren and Smith River Church of the Brethren, both of Stuart, Va., were among the churches participating in the event, which drew 44 children. It was a unifying event for the seven churches and it identified several families in the area who do not have a church home. Plans are being made for a similar event next year, perhaps with different or additional sports options, but the same evangelistic focus.—Tim Harvey

Soccer lessons were part of an ecumenical outreach to children.

Do you have a video about Dan West?

This is one of the most frequently asked questions at the International Gift Shop at Heifer (International) Ranch, near Perryville, Ark.

People involved in the work of Heifer, possibly the most valuable of Dan West's contributions in the life of the Church of the Brethren, may know him well. Others may know little of the man whose visions of a world at peace, without hunger or poverty, helped to spark Heifer International.

Following his relief work during the Spanish Civil War, Dan shared his conviction that peace could be a reality only when all people were able to feed themselves. He challenged churchmen and women, farmers, and young people to be creative in developing alternatives to war, and by 1944 they were motivated to donate and transport cattle





Norman Glick

Walk Across America passes 7,000 miles

"The Western Plains District is the only one in the Brotherhood where 100 percent of the congregations have invited me to speak," says Don Vermilyea, who is making a cross-country walk, stopping to visit Church of the Brethren congregations along the way.

After 19 months of "walking to promote peace, the environment, and justice," Don walked his 7,000th mile in Kansas City, Kan., and is wearing his fifth pair of shoes. Last year he averaged 16 miles a day; this year it's nearly 20. One day he began at 4:30 a.m. and quit at 9:30 p.m., trekking 34 miles to reach his Sunday preaching destination.

Some of Don's Good Samaritans include three youngsters who packed his lunch for the next day when they made their own school lunches; the children who send him "love notes" and ice cream coupons every six weeks, the fellows who replaced his food when the rats ate it, the nursing home messenger who chased him to ask him back to talk to residents and spend the night, the convenience store who offered a night's shelter and lots of pizza, and Sandy Brown Payne, his Ottawa, Kan., host who contacted the local newspaper and radio station and turned him into a local celebrity for whom motorists slowed and handed him monetary contributions, including a \$20 bill or two.

But it is not all "fun" on Don's Walk Across America.

"Sometimes I've gone two weeks between staying in a home in the Western states. I've

been screamed at, accused of being a dangerous terrorist, accosted by police, nearly run over by motorists, had my 80-pound backpack stolen by a clean-cut, 50s-something white couple driving a very nice El Camino." (He ran in front of the Camino to stop the thieves.) Once he went to sleep on a sandy river bank and awakened under water when a dam was opened.

Although Don was 10 miles from the Church of the Brethren in Kansas City, Mo., he doubled back to Mt. Ida, Wichita, and McPherson from Kansas City. He plans to spend Christmas in Lincoln, Neb., with the George Eiseles, who drove him to Annual Conference and back, then journey through Iowa until March. "I plan to be back in Kansas City next fall, cross the Mississippi in about two years, and eventually return to my home, Friends Run Church, in Franklin, W.Va."

Last year Don snapped 750 photos and with help from friends in Idaho Falls, turned out a CD of his first year's walk. "The day I left Idaho Falls, winter set in!" he recalls.

This winter Don will select from some 3,000 photos he's taken and compose a new CD for his second year's walk. More information is available at www.brethren.org/genbd/witness/Walk, or at www.meetingground.org under Don's picture and the heading, Walk Across America. He regularly updates a two-minute report on extension # 239 at 1-800-323-8039.—Irene Shull Reynolds

New school named for Norman Glick, community servant

The new \$15 million Norman N. Glick Middle School near Modesto, Calif., was named for a Church of the Brethren member who spent 50 years serving on school boards. Norman Glick, a longtime resident of Empire, Calif., died in 2000 at the age of 93.

He had served 10 years on the Empire school board and 40 years on the Stanislaus County board. He had been an active member of Empire Church of the Brethren, serving it as treasurer, board chair, deacon, and Sunday school teacher. He was also active in church district affairs, serving as treasurer, Standing Committee delegate, and moderator.

Guest speaker at the school dedication in September was J. D. Glick, son of Norman. J. D. is pastor of the Sunrise Church of the Brethren, Harrisonburg, Va., and a member of the General Board.



Chris Detrick

Brethren mount response in wake of Hurricane Isabel's destruction

Brethren responded on numerous fronts in the wake of Hurricane Isabel, which decimated areas from North Carolina to Pennsylvania and affected millions of people.

Virginia was particularly hard hit, with at least two congregations suffering damage and a number of others losing power. Christian Church Uniting in



Walt Willishiek

Disaster project director Don Atkins of Indiana, left, consults with volunteer Don Trump of Virginia at a Church of the Brethren disaster response project in Columbus, Miss. The project closed Sept. 30 after repairing and rebuilding numerous homes.

Virginia Beach and the West Richmond congregation both had trees fall on their respective properties.

The Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., twice lost power and had to cancel conference groups during the Sept. 19-21 weekend. The General Board's Emergency Response/ Service Ministries office based there continued in high gear, however, arranging for Disaster Child Care (DCC) caregivers, coordinating work with other response agencies, and

BBT, credit union announce new partnership agreement

Brethren Benefit Trust and the Brethren Employees' Credit Union (BECU) on Oct. 1 signed a partnership agreement that calls for BBT to become the credit union's third-party administrator (TPA) in 2004. In that role, BBT will assume the credit union's daily administrative responsibilities, including all staff and office functions.

The agreement is viewed by both agencies as the first step in what could lead to expanded credit union membership availability and services.

"We see this partnership as opening up many opportunities for both organizations, to the benefit of all Church of the Brethren members," said BECU board chair Russ Matteson.

Discussions about forging a partnership agreement between BBT and BECU have been ongoing for nearly two years. A third-party administrator agreement was tentatively reached in July, but was contingent on a market study conducted this past summer to assess whether a credit union with a broader membership base and expanded services would be utilized by Brethren

sending out relief supplies from the warehouse.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency quickly requested child care in a FEMA Disaster Recovery Center in Poquoson, Va., near the Tidewater area. Eight caregivers from Pennsylvania and Virginia were sent along with Jean Myers of Sinking Spring, Pa., who served as disaster project manager. "We were able to have volunteers on-site in less than 24 hours after the request," DCC coordinator Helen Stonesifer said.

Child care was later requested at five additional recovery centers elsewhere in the Tidewater region. In all, 16 DCC volunteers made 235 child-care contacts before the project closed Oct. 5.

At the warehouse, meanwhile, Service Ministries provided 300 blankets on behalf of Church World Service (CWS) to the Baltimore American Red Cross the morning after Isabel made landfall. A shipment of 750 CWS "Gift of the Heart" health kits, 750 cleanup kits, 100 school kits, and 750 blankets were forwarded to assist families in the Norfolk/Virginia Beach area, and 200 each of the health kits, cleanup kits, and blankets were sent to a church in flooded Baltimore for distribution. CWS noted in a release that New Windsor was the "primary staging area" for its material assistance efforts.

"Our staff has responded quickly to requests for material resources, support services, and volunteers in Virginia and Maryland, sometimes working with only emergency lighting due to power outages in New Windsor," said Roy Winter, executive director of the Brethren Service Center.

Two grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund were made to support the response. One \$5,000 grant supported the DCC response, while another \$10,000 grant aided a CWS appeal for recovery work in North Carolina, Virginia, and Maryland. The funds will provide health kits, cleanup kits, blankets, and the deployment of Disaster Response and Recovery liaisons.

nationwide.

With the TPA partnership agreement now signed, both agencies will begin exploring the possibility of expanding the credit union's membership base and services. BECU currently serves 1,200 employees of Brethren-related congregations and agencies and their family members and Church of the Brethren members who reside in Illinois and Wisconsin.

The agreement calls for BBT to assume all BECU staff and office functions beginning April 1. Due to this move, BBT has announced a position opening for a director of Credit Union Operations.



Right: **Missouri-Arkansas District** leaders put creativity into their presentation of district ministries as delegates and others gathered on the Lake of the Ozarks for district conference in early September. From left are Jane Neher Davis, Kelly Bosserman, Kathryn Erisman, and moderator Roger Schrock.

Below: Delegates to the 2003 **Southern Pennsylvania District** conference join in song as the gathering officially opened on Sept. 19. The conference, held at Chambersburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, went on despite Hurricane Isabel rolling through the area and causing widespread damage the previous night.

Walt Wiltschek



Annual Conference announces theme, music leadership for 2004

The Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee has announced "Loving God and Neighbor," based on Jesus' discussion of the "greatest commandment" in the gospel of Mark, as the theme for the 2004 Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va.

Dr. Jesse Hopkins, chair of the music department at Bridgewater (Va.) College, will serve as choir director for the Conference, and Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren pastor Scott Duffey as music coordinator.

There will be no logo contest for the 2004 Conference. Moderator Chris Bowman plans to work with Program and Arrangements Committee to create the logo to help illustrate the theme.

YOUTHBEAT

Youth cabinet makes prayer an emphasis

The National Youth Cabinet invited youth around the denomination to put a special emphasis on prayer on Sunday, Sept. 28.

The cabinet—sponsored by the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministries office—came up with the idea at its spring meeting after being aware of the "Call to Prayer" adopted by Annual Conference delegates in 2002. They decided to designate a Youth Day of Prayer when Church of the Brethren youth could be more intentional about praying for one another, for the denomination, and for the world.

Cabinet member Caitlyn Haynes of Mid-Atlantic District says the time the cabinet itself

spent in prayer during its meeting had a deep impact. They wanted other youth to have that opportunity, too.

"All of us were affected by the fact that prayer had been so powerful for us," Haynes says. "We thought it would be a really unifying and powerful experience for youth, and it just kind of rolled on from there."

Cabinet members pitched in to draft a cover letter, compile a list of resources, and get the word out. Youth groups were invited to send summaries of the ways they had observed the day.

Youth/Young Adult Ministry coordinator Chris Douglas says the cabinet's enthusiasm for the idea didn't surprise her. She says she is "experiencing that level of interest and energy" for spiritual depth from youth throughout the denomination.

One workcamp season ends, preparations begin for another

The 2003 youth and young adult workcamp season ended in mid-August after more than 500 youth, youth advisors, and young adults participated in 26 workcamps across the US, in the Caribbean, and in Northern Ireland and Ecuador. The workcamps are organized annually by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministries office.

Details on the 2004 workcamps, with the theme "Voices That Challenge," are now available on the web at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps. Twenty-three workcamps will be offered in 2004. Registration opens Dec. 1.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

- Nov. 1 Youth Ministry Workshop,**
Brethren Service Center, New Windsor, Md.
- Nov. 2 Junior High Sunday**
- Nov. 3 Inter-Agency Forum executives meeting,** Richmond, Ind.
- Nov. 4-6 National Council of Churches** General Assembly, Jackson, Miss.
- Nov. 7-8 Shenandoah District**
Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren
- Nov. 9 National Donor Sabbath**
- Nov. 14-15 Virginia District**
Conference, Bonsack Baptist Church, Roanoke, Va.
- Nov. 14-16 Outdoor Ministries Association workshop/retreat,** Camp Blue Diamond, Petersburg, Pa.
- Nov. 16-20 Outdoor Ministries Association directors'/managers' retreat,** Camp Blue Diamond, Petersburg, Pa.
- Nov. 20-22 Ministry of Reconciliation** conflict resolution workshop, Camp Mack, Milford, Ind.
- Nov. 21-22 Brethren Benefit Trust** board meeting, McPherson, Kan.
- Dec. 2-5 Ecumenical Stewardship Center leadership event,** San Antonio, Texas
- Dec. 5-7 Decade to Overcome Violence** training event, New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center
- Dec. 7 General Board Christmas offering emphasis**

Personnel moves

Del Keeney has accepted the call to the position of executive director of Congregational Life Ministries for the Church of the Brethren General Board, a Leadership Team position, beginning January 2004. He will work out of the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. Current executive director Glenn Timmons will conclude his service on Jan. 4.

Keeney, currently of Leola, Pa., has been serving in "consultative interim pastorates," including Oakton Church of the Brethren, Vienna, Va., and Green Tree Church of the Brethren, Oaks, Pa. Prior to that, he was lead pastor at Conestoga Church of the Brethren in Leola from 1986 to 1999.

He has been a trainer in The Creative Church Leader Program and holds a variety of certifications pertaining to the development of church leadership. He has taught Academy-level classes for Bethany Theological Seminary and its Susquehanna Valley Satellite in Pennsylvania.

• **Jewel McNary** was called as director

of marketing and sales for Brethren Press, effective Sept. 22.

McNary comes to the position bringing familiarity with both Brethren Press and MESSENGER. She was most recently serving in a special assignment in MESSENGER promotions and has provided temporary assistance in Brethren Press customer service over the past four years.

A paralegal, McNary's earlier work experience included management of the closing department of a title insurance company. She is a University of Illinois graduate, with a bachelor's degree in political science and minor in business. McNary lives in Aurora, Ill., and attends the Boulder Hill (Montgomery, Ill.) and Faith (Batavia, Ill.) congregations. She is a district youth advisor for Illinois/Wisconsin District and serves on the Camp Emmaus board.

• **Anna M. Speicher** has accepted a new contract position in Brethren Press as project editor for a forthcoming children's curriculum to succeed "Jubilee." This position is initially for a two-month period as the publishing house awaits a decision on a potential grant.



BVS-BRF Unit #256 heads for Maine and Dominican Republic

The Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 256, sponsored jointly by the General Board and Brethren Revival Fellowship, received orientation Aug. 17-27 in Bethel, Pa., then headed for work assignments in Maine and the Dominican Republic. The volunteers and their work assignments are as follows: *Front row:* Christi Cater (Good Shepherd Foodbank, Lewiston, Maine); Judah, Caleb, Desiree Martin (Lewiston, Maine); Anna and Megan Brinton (Dominican Republic).

Second row: Joanna Hilty (Maine Area Home School Project); Mary Ann Martin (house mom, Lewiston); Curvin Martin (Good Shepherd Foodbank); Gabriel Martin (Lewiston, Maine); Laura, Ben, and Ron Brinton (Dominican Republic).

Third row: Clara and Lowell Witmer (orientation leadership); Evan Negley (Good Shepherd Foodbank).

For more information on Brethren Volunteer Service and how to volunteer for a work assignment, go to www.brethren.org/genbd/bvs.



If funding is approved through this grant or other sources, the position will continue through 2005. Speicher will be responsible for overall management of the project, including completing development work on it in collaboration with a partner denomination, supervising the writing and production process, and editing all manuscripts.

Currently an independent scholar, writer, and editor, Speicher has a Ph.D. in American studies from George Washington University. She is an active member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill.

• **Greg Bidgood Enders** has been appointed by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership to a 10-month assignment as coordinator of the Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) program.

Enders, a 2000 graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary—which coordinates the Academy along with the General Board—currently co-pastors Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Ohio, and serves as a part-time hospital chaplain.

His responsibilities will include making contact with current EFSM ministers-in-training, supervisors, and congregations to assess progress and participation in the EFSM program. Enders will also work with the March 2004 EFSM orientation, make a variety of congregational visits, set up Bethany weekends, and help to strengthen the process. Enders' work with the Academy will continue through June 2004.

• **Tom and Janet Crago** left for Nigeria in late August to begin serving as mission coordinators on an interim basis until mid-December through the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office.

The Cragos had served in Nigeria from 1968 to 1971, and after early retirement they returned in 2001 to serve as funding consultants for the Theological College of Northern Nigeria. They returned again in 2002 to assist the Nigerian church with a membership count.

• **Fletcher Farrar** has announced his resignation as editor of *MESSENGER*, effective at the end of 2003. He has served in this position since October 1997.

He plans to devote more time to affordable housing and neighborhood revitalization through the nonprofit group he founded in Springfield, Ill., Old Neighborhood Rehab, Inc. He is also publisher and owner of *Illinois Times*, an alternative weekly newspaper in Springfield.

1. Lebanon, Pa. According to initial reports from the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction held in late September, about \$450,000 was raised from this year's event. The annual auction is the oldest and largest in the denomination. It is jointly sponsored by the Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania districts.

2. Angola. The General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund will send \$15,000 to the African nation in support of an appeal by Church World Service (CWS). Angola is recovering from a long civil war, when many people were displaced. The funds will help to provide seeds and tools for about 6,000 rural farming families who are trying to rebuild their lives.

3. Ohio/Indiana. The Emergency Disaster Fund of the General Board, which has been busy this fall, sent \$5,000 in aid to the two Midwestern states, which were hit by heavy rains and flooding in July. Church World Service is working at long-term recovery efforts by providing coordination of response efforts and seed grants to new recovery organizations.

4. Pakistan. Another Emergency Disaster Fund grant, for \$15,000, will support a Church World Service (CWS) project in this central Asian nation. Heavy rain and flooding in late July destroyed more than 47,000 homes and resulted in more than 160 deaths. CWS, which has had a long-term presence in Pakistan, will use the funds to assist 2,000 families living in temporary camps with food packages, cooking utensils, and health kits.

5. Philippines. A \$10,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant will go to this island nation, where a series of typhoons and tropical storms this spring and summer destroyed more than 10,000 homes and damaged nearly 35,000 others. An estimated 172,000-plus families were affected. Action by Churches Together (ACT) is working with its local partner, the National Council of Churches in the Philippines, to provide aid. Funds will assist families with immediate needs including food, clothing, sleeping mats, blankets, and medical assistance.

6. West Virginia. The Emergency Disaster Fund sent \$10,000 as additional aid to long-term flood recovery work in the state. The money will help to cover unmet needs for an estimated 1,040 families who have exhausted available public assistance.

7. Southern Illinois. The Church of the Brethren General Board's Emergency Response/Service Ministries office opened a new disaster response project in rural Massac County, at Illinois' southern tip, in late September. The area was struck by several tornadoes on May 6, killing one person, destroying dozens of homes, and damaging many others. Work will include repairing several of these homes and completely rebuilding others.

8. Alaska. A Brethren group visited the Gwich'i'n community of Arctic Village Sept. 2-11 to learn about human rights and environmental concerns in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The 11-member delegation heard from church and environmental leaders in Fairbanks before traveling to the far-northern village. The trip was sponsored by New Community Project.

ABC learns to walk on its own

Gaining strength and confidence, the caring ministries agency says farewell to its leader

by Fletcher Farrar

Tucked off in a remote corner of Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., is the office of the Association of Brethren Caregivers, an agency that is losing its staff leader as it is finding its way.

"Now we've found where we're going to be," says Steve Mason, executive director for the past six years. "We have renewed our focus and identified how we will and won't do business." Mason resigned in June and will leave ABC Dec. 31. He recently announced he will take a position as vice president for college advancement at Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind.

ABC is best known for its national conferences, especially the National Older Adult Conference, held every other year at Lake Junaluska, N.C., and scheduled again for Sept. 6-10, 2004. In non-NOAC years, ABC hosts a Caring Ministries Assembly. This year's conference, held Aug. 14-16 in Bridgewater, Va., drew more than 250 participants. An annual Brethren Homes Forum, organized by ABC's Fellowship of Brethren Homes, pulls together leaders of retirement homes and healthcare facilities to discuss business issues in a context of Christian faith.

In addition to the conferences, ABC sponsors numerous events and insight sessions at Annual Conference, provides training and seminars for deacons, and publishes resources, including the quarterly magazine *Caregiving* and a series of booklets on end-of-life issues.

Under ABC's wing are nine different ministry areas

(see below), which recruit a host of volunteers to help with carrying out their programs. Recruiting volunteers is "part of our culture," says Mason. "When giving and receiving care is our mission, it's a small step from there to getting involved to help care happen." ABC's 14-member board is a training ground for local church leaders called out for service on the denominational level.

ABC traces its history to the 1952 Annual Conference and the formation of the Brethren Medical Workers' Conference. Later other church organizations and groups formed around the denomination's health ministries and were eventually merged under the banner of ABC.

ABC and its predecessors were all organized under the General Board until 1998, when Annual Conference made it a separate nonprofit agency, reportable to Annual Conference, but responsible for raising its own funds, independent of the General Board. The 1998 restructure, which also launched On Earth Peace on its own, resulted in some consternation among congregations who were being asked to send financial support to more church agencies.

With experience as a professional fundraiser at McPherson College, Mason plunged into the task of convincing churches to support ABC's ministries, and he was a scrapper for his agency when inevitable turf battles came along. Last year ABC received \$137,000 in congregational support, up from \$15,200 in 1998.

ABC's nine ministry areas

Brethren Chaplains Network provides networking opportunities for chaplains within the Church of the Brethren.

Church and Persons with Disabilities Network facilitates barrier-free participation of individuals with disabilities in the life and programs of congregations.

Denominational Deacon Ministry develops and promotes resources to equip deacons to carry out their ministries in congregational life.

Family Life Ministry develops and promotes resources and educational opportunities for family issues, such as parenting skills, marriage enrichment, domestic abuse, and advocacy for children and families.

Fellowship of Brethren Homes identifies, promotes, and supports the work of Brethren retirement communities as an important ministry of the denomination.

Health Education and Research Ministry encourages consideration of health ministries as an attractive career option and increases awareness of available financial support for

individuals preparing for health ministries.

Lafiya: A Whole-Person Health Ministry provides denominational leadership in the development of programming and resources which empower people to be healthy in spirit, mind, and body.

Older Adult Ministry develops resources and leadership that enable Church of the Brethren older adults to enjoy full and creative lives.

Voice Ministry seeks to increase the visibility and participation of those within the church who are hurting, afraid, silent, and left at the margins.



Steve Mason, executive director of the Association of Brethren Caregivers

About a third of Church of the Brethren congregations are supporting ABC with financial gifts. ABC also receives funding from conferences, investments, and individuals.

Though income is improving, ABC has dipped heavily into its financial reserves in order to build the kind of program that would win long-term support of congregations and other donors. Over the past six years, ABC has spent about \$250,000 of its reserve fund, drawing it down from \$308,000 at the end of 1997 to just \$57,000 today.

At its September meeting the ABC board passed its first balanced budget in seven years, planning to continue with five staff members rather than the six it had before a resignation earlier this year. "The church has told us what its appetite for our program is," Mason says. The 2004 budget, swollen by anticipated revenues from another National Older Adult Conference, is \$611,000.

"We're not out of the woods yet," says Mason. "I would expect the budget for 2005 to be a deficit again." Still, the agency carries a healthy balance sheet, which includes, in addition to its \$57,000 reserve fund, a "quasi-endowment" savings account of \$140,000 and a permanently restricted endowment of \$1.7 million.

Another indication of health, Mason says, is the board's completion of work this fall on strategic goals, following earlier work on vision and mission statements. The goals emphasize adhering carefully to its mission, serving the denomination, working through partnerships and volunteers, and operating within its financial resources. "We see ourselves not as leaders of the church but as servants," Mason says.

As he completes his work as executive director, Mason is pleased with ABC's effort to adapt to the new denominational structure as an independent agency. "ABC has found a way to live within the current structure," Mason says. "We've done about as good a job as we can do."

But after last spring's ABC board meeting, the organization let it be known that it would be "open to a more

effective framework" for denominational ministries. "We hope caring ministries will always have a central place in the denomination," Mason says. "But if a new structure emerges, we're open to it." Yet despite its handsome dowry, popular conferences, and organized programs, apparently no suitor has yet come calling on ABC.

Board establishes Mason Endowment

The ABC board announced last month that it has established a new endowment fund to honor its outgoing executive director. The fund was established with gifts from board members, and others are invited to contribute.

"The ABC board established the endowment to honor the valuable and dedicated service provided by Steve Mason these last six years," says Bentley Peters, board chair. "We wanted to honor Steve's commit-

ment to all of the issues encompassed by the work of ABC as well as the work and leadership he provided more widely in the denomination. We felt this was a way to show our appreciation to Steve for outstanding leadership in helping to position ABC for future service to the church and for future involvement with the various organizational development issues facing the denomination."

Interest from the endowed fund will be used to help ABC through direct support of its management team.

Mason acknowledges that the road he has traveled has been somewhat bumpy. "My love for the church has deepened, but so has my concern," he says. "The sense of community is eroding somewhat. There seem to be more who feel that if you don't agree with me, you don't belong here. I've become more aware of our discomfort with differences."

But as he moves on to his next position, he looks back with satisfaction. "I have been able to immerse myself in the faith community that I love," he says. "This has been a wonderful experience." ■

Fletcher Farrar is a former ABC board member and is a board member of Pleasant Hill Village, part of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes.

Revive us ag

New life and spirit in an old urban church

by Fletcher Farrar



The congregation today.

For such a small congregation, there are so many announcements. Some are what you might hear at any Church of the Brethren congregation: CROP Walk is in two weeks, and don't forget district conference Oct. 24-26. Some are not: Monday is the weekly potluck with Christian Peacemaker Teams. All are invited. Also Monday the Hispanic fellowship meets here. Saturday is kids club and Bible study. There will be a Voices Against Violence meeting. And next week 30 BVSers will be staying here.

Unlike many churches, Sunday morning does not dominate the ministry of Douglas Park Church of the Brethren, set in a densely populated Hispanic neighborhood on the near southwest side of Chicago. Through a growing network of connections, Douglas Park is becoming a busy neighborhood center once again, like the Brethren intended when they built it in 1910.

Still, prayer and worship remain at the core of this inner-city congregation, where joys and concerns take on a life-and-death flavor often missing from middle-class prayer requests: One member is experiencing heart problems, but can't afford the medicine he needs. Another rejoices she's received her license as a nurse, and a job. Prayer is requested for the nine-year-old boy who was shot last week down the street at 25th and California. The pastor, a volunteer, asks prayers for his job search. A woman says she's been taking a lot of pills for her chest pain rather than seeing a doctor. Pastor says that doesn't sound like a good idea. And finally, "Praise God for heat in this building!"

There wasn't always heat in the building. The once-overflowing Douglas Park church had fallen on hard times, the congregation had dwindled, the church-owned building

ain in the city

next door was abandoned, the windows leaked, and the boiler failed. But through a series of meetings and miracles, the church has received a new boiler, new windows, and new life. "They're paying their own bills now," says Jim Yaussy Albright, the Illinois/Wisconsin district executive. "They've done an outstanding job in turning things around. This could re-energize the Brethren in the inner city."

wept over Jerusalem, but also to invest our energies and money into urban ministries," Douglas says.

On Christmas Day, 1901, each child who attended Sunday school at Chicago's Hastings Street church was given a pock-

Through a growing network of connections, Douglas Park is becoming a busy neighborhood center once again, like the Brethren intended when they built it in 1910.

From the 1880s, when a debate raged in the *Gospel Messenger* over the need for city missions, until now, many Brethren have had deep fears about the city, says General Board staff member Chris Douglas, who was director of urban ministry for the denomination from 1985 to 1989. "Yet, through the fears, prophetic voices throughout our history have called us not only to weep over the city, as Jesus

etbook and a bright new nickel, and asked to invest the nickel until Easter, when the returns would be used to start Sunday schools. After the hard work of many children, by Easter there was \$25 in the treasury. Then letters went out to Brethren Sunday school superintendents all over the country, explaining the needs of Chicago's children. Those who responded



The Sunday school extension at Douglas Park was in full bloom in 1925 when this photo appeared in the *Evangel*, a yearbook published by Bethany Bible School. The text with the photo explained, "The large unchurched area about Douglas Park presents a virile Missionary Challenge to every Christian worker. Quite a number of the parents have come to us from other shores, but the children are American in language and ideals and afford an open sesame to the parents' hearts and homes."



A.D. Aldridge washes the feet of Jimmy Whitfield at Douglas Park's love feast in October.

were sent pocketbooks with shiny nickels, and within a year several hundred dollars had been raised. In the next few years, several Sunday school "extensions" had been started in Chicago neighborhoods, offering home visits, food and clothing distribution, sewing classes, Bible study, and preaching services. In 1910, Douglas Park became the fifth Sunday school extension project.

Building on the success of the nickel-in-a-

pocketbook campaign, Douglas Park backers began a fundraising program with the slogan "Buy a Brick for a Dime," bringing in contributions from all over the denomination and raising a building fund that would reach \$10,871.

After the building was completed, a 1911 progress report was sent out to the denomination. It said that, under the guidance of Sister Hintz, "25 children meet daily for instruction, physical, mental, and spiritual, and thus the work of the Sabbath school is augmented." An average of 115 children attended each Sunday. There were 420 missionary calls in the neighborhood, 16 baptisms, and 90 mothers and children sent to the country for fresh air.

The Sunday school continued to flourish, offering the hope of Jesus to thousands of Chicago's poor. By 1938, after a vote of the district, Douglas Park became an independent Church of the Brethren congregation.

In 1943 a fourth-grader named Vernon Dean came to the church with his family, and he worshiped there for the next 43 years. Now pastor of the Woodland Church of the Brethren in rural central Illinois, Dean

Finding the way after a wrong turn

Six years ago, when Ken Holderread, Howard Royer, and I headed to Douglas Park Church of the Brethren, we did not know what to expect. We only knew that the situation was one of dire need. We were very late to the first meeting because we had underestimated the time required for traveling the distance from Elgin to that neighborhood of southwest Chicago through rush hour and road construction traffic.

And when we got to Douglas Park we had also mistaken our task. While this new member of the Congregational Life Team naively assumed we would be talking about the future of the congregation and how we might enhance the ministry possibilities on that corner of 16th and California, we had to backtrack and spend

many hours together working through the hurts and struggles of the past before we could look forward.

We had to accomplish that in a building that was desperate for some work. One volunteer said, "Yikes, this is what is meant by fixer upper." For too long the building had received too little attention. The sanctuary was not only dirty, the windows were dark and cracked. The theater seating was bolted in place with no flexibility. The upstairs apartment plumbing was leaking into the sanctuary, and the downstairs plumbing was wasting water. The furnace was about to give out. The people were in over their heads and weary.

On the way home that night I remember asking the others if they would return. Either

they felt my desperation or they enjoy a challenge because we all agreed to make another trip. This began several years of regular travel to meetings in Douglas Park. We would often spend the time driving into the city thinking up new ways to share hope with the church. We would spend the time driving home commiserating and dreaming of the day when the small fragile group would move a step closer to viability. Our return trip always began with a wrong-way turn out of the parking lot onto a one-way street to get back to the interstate. I wondered sometimes if the whole process wasn't a wrong-way trip because we seemed unable to move forward into the future.

Each time we gathered,

members of the congregation provided supper and coffee and we brought along listening ears, encouragement, and companionship for the struggle to bring something to life on that street corner. We prayed, dreamed, researched, tried, failed, and did it all again. We had any number of ideas but we were committed to discerning the call of God that came to the people of the Douglas Park church. We were certain we were searching for something the congregation could embrace with passion and energy. In the meantime they cooked and we brought a steady procession of plumbers, cleaners, carpenters, painters, cleaners, plasterers, cleaners.

Members of Panther Creek Church of the Brethren in Iowa had been bringing a workcamp

"We're up to 13 regulars now. People laugh, but remember, Jesus only had 12."

remembers that during World War II Douglas Park often filled its 90-seat sanctuary, and there was a choir and a large youth group.

In the early 1960s the Douglas Park community found its neighborhood riddled with gangs, the most notorious calling itself Satan's Disciples. So the church started one of the first organized gang outreach ministries in Chicago, and at one point had 125 neighborhood children coming during the week for an after-school program. During that period there were at times four Brethren Volunteer Service workers on the job full-time. During the 1960s the church had an average attendance of at least 70, and there was an active Hispanic fellowship.

"The church must be involved in the community," Dean says. "You have to be willing to work one on one with people."

"We are looking at church as a way to touch people in different ways," says Tony Asta, an ordained Church of the Brethren minister who

has served Douglas Park for the past two years. After he finished at Northern Baptist Seminary in 2001, he went to his district executive and said, "Okay Jim, what do you want me to do?" Albright and Beth Sollenberger-Morphew, the General Board's Congregational Life Team



by Beth Sollenberger-Morphew

to Douglas Park for years and they have continued sprucing up corners. Members of the Bethany church in Indiana for four years have sent a delegation to clean and paint and work on small projects. We have filled dumpsters and coerced any number of skilled friends to journey into the city to give a day's work to the cause. And it is all done to the sounds of dedicated church people having a good time helping sisters and brothers of the faith.

There was a turning point in our efforts there. We arrived for yet another meeting one January evening. There was excitement in the air and a story ready to be told. The front steps into the church also provide seats for people waiting for a bus that stops in front of the church. On Christmas

Eve the congregation had decided to heat water and offer hot coffee or hot chocolate to anyone waiting for the bus. They got the idea, they gathered the ingredients, and they made it happen, sharing warm drinks and conversation with a number of people spending time in the cold waiting for a city bus.

Not so long after that event we began to hear more and more about Christian Peacemaker Teams and the possibility of their renovating and renting the apartment building on the lot. Today I can't remember how the lot used to look. There are no abandoned cars in the parking spaces, the weeds have been kept under control, the deteriorating apartments have a

newly installed stairs, and it is safe to travel to the top floor. The plumbing works, and the windows are clean. It is a beautiful space, thanks to the work of the CPT folks.

And they have not stopped with the apartment. They have helped to put all new windows in the church building, and on my last visit the showers had been installed in the church so workcamps can enjoy their convenience.

The most noticeable change is that now there is a steady stream of activity and ministry happening on that city corner. There is a young man testing his call to ministry and leading a Bible study in Spanish. There are children joining in wor-

Youth from Panther Creek Church of the Brethren in Iowa help with children's activities during their annual trip to Douglas Park.

ship; attendance has been growing. The buildings are in better repair and the people have hope.

I don't make the trip into Douglas Park for meetings anymore. The members are in ministry in ways I never dreamed possible. They certainly need our prayers. Urban ministry in the inner city isn't easy. As always, the needs are great and the resources are slight, but the ministry continues. 

Beth Sollenberger-Morphew, of Goshen, Ind., is coordinator for the General Board's Congregational Life Team Area 2.



Fletcher Farrah

Douglas Park pastor Tony Asta.

coordinator for Area 2, presented him with their vision of developing Douglas Park as an urban ministry center. He agreed, and went to work building on the church's connections and developing new partnerships.

"How do we reach out to this neighborhood, where 70 percent of the people speak Spanish,

like Iraq and Palestine, but wants to become more involved in efforts to reduce violence at home. After a murdered woman's body was discovered in the block behind the church early this fall, Pastor Asta, carrying a large cross, led a march around the neighborhood, protesting the violence. He was joined by members of his congregation, CPT members, and neighborhood residents.

The desire to become more involved in urban peacemaking fueled CPT's decision to move its headquarters from a basement on the serene University of Illinois-Chicago campus to a residential building behind the Douglas Park church. The church agreed to let CPT use the building for offices in exchange for renovating it, aided by a \$20,000 contribution from the Illinois/Wisconsin district.

Lately the partnership has expanded to the church building itself, where CPT installed energy-efficient new windows in exchange for using the church for training groups.

"It's just been a wonderful experience to come here,"

says CPT director Gene Stoltzfus.

"We're hoping this is just the first stage of a

After a murdered woman's body was discovered in the block behind the church early this fall, Pastor Asta, carrying a large cross, led a march around the neighborhood, protesting the violence.

and make a statement about our faith?" Asta asks. One answer is the Monday night Hispanic fellowship and Bible study, led by Jorge Montas, a new church member originally from El Salvador.

Another answer is the congregation's partnership with Christian Peacemaker Teams. The Brethren and Mennonite organization is known for witnessing for peace in global trouble spots

much longer rejuvenation of the church and the neighborhood."

Douglas Park has also made itself a popular destination for youth mission trips and work-camps, filling the building for many summer weeks with teenagers and neighborhood children. "In summer we have to turn groups away," says Asta. The youth groups typically spend part of their time doing physical work like painting, drywalling, and landscaping, and the other part playing with children and teaching them Bible lessons.

"The kids of the neighborhood just love to come here," says Asta. "And the most rewarding part for youth being here is being able to bond with the kids." Last summer the church hosted groups from Bethany Church of the Brethren, New Paris, Ind.; Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Panther Creek Church of the Brethren, Adel, Iowa; a General Board-sponsored junior high workcamp; and Youthworks, an ecumenical sponsor of youth mission trips.

Jeff Neuman-Lee, pastor of Panther Creek, has been taking youth to Douglas Park for a week every summer since 1996. He says his youth get a rare experience offered by few other

Patricia McKee of Youthworks plays with neighborhood kids at Douglas Park.



churches in rural Iowa—the chance to experience a big city neighborhood and to interact with people of different ethnic backgrounds.

“It’s something that a lot of people are afraid of but shouldn’t be,” says Neuman-Lee. “The kids learn that if we share our faith in an open-handed way, it will be well received.”

Shirley Petracek was one of the neighborhood kids back in 1939 when women from the Douglas Park church came to her home and asked her parents if they would send their children to Sunday school. The five-year-old was allowed to go, and she kept going for the next 40 years. She remembers the glory days when close to 200 would pack the church on an Easter Sunday. The membership reflected the neighborhood of Eastern European immigrants, including Russians, Poles, and Bohemians. In the late 1970s she moved away from the neighborhood and attended a large church in a more affluent section of Chicago.

But two years ago, after an absence of more than 20 years, she came back. “I believe I was called to go back,” she says. “My mind would return to all the wonderful people who had been there, and I remember holding hands with them and singing, ‘The Tie that Binds.’”

“My spirit was troubled. I heard a voice saying, ‘Go back. Go back.’ I saw the door and keys, and I feared that the keys were locking the doors for good.”

What did she find when she returned? “I was shocked,” she says. “I was shocked at the sight of my old neighborhood. There were gates on all the yards.” And she was shocked at how the church had deteriorated. “There were cobwebs everywhere. You can hardly keep a church open with 8-12 people, and they were losing ground fast. They were broke.”

Petracek calls the recent turnaround remarkable. The church is cleaned out, finances are improving, and spirit is growing. “We’re up to 13 regulars now,” she says. “People laugh, but remember, Jesus only had 12.”

Years ago she attended Bethany Seminary, but her father’s illness prevented her from completing her degree. Now she’s returning to her dream of being a minister, with plans to become licensed so she can help with pastoral duties at Douglas Park. “Even though I’m almost 70,” she says, “I’m going to give it the best I’ve got to make sure the church makes it. We’re all fighting to save the place.” ❧

Fletcher Farrar is editor of MESSENGER.

Fletcher Farrar



The congregation gathers for the love feast meal.

“We meet as friends at table”

When Richard Brode, a Church of the Brethren musician and composer, was asked to write music for the hymn text “We meet as friends at table,” he thought back to the many Saturday evening potlucks he enjoyed with seminary classmates Jean Keith and John Carter, then co-pastors of the Douglas Park Church of the

Brethren. Many of the church members dropped by as well. “It was a nice kind of variation on the love feast,” Brode recalls, “with a spirit of warmth and hospitality.” In honor of the church he grew to love, Brode named his hymn tune “Douglas Park.” When Brode goes there now to host quarterly hymn sings, the congrega-

tion often closes with the music named after their church.

“We meet as friends at table,” read the words by Brian Wren.

“To listen and be heard, united by the Spirit, attentive to the Word.

“Through prayer and conversation, we tune our varied views, to Christ whose love

has made us, the bearers of good news.”

With the music Brode composed for it, the hymn has become No. 1066 in the latest *Hymnal Supplement*. It made its debut at the 2002 Annual Conference in Louisville, Ky., where the Conference choir sang it as closing communion was served. —Fletcher Farrar



Illustration by Kate Greenaway, from the 1988 edition of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin*

“The Pied Piper of Hamelin” was written by the English poet Robert Browning more than 150 years ago. Tradition has it that he wrote the story poem for the 10-year-old son of a good friend. It has been a favorite of children for many years.

Why do children like it? When I was a boy I liked it because I was afraid of rats. That fear first took hold of me one night in our barn. I had heard dire tales of rats crawling up boys’ pants legs, so when a huge rat hopped onto the wagon where I stood, I panicked. Did it really run over my shoe or did I just imagine it? God only knows, but I screamed bloody murder. From then on the sight of a rat was enough to make my hair stand on end.

So when the Pied Piper in the story played his pipe and the rats came tumbling out of the houses of Hamelin, I paid close attention to each line.

Great rats, small rats, lean rats,
brawny rats,
Brown rats, black rats, grey rats,
tawny rats,
Grave old plodders, gay young
friskers,
Fathers, mothers, uncles, cousins,
Cocking tails and pricking whiskers,
Families by tens and dozens,
Brothers, sisters, husbands, wives
Followed the Piper for their lives.
From street to street
he piped advancing,
And step by step they followed
dancing,
Until they came to the river Weser
Wherein all plunged and perished ...

I loved that part! Good riddance. That’s what most children think. But there are some other reasons why children enjoy the story of the Pied Piper, reasons that have to do with feeling at the mercy of grownups. It is an adult world, after all, and children learn that very early. Adults make the rules, adults enforce the rules. Adults are physically bigger and stronger. They control the purse strings. Children want to trust grownups and usually that trust is well placed. But sometimes kids feel betrayed and angry at what the grownups do. They are resentful and secretly wish the adults would be punished for their wrongs.

In the story of the Pied Piper, that very thing happens. When the strange-looking piper comes to rat-infested Hamelin with his offer to rid the town of vermin, the mayor and town council are desperate enough to agree to anything. A thousand guilders, he wants? “We’ll give you fifty thousand,” they say. Note that the town fathers play the role of grownups in this story. They are the ones in charge, they wield political and economic power. And they are described in very unflattering terms. The mayor, we are told, is “old and obese.” And besides, he isn’t very bright.

By contrast, the Pied Piper is a fascinating character, dressed in unusual clothing and telling stories of his world travels and his amazing exploits. When he pipes away the rats and asks for his fair payment, the duplicity of the grownups is unveiled. They are selfish and dishonest. They are greedy. They congratulate themselves on outfoxing the piper. After all, as the Mayor puts it:

Our business was done at the river’s
brink;
We saw with our eyes the vermin sink,
And what’s dead can’t come to life, I
think.

They offer the piper 50 guilders. Now every child knows what it feels like to be unappreciated, just as the piper felt. And every child also has experienced broken promises.

Being human, grownups do sometimes make promises they fail to keep. When that happens, children don’t have the ability to get justice for themselves. They may cry or pout or otherwise show their displeasure, but there ain’t a thing they can do about it.

But the Pied Piper? Ah, there is something he can do about it. Once more he steps into the street. Once more he raises the pipe to his lips. And this time the children of Hamelin come after him.

Small feet were pattering, wooden
shoes clattering,
Little hands clapping, and little
tongues chattering,
And, like fowls in a farmyard when
barley is scattering,
Out came the children running.
All the little boys and girls,
With rosy cheeks and flaxen curls,
And sparkling eyes and teeth
like pearls,
Tripping and skipping, ran merrily
after
The wonderful music with shouting
and laughter.

Following the Piper

by Kenneth L. Gible

Where does the Piper lead them? Not into the river but to the mountainside, where "a wonderful portal opened wide . . . /and when all were in to the very last /The door in the mountain side shut fast."

What a tragedy for Hamelin. The mayor and town council and all the parents were grief-stricken. The town itself was solemn and quiet for years afterwards. No children's shouts, no happy laughter filled the air.

And here again is a clue to why children love this story. I remember how, as a youngster, I sometimes nursed grievances against my parents. I thought: I'll run away. Then they'll be sorry for the way they treated me. They'll never see me again, and they'll cry because I'm gone. As grownups you and I still have such fantasies when we don't feel loved or appreciated at work or at home. "I know they're gonna miss me when I'm gone," we tell ourselves.

Maybe they will or maybe they won't, but let's go back to the story for one more reason why kids of all ages like it. Maybe it's the main reason. The story says that one child could not follow the piper, a little boy who was lame. He remained behind and told the grownups how he had wanted to go with the other children, because of what he heard in the piper's music.

He led us, he said, to a joyous land,
Joining the town and just at hand,
Where waters gushed and fruit trees
grew,
And flowers put forth a fairer hue,
And everything was strange
and new.
The sparrows were brighter than

peacocks here,
And their dogs outran our
fallow deer,
And honey bees had lost their stings;
And horses were born with
eagle's wings . . .

This is a picture of a child's paradise, of never never land. Who wouldn't want to go to such a place? Who wouldn't want to follow the piper?

There is another Piper in another story. He didn't wear funny clothes and he didn't lead the rats away to drown and he didn't really play on a pipe. But he was a Piper nonetheless because in his own way he piped a tune that called boys and girls, men and women, to follow him.

"Follow me," he piped to Peter and Andrew there by the lakeside where they were fishing. "Follow me," he piped to John and James, their backs bent over as they mended the nets of grumpy old Zebedee their father. "Follow me," the Piper piped to sleazy looking Levi sitting at his tax table. And immediately ("immediately!") they rose and followed him, the Gospels tell us.

It must have been a merry tune this Piper played. The people followed him in droves, and danced to the tune he played. They loved the way his music healed the sick, made the blind to see, the lame to walk. No one need be left behind following this Piper. He said, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs." The Piper's tune told about a wondrous kingdom where the

last would be first and the first last, where even enemies were loved and prayed for, where the sorrowing were comforted, where those who hungered and thirsted for righteousness would have their fill, where those who worked for peace would be called children of God.

Oh what a Piper this was, and what a tune he played! Lead on, Piper, the people said. But some did not like his tune. They said it was silly and idealistic. Others said the tune was dangerous to the established order. They said it should be banned. They said the Piper should be quiet, or else. But still the Piper played. Leave everything behind and follow me, said his tune. And some, and then more and more, began to say to themselves: "Leave everything behind? We can't do that. That's too risky."

So many of them stopped dancing, stopped following. And the Piper was sad. But he played on, until one dark day, they killed him. "We don't want to hear your music any more," they said. And they thought they had heard the last of the Piper and his tune.

How wrong they were! For the Piper still plays his pipe, still calls girls and boys, women and men, to follow, to dance and sing their way with him into the kingdom of peace and joy and love. It's a lovely tune he plays. And he dances as he leads us, across the hills to God knows where.

A lovely tune, a glorious tune. Can you hear it? Will you follow? 

Kenneth L. Gible, of Greencastle, Pa., is interim pastor for the Greencastle Church of the Brethren. He is the author of several books, including the forthcoming Lenten devotional book by Brethren Press, *Journey to Jerusalem*.

Glimpses of God in the people

Hope is in their eyes,
as peace seems possible

When approaching many Sudanese people, you notice their rich, dark skin, probably the closest you'll ever come to seeing black skin. You notice their warm, spirited smiles that welcome you and hold you close. And you especially notice their eyes. Eyes that reveal the depth of these persons who have suffered many years from war and despair, yet also are strengthened from many years of great faith. When you look into the eyes of a Sudanese, you have difficulty looking away because you are drawn deeply into their heart and soul.

Sponsored by the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office and led by Phil and Louise Baldwin Rieman, seven of us had the opportunity to look into these eyes and be welcomed by these smiles. This trip to Sudan during August and September provided occasions for both education and engagement as we learned about this nation of famine, civil war, slavery, terrorism, and oil. It also allowed opportunities for adventure and advocacy with some of the people of Sudan who invited us into their hearts and souls.

As we spoke to various persons during our trip, we made a commitment to share their stories of hope, their faith in the midst of struggle, and all that they are doing to cultivate a culture of peace.

Students sing at the Blessed Bakhita School for Girls in Narus.

Little did we know that by listening to their stories and struggles, we would be shown glimpses of God.

All participants in the Sudan delegation contributed to this article: Amy Beery, of the Northview Church of the Brethren, Indianapolis, Ind.; Kelly Burk, Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren; Phil Jones, Brethren Witness/Washington Office, Washington, DC; Phil and Louise (Louie) Baldwin Rieman, Northview congregation, Indianapolis, Ind.; Barbara Saylor, On Earth Peace, New Windsor, Md.; and Otto Schaudel, Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

"The children and youth are the hope for the future of Sudan."

Amy Beery writes: We heard this declaration of hope expressed by church leaders, school-teachers, relief workers, and local officials everywhere our group went. The adults all realize the important role children and youth

Amy Beery



od ople of Sudan

will be playing in the rebuilding of southern Sudan when peace comes.

We looked forward to talking with the children and youth in all the places we were able to go, to hear their stories, and their hopes and dreams for the future. During a meeting with the youth group from the Inter-Church Committee (ICC) in Rumbek we asked them to share their hopes. A girl in her late teens stood up and said, "My hope for Sudan is that when I am married and have children, they will not know war like your children in America do not know war."

The wisdom of these young voices overwhelmed us as we listened to their simple yet difficult wishes. In the children and youth there is hope for the future.

**"If I'm educated,
I'm somebody."**

Delegation member **Otto Schaudel** reflects: After this visit to Sudan, I have come to a simple conclusion: Never before have I met a people with a deeper faith in God, a more profound hope for peace, or a more sincere desire for education with the hope of changing their way of life!

We experienced various churches working closely together, giving us a glimpse of ecumenism. We met predominantly Christian groups in schools and ecumenical centers with close connections to the New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) in Narus, Rumbek, and Wulu. In boys and girls schools, with the Demobilized Children Soldiers' school, and especially with the ICC Youth, the overriding theme was: We need a just and lasting peace. We need schools for all our young people. We need an infrastructure, health services, mechanization of daily chores so more girls may attend schools. We also hope that once there is peace, all Sudanese around the world will come back to help us with teaching our people, to allow our dreams to come true!

Courtesy New Sudan Council of Churches



The women in southern Sudan have been a key part in the peace process, and have been organizing peace meetings and conferences for over a decade,

These overriding factors—peace and education—were always at the forefront. All these youngsters realized that without peace and education there is no future. It takes education, including higher education, to train people to grow into leaders for the future, yet they have no place to get higher education in southern Sudan. It takes education to see that peace cannot be achieved through violence but instead through dialog and nonviolence. It takes education to recognize that the people of Sudan are worthy of peace.

"Our hope is God."

Hope and despair are not far apart in Sudan. They are often held in the same hand. They sit at the same scene.

Louie Baldwin Rieman, who worked in Sudan in the 1990s (along with Phil Rieman), shares this experience: "The bomber had just flown over the areas of Mundri then Lui, sounding its death knell and killing 10 people. A woman saw the blown-apart remains of a victim of the bombing. She said, "God has forgotten us," she said, then turned and walked away. Another woman standing there declared, "God is great!" Despair and hope: two perspectives, one reality.

The reality is incredible suffering brought about by a long, torturous war, but God has not forgotten the people.

Many know God suffers with them.

Still, there is cause for despair: children dying from simple things because of lack of medicine or enough food; young adults asking visitors if they'll do anything more than all the other visitors they've had; women cry-

While many persons have been displaced, they tenaciously rebuild, start again, sometimes for the sixth time or more. Some who have lost a limb receive a prosthesis and walk again. Women are being empowered to establish small businesses and cooperatives. More girls and children in general are getting educated in schools, including teenage soldiers who are being demobilized. NSCC is working on a goal of "civic education," which includes teaching basic human rights, along with issues of morality to those feeling powerless and those abusing power.

Peace mobilizers, such as NSCC's Anna Kima, are making an impact. She spoke in such a way to a soldier threatening to kill her that he threw down his gun and wept. Peace agreements are holding between clans and tribes who have a past of vicious fighting. Guests from a distant land and church are seen as a blessing and a sign that the people of Sudan are not forgotten. Some people carry their crosses as a constant reminder of who it is they follow, who it is that gives them hope and peace.

We wonder if we offer the people of Sudan hope or add to their despair. We wonder and we pray for peace for the Sudanese people.

"We hope for development, independence, self-reliance..."

Kelly Burk writes: With the anticipation that basic human needs in Sudan would be great, we thought our group would be bombarded with requests for material aid. While that happened on occasion, the depth of our interactions moved us

beyond this as various Sudanese shared their life stories as well as their frustrations and hopes for the situation in Sudan.

In these stories we heard a clear appreciation of the humanitarian aid provided by relief agencies, yet the discussions never centered on temporary solutions. Instead, the people of Sudan discussed what they saw as

The Christian church has grown tremendously. While many persons have been displaced, they tenaciously rebuild, start again, sometimes for the sixth time or more.

ing because they've lost their children, their fathers, their husbands to the war; students and teachers getting no more than one meal a day and no pay; people weary of hearing about peace talks with no real hope for the freedom and just peace they crave.

But for many hope remains alive. The Christian church has grown tremendously.



Louie Rieman

Anna Kima, a peace mobilizer with the New Sudan Council of Churches, spoke peace to a soldier threatening to kill her.

a more sustainable solution to the problems, not asking us for food and water but instead asking us to help them get peace.

As a group, we sometimes wished that we could distribute tangibles such as food and clothing. This would have felt good to us, but we recognized that this approach addresses the problems only temporarily. Instead, we were encouraged to do something more difficult but sustainable: we were encouraged to listen. We heard their pain, their anger, and their requests for help with something as abstract as peace.

Supporting the Sudanese in their quest for peace may not at first glance seem as helpful as distributing humanitarian aid. Yet as Lilla Watson, a wise aboriginal woman once said, "If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

"The question of peace is simple to answer, but very hard to come by."

Phil Rieman: Our visit to southern Sudan came at a unique time—a time when southern Sudan was in the thick of the most comprehensive and hopeful peace negotiations to date. Sudan's peace hangs in the balance.

From our perspective as visitors and a people of peace, it became evident that the only hope for ending Sudan's quagmire is to fashion a just peace. It needs to be the kind of peace that allows for and fosters:

- the right of self-determination for all marginalized peoples currently disenfranchised by the government;
- free and fair elections;

Members of the women's cooperative in Narus posed with women of the Church of the Brethren delegation.

Phil Jones



Louie Rieiman



- freedom of assembly and speech;
- equal rights under constitutional law without discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic group, religion, gender, class, language, or political opinion;
- cultural and religious diversity;
- education for all citizens;
- equitable sharing of the country's resources; and,
- a process for truth-telling and reconciliation to heal the wounds of this war so that a culture of peace may prevail.

Just as Jesus lamented upon his entry to Jerusalem, "Would that you knew the things that make for peace," we pray that all of Sudan's citizens will discern in their hearts

gin, power, and natural resources, there is a common understanding that there must be something new or they will not survive.

The Christian churches of the south have taken a direct lead in the search for newness. With the leadership of the New Sudan Councils of Churches, an ecumenical movement has taken shape and given strength to the voice of the people. While government leadership and liberation movements have clashed in their struggle to achieve a political peace or negotiated settlement, the Christian faith community has made great strides in preparing its people for the work of moving forward together. They have remained a moderate but constant witness for the rights and roles of the people.

It is unclear at this point whether Sudan will remain as one, or as two separate nations with negotiated

For the people of this nation divided over religion, ethnic origin, power, and natural resources, there is a common understanding that there must be something new or they will not survive.

what will make for peace and act compassionately out of that reality. We stand in solidarity with those who will help to usher in a just peace in the spirit of Jesus Christ.

"As a Christian church, we pray for peace, not for war."

Phil Jones: To live, or even to journey through the land of Southern Sudan, requires that one become involved in the vision of shaping and molding a new people. Wherever we went, the term "New Sudan" was used over and over. For the people of this nation divided over religion, ethnic ori-

understandings. It is clear, however, that the people of southern Sudan, under the leadership of its churches, will have a voice in the shaping of its future.

Over the years, Brethren have shifted in their understandings of how the church and the state should relate. We still have many differing views on our church's involvement with the National or World Council of Churches. As we watch our sisters and brothers in Sudan struggle for their very existence, we might also reflect on our own struggles. What is the role of the church as political and global events unfold around us? How are we to become involved when the foundational teachings of Christ seem to be shattering all around us? How does the "Living Peace Church" best respond? ❗

Sudan study guide coming

The delegation plans a study guide on Sudan, to be available in January. It will explore the concept of just peace, the difference between providing instant relief and building for self reliance, and ways the church can best address these matters of faith. Contact the Brethren Witness/Washington Office at washington_office_gb@brethren.org or 202-546-3202 if your congregation would like to receive copies of the study guide.

Inside Sudan, a 90-page booklet, is an excellent resource to learn more about the conflict in Sudan.



A new way to look "Inside Sudan"

Inside Sudan: the Story of People-to-People Peacemaking, a 90-page booklet, was written and compiled by Merlyn Kettering and his daughter, Gimbiya Kettering. Merlyn Kettering has served as an advisor and consultant to the New Sudan Council of Churches since 1997 on matters related to strategic direction, peacemaking, advocacy, and institutional development. Kettering and Haruun Ruun, executive director of NSCC, are both supported by the Church of the Brethren. The denomination also gave a grant to NSCC to help with publication of this unique and informative booklet.

Inside Sudan: the Story of People-to-People Peacemaking is designed to help you and your church become familiar with the conflict in Sudan, one of the longstanding conflicts in the world. The publication details the story of NSCC's People-to-People

peacemaking, an initiative that is a testimony to the power of reconciliation and peace. It builds upon the peace traditions and involvement of the Brethren within the harsh setting of southern Sudan. Along with a rich mix of stories, poems, and political analysis are numerous pictures that help tell the story.

Also scattered throughout the text are peace sayings and proverbs, such as this: "If your steps are peaceful, the world will have peace. If you can take one peaceful step, you can take two. You can take one hundred and eight peaceful steps" (Thich Nhat Hanh).

The booklet, suitable for individuals, small groups, or church school classes, is available from Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 or BrethrenPress.com for \$10 per copy, which includes shipping costs.—Merlyn Kettering

Amish, Brethren, Hutterites, and Mennonites

Who Are the Anabaptists?



Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites

DONALD B. KRAYBILL

Who Are the Anabaptists?

Donald B. Kraybill

The Anabaptists of North America sport an amazing spectrum of religious and cultural diversity—from communal Hutterites to urban Mennonites, from low-tech Amish to acculturated Brethren. New members with Asian, African, and Hispanic cultural roots add spice and color to traditional Anabaptist ways. Counting more than 6,000 congregations and 100 different groups, the Anabaptists are known for their strong commitments to peacemaking, service, and community. In this concise text, a leading scholar of Anabaptist

communities provides a sweeping overview of their beliefs and practices as well as their similarities and differences.

Paper, 48 pages, \$7.99; in Canada \$12.49



Herald Press

1 800 245-7894 • www.heraldpress.com

Bring
the whole
family home for
dinner.

Stay in touch with the broader church community. Start a subscription for you or a friend, today. And by the way, could you pass the potatoes?

MESSENGER
Your family. Your church. Your faith.

The sower

J. BENTON RHOADES: 1920-2003

by Rhonda Pittman Gingrich

J. Benton Rhoades was a farmer. He spent his life sowing and tending seeds—in soil and lives—around the world.

His commitment to the land and his passion for justice were deeply rooted in his childhood as the son of Paul J. and Orpha Benton Rhoades, tenant farmers who, though poor themselves, never hesitated to open their doors to those in need.

In 1946 his commitment to the land and the people who tend it led Rhoades to respond to a call from the Church of the Brethren to go to Ecuador as a missionary. Eager to work the soil and share his faith, he and his first wife, Ruby Frantz, made a home for themselves and their family among the indigenous people in a rural community outside Quito. Over the course of 12 years, he sowed the seeds of a church that is still vibrant and active today, he helped establish a school that is still educating children, and he planted 4-H clubs across that country in hopes of connecting young people with positive experiences of agriculture.

Rhoades once said, "I came to Ecuador a missionary; I left Ecuador a radical." Upon returning to the US, Rhoades was more committed than ever to labor for people around the world who made their living off the land. His experiences in Ecuador had convinced him that there was more to fighting rural poverty and injustice than money and technology. He believed in empowering rural people to be their own vehicles of change.

He continued his ministry as executive director of Agricultural Missions, an ecumenical agency committed to working for justice for the rural poor. Under his leadership, the focus of the agency shifted from training and providing field support for missionaries to sowing seeds in the lives of the farmers themselves. He also believed the church should be with the people in the midst of their struggle, nurturing by its presence the seeds of self-esteem and hope. Under his direction, rural peoples organizations made connections with North American churches through a program called Education for Liberation. Strengthened by the monetary, moral, and spiritual support of North American churches, many of these grassroots organizations emerged from the Cold War as viable political entities.

Rhoades himself was always ready to represent the church, standing with the poor even in the face of danger. At the invitation of César Chávez, president of the United Farm Workers, in 1973 he joined striking workers on the picket line in California. In 1987 he was with Filipino farmers on the Mendiola Bridge when government troops opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators. And in October 2002, at the age of 82, he returned to Ecuador, this time as part of an Agricultural Missions delegation to participate in conferences and demonstrations in opposition to a new trade

agreement he believed would only exploit the land and the people of Latin America. In the same way he nurtured life and fruit from the soil, Rhoades nurtured the potential in people—presidents, pastors, and peasants—empowering them to find creative and courageous solutions to the root causes of oppression and injustice.

Although he dedicated his life to serving the rural poor, he also nurtured the lives of those closest to him. Along with Ruby, he nurtured four children through adolescence and into adulthood during the turbulent 1960s. Today they lead productive lives as a nurse practitioner, a midwife, a social worker, and a teacher. When Ruby was diagnosed with cancer, he walked with her as she battled the disease, sitting by her bedside during

Kermon Thomasson



her final hours, softly singing hymns to her. Following her death, he embraced the grief, then opened himself to new love with Doris Caldwell, a retired Presbyterian missionary.

Rhoades faithfully tended the seeds of experience and change planted in his own life. During his last trip to Ecuador, in a small, dark sanctuary, he humbly and gracefully asked for forgiveness for having come there, 56 years earlier, as a young, idealistic, white, American missionary without having fully understood the power and privilege that afforded him. In his later years, well aware of his position of power as a retired, white, male churchman, he passionately extended his fight for justice beyond the rural community to all those who were disenfranchised and oppressed.

This farmer left his mark on land and people around the world. He cultivated crops and friendships. He cultivated joy and hope. He cultivated gentleness and justice. The seeds he sowed will continue to grow and bear fruit, cultivated by those whose lives he touched, those who will put their hand to the plow in the spirit of love, hope, good humor, joy, and justice that was J. Benton Rhoades. 

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, a member of Open Circle Church of the Brethren, is director of the Resource Center for Churches in Minneapolis, Minn. Benton Rhoades was her uncle.

LETTERS

“The church is not God. When church leadership takes you in a direction which is contrary to the Bible, it is decision time.”

Stickin' with God's word

I found Mr. Farrar's editorial "Are you stickin'?" [September] interesting. It is important to try to determine why so many faithful Christians are leaving the church. Given the tough financial condition of the church, it becomes even more crucial.

I disagree with "marrying" same-sex couples. I do not make an issue of anyone's sexuality before deciding whether I can worship God with them. We should be a welcoming church as the Bible instructs us to be. We are all welcome in the house of God and are promised forgiveness of sins following confession (1 John 1:9).

Confess comes from the Greek, which means "to agree with God that what I am doing is sin." Celebration of sin is not confession. Although nothing can separate us from God's love, it is sin which

separates us from him.

Perhaps a better question is: Are you stickin' with God's word? The church is not God. When church leadership takes you in a direction which is contrary to the Bible, it is decision time. The decision becomes whether to "go along," leave the church, or take a stand on what the Bible says.

Farrar quoted from Deuteronomy 7:9 "Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who maintains covenant loyalty with those who love Him and keep His commandments." Contrary to what the editorial says, God's mercy does depend on reciprocation. There are many places in the Bible which reveal this: Deuteronomy, 11 Kings, 11 Chronicles, Isaiah, Ephesians, and Colossians to mention a few. If we reject God's word and Jesus Christ we do not receive mercy.



Mutual Aid Association
FOR CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN



The Mutual Aid Association has been protecting Brethren with property insurance for 118 years.

Contact us today to discover the value and security MAA offers you including insurance for farms, homes, personal property, business, rentals and collectible items!

3094 Jeep Road, Abilene, KS 67410-6064
1-800-255-1243
e-mail: maa@maabrethren.com
www.maabrethren.com

DISCOVER THE WORLD ON A TOURMAGINATION TOUR

2003 TOURS

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)

EUROPEAN TOUR for GRANDPARENTS and GRANDCHILDREN (July 15-22)

SMALL TOWN THEATRES and COUNTRY GARDENS (July 29 - August 4)

MENNONITE WORLD CONFERENCE (August - 6 Tours)

FALL FOLIAGE TOUR in NEW ENGLAND (October 7-13)

GERMANY and SWITZERLAND (October 9-23)

CHRISTMAS SERVICE TOUR to PENNSYLVANIA (November 29 - December 4)

2004 TOURS

SERVICE TOUR to SUNNY JAMAICA (January 23 - February 1)

VIETNAM (February 4-21)

AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND (February 6-26)

MEXICO (March 2-17)

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

SEVEN CHURCHES of REVELATION (May 28 - June 7)

ENGLAND and SCOTLAND for GRANDPARENTS and GRANDCHILDREN (June 23 - July 5)

From PRAGUE to GDANSK (July 22 - August 1)

CANADIAN MARITIME PROVINCES (August 7-16)

SWISS-VOLHYNIAN MENNONITE HERITAGE (September 15-29)



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

CALL 1-800-565-0451

FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO BOOK YOUR TOUR

E-MAIL: office@tourmagination.com

WEB: www.tourmagination.com

9 Willow Street 1011 Cathill Road
Waterloo, ON N2J 1V6 Canada Sellersville, PA 18960-1315
Reg. #1567624 USA

Microloan program strengthens families



"I planted an extra crop of okra."

—Adriano Sanchez rented a new field and hired its planting to grow an expanded crop of okra in the Dominican Republic.

He is benefiting from an affordable, church-based GFCF microloan. Won't you help others like him build better lives?

Give—'til it helps!



Global Food Crisis Fund

1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin IL 60120
800.323.8039

Church of the Brethren General Board

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation

This is a periodical publication.

Publication Title: MESSENGER

Publication Number: 0026-0355

Filing Date: September 30, 2003

Owner: Church of the Brethren General Board
1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin IL 60120-1694

Publisher: Wendy McFadden
1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin IL 60120-1694

Editor: Fletcher Farrar
1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin IL 60120-1694

Total Circulation: 14,737

Cost: \$16.50

Join the sunny churches of **ARIZONA**

Tucson Church of the Brethren

2200 N. Dodge Blvd, Tucson, AZ 85716
Phone: 520-527-5106 Fax: 520-527-5110
e-mail: brethrenfaith02@msn.com
www.brethrenministries.org

Community Church of the Brethren

5015 E. Broadway, Mesa, AZ 85206
Rev Charles Russell, Pastor
Phone: 480-641-2230 Cell: 480-694-3648
http://www.brethren.org/history.htm

LETTERS

God promises that if we make the right choices he will bless us (II Chronicles 7:14). He is our heavenly father. He earnestly wants us to make good decisions. Don't be fooled by new-age theology (which is actually not new at all). Rely on God's word. It will never change. Remember the words of Joshua: "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

Are you stickin' with God's word?

Philip A. Douglas
Springfield, Ill.

Called to be a queer people

Two events this year have been tumbling over in my mind and troubling my understanding of who I am as a Christian and a Brethren. One was the annual weekend of Connecting Families, a gathering of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender (GLBT) persons and their families and friends, representing Mennonite, Brethren, and other faith groups from many states and Canada. The other event was the conference, "At the Crossroads: A Historic Peace Church in the 21st Century," held at Bridgewater College.

In both of these situations I realized that loving my lesbian daughter and supporting GLBT persons, and speaking for peace in a nation so enamored by violence, make me a queer person. To act out the discipline of love as taught by Jesus makes you or me strange persons. The Brethren have known this from the earliest days, but unfortunately got caught up in looking different, rather than being different. I find "different" to be an inescapable outcome of discipleship.

A speaker at Connecting Families asked us to look around and recognize that "if you're here you're queer." This statement has tumbled around in my head as, "How willing am I to be queer as a disciple of Christ?"

The Crossroads conference was another reminder that being queer for Christ must be rooted in faith, biblical study, and a faith community. I was reminded that speaking for peace outside Christian discipleship is just another peace protest that comes and goes with the wind.

Those interested in Connecting Families may call 717-865-4711 or write junedick@paonline.com.

Richard G. Blouch
Jonestown, Pa.

Organizing for Peace 2004



WIDENING THE CIRCLE

Peacemaking in the midst of diversity

March 11-14, 2004
La Verne, California

Co-sponsored by On Earth Peace, the University of La Verne
and the La Verne Church of the Brethren

We will gather to:

Nurture creative responses to violence with music, art, and spoken word

Explore racism, classism, and prejudice to expand peace-work across traditional ethnic and religious boundaries

Deepen our spiritual roots to help us stay fertile, grounded, centered and faithful

You will find:

Workshops that inform and empower active peacemaking
Art and prayer woven throughout
Relationship-building across traditional boundaries

Invited leadership includes:

Biblical scholar, preacher and urban activist **Ched Myers**
James Lawson, nonviolence organizer in the Civil Rights movement
Music leadership: Steve Kinzie and Shawn Kirchner

Organizing for Peace is an initiative rooted in the Church of the Brethren Anabaptist tradition. This year's conference, held for the first time in southern California, hopes to address the rich and growing diversity of today's world, as well as to offer hands-on tools for active social change among people of faith. *This a qualifying event for those in the Church of the Brethren interested in earning one CEU.*

Register online: www.brethren.org/oepa/ofp2004.html
(or contact Kim Stuckey at On Earth Peace (below).



On Earth Peace is an agency of the Church of the Brethren empowering people to discern the things that make for peace.

PO Box 188 New Windsor, MD 21776
410-635-8706 www.brethren.org/oepa



Underserved forgiveness

My wife, Bonnie, passed away a few months ago. In my grief recovery, I was stuck for several months. The reason for being stuck was simple: there was some forgiveness I had refused to give [see "The power of forgiveness," July].

We learned too late that my wife did not receive the best care because of a money-pinching health maintenance organization and errant physicians. How many additional days, months, or years might she have enjoyed our grandchildren if a better healthcare program had provided her care?

Forgiveness is not easy. The New Testament model anticipates repentance prior to forgiveness. Do HMO's repent of shortchanging a patient's healthcare? The HMO does not deserve forgiveness. Their agent's decision cost Bonnie some quality of life, some time on this earth, and cost many of us the pain of her absence.

Yet I forgave the HMO and its personnel, not because they deserved it, or somehow earned it, but because I have been forgiven. God knows that I do not deserve forgiveness, but he has forgiven me anyway. I can do no less. And I thank God for taking away my excuse to waste life in hatred.

James Merrifield
Peoria, Ariz.

Where's the rescue team?

Singer Alan Jackson asks the question, "Where were you that September morn'?" as he referred to the tragedy our nation faced on Sept. 11, 2001.

I live in the small town of Geiger, just outside of Somerset, Pa. Just a few miles from my home is the site where Flight 93 made its final descent, and in the other direction, the place where the Quecreek miners were rescued [see "The miracle mine rescue in Brethren country," November 2002].

For both events I watched as Somerset County's people came to the rescue. People from all walks of life came together with their expertise to help. It didn't matter who they were before; now they were just Americans with a mission to help others.

As I reflect on both of these tragedies



ADVANCEMENT Associates

Building relationships. Advancing your mission.



Consulting in

Strategic visioning

Fundraising campaigns

Constituency relations

Communications

**Pat Swartzendruber,
Jerry Kennell, Rich Gerig
and Dan Hess**

866-777-1606 toll free
info@advanassociates.com
www.advanassociates.com

-COME HOME to NEW WINDSOR-



Volunteer...and Support
a Unique Brethren Ministry

The New Windsor Conference Center is located at the lovely, historic Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, MD. Many fond memories are formed here among the beauty and peace of these 26 acres.

As a Volunteer Hostess or Host, you will have the opportunity to share in this ministry by helping to provide Christian hospitality and conference services to our guests in a cozy and homey atmosphere. You will experience the rewards of service as you interact with groups and individuals and witness the true meaning of our motto: "A Quiet Place to Get Things Done."

On days off, an added benefit is our convenient access to Baltimore, MD, Lancaster, PA, Washington, DC and other interesting places with opportunities for cultural, recreational and religious activities. Numerous Brethren churches are available in the area.

We provide a furnished apartment and meals along with a small stipend. You'll need to bring maturity, detail orientation, an outgoing personality and genuine interest in providing excellent customer service. Come join us for a week, a month or longer, if you'd like. Applications are accepted on an ongoing basis. A few opportunities are still available for this year. **For more information, call or write Elaine Hyde, Conference Coordinator, PO Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776-0188; 1-800-766-1553 (toll-free).**

Mission Coordinator for Nigeria

This key mission role is the team leader, communicator, administrator, pastor, and advisor. This is a prime opportunity to be in ministry alongside the leadership of the dynamic Nigerian church!

See position description at www.brethren.org

Apply by: 1/16/04
Placement by mid-2004.

Contact Mary Lou Garrison
800-323-8039

a ministry of
Global Mission Partnerships
Church of the Brethren
General Board

that happened so near to me, I see an even bigger tragedy occurring and it will eventually end in death as well if it is not stopped. I am referring to our beloved denomination, the Church of the Brethren. We are dying a slow and painful death. When I attend Annual Conference I hear the concern from our denomination's leaders.

It leads me to ask: Where are the fire and rescue teams? If they come will it be too late? Will there just be a smoldering hole in the ground with nothing to put back together?

In recent years we have become stuck on petty issues, such as whether to change our name, that really don't mean anything to God's kingdom. We need to put away this pettiness and get on to the important business of the church.

I am a pastor and I talk to many pastors. Many are saying the same things about

congregations they know about. They are dying because unimportant issues have taken priority. Pastors and many in the congregations are frustrated because it seems the congregations don't really care about the important issues.

The pettiness we find on the national level trickles down to the local level. For instance, churches have assets they will not touch because they might need them someday. More concern is placed on maintaining, rather than growing, God's church. If the patriarchs and matriarchs of the church do not step aside and let change happen we will perish.

Is it going to take a Sept. 11? Do we need to crash and burn before we wake up and start taking steps to turn things around?

Shelby McCoy
Friedens, Pa.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Christopher Saur Bible in nice condition. No breaks and all clasps work. Hand-printed in 1775 at Germantown (near Philadelphia, Pa.), where he was a deacon at the first Brethren church formed in America (organized 1723). Also Germantown Mother Church commemorative plate and 1947 224th anniversary program and postcard (Pastor Benjamin Waltz). Saur Bibles are worth between \$1,000 and \$2,000. \$1,500 or best offer. All proceeds benefit our church. Thank you. 610-353-8126.

Advent devotional now available. *Attending to God's Advent: Scripture and Prayers for the Advent-Epiphany Journey*, by Glenn Mitchell, is now available from Brethren Press. This devotional combines scripture, prayer, and meditation to guide you through the tensions of the season to a deeper daily communion with God. Call 800-441-3712 to purchase this devotional for yourself, your family, or your church. Item # 8488, \$1.75 each.

Loans and scholarships are available for qualified Church of the Brethren students or employees of a Church of the Brethren agency preparing for a career in a health care profession. This program is offered through the Association of Brethren Caregivers. For qualifications to receive a loan or scholarship, visit ABC's website at

www.brethren.org/abc/. For more information, contact Loans and Scholarships Coordinator Linda Timmons at 847-742-5100, ext. 300, or e-mail ltimmons_abc@brethren.org.

Cruise/tour to Greece and Turkey. "Walking in the Footsteps of Paul" March 2-12, 2004. Hosted by Brethren couple with over 16 years experience as professional travel agents. Three nights in Athens and six nights aboard Royal Olympic Cruise Line's the Triton. The Bible comes alive with beautiful ports-of-call. Lectures on board ship and professional guide service on land. Flights arranged from all major US cities. "Early Booking Discount." Fax or phone 814-444-8800 or 877-456-8769 (4JO-RNY); e-mail jnljaunt@floodcity.net; on the web: www.smallgrouptours.com.

Lost in Florida. "Finding Our Heart Again: A Day for Rekindling Our Passions & Sharpening Our Skills," Saturday, Jan. 31, 2004, St. Petersburg First Church of the Brethren. A symposium sponsored by the Atlantic Southeast District of the Church of the Brethren. FOCUS: Recapturing our "first love" for Jesus and his Gospel and our passion for those who have not experienced his saving grace. KEYNOTE SPEAKERS: James F. Myer and Paul E.R. Munday. PLUS: 7 dynamic workshops! For more information: Call Terry Hatfield 727-381-0709 or e-mail thatfie2@tampabay.rr.com.

Flory Tours

Alaska

June 3 -26, 2004

From central U.S. to British Columbia, Inner Passage cruise, Yukon, Fairbanks, Denali, Anchorage, Prince William Sound glacier cruise. Return by Cassiar Highway and Canadian Rockies.

Oregon Trail

July 11-27, 2004

Follows Oregon Trail route to Portland with some attention to California Trail, Mormon Trail, and Lewis and Clark exploration route. Includes Seattle and Victoria, BC, then down the coast to San Francisco, east to Reno, & Salt Lake.

Tours originate by bus from McPherson, Kansas. A "fly and meet" 16 day option for Alaska may be negotiated. Schedules tentative. Contact us for detailed brochure and cost information.

Planned and hosted by

Barbara & Lowell Flory

1142 E. Euclid, McPherson KS 67460
(620) 241-1056 ~ florytours@alltel.net

Please send information to be included in Turning Points to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800 323-8059 ext. 206; jclements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Bakersfield, Calif.: James Isaacs, Brenda Isaacs, Johanna Isaacs, Terri Burke, Mitchell Lecrone, Jacob McKenzie, Nicholas Herder

Bear Creek, Dayton, Ohio: Jason Gauthier, Jill Gauthier, Randy Powers, Monique Powers, Eric Deaton, Dianna Deaton

Beaver Creek, Hagerstown, Md.: Tessa Doyle, Amelia Doyle, Tom Shank, Mike Wolfe

Brownsville, Md.: Addie Bowers

Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.: Aaron Tressler, Jennifer Tressler

Enders, Neb.: Rebecca Grosbach

Ephrata, Pa.: Brad Murphy, Mona Murphy, Michael Miller, Clarence Frankfort, Steve Groff, Kim Groff, Darla Shaeffer, Charles Jones

Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.: David Kindy, Merna Kindy, Joanna Kindy

Hollins Road, Roanoke, Va.: Bill Bryant, Carol Bryant, Therese Farmer, Katie Lane Johnson, Joan Moore, Lauren Robinette

Lewiston, Maine: Jamie Lynn Baillargeon

Lone Star, Lawrence, Kan.: Nan Hill, Jeannie Torneden

Lower Clair, Claysburg, Pa.: Clay Dodson, Ali Dodson, Shannon Imler, Jason Imler, Jane Walter, Robert Walter, Susan K. Walter Citraro

Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.: Janice Larson, Wendy Lerch, John Lerch, Peggy Spry, Steven Ivey

Morgantown, W.Va.: Jacob Lewellen

Nappanee, Ind.: Rex Schultz, Christina Schultz

Oakton, Vienna, Va.: Kaili Ludwick, Molly Bridenbaugh, Melinda Kessler, Al Zebrowski, Gloria Yates, Paula Mendenhall, Grady Mendenhall

Painter Creek, Arcanum, Ohio: Esther Ludy, Gordon Shellhaas, Kathy Thornton

Palmyra, Pa.: Todd Gottshall, Brenda McKinley, Beverly Heisey

Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.: Justine Dishong, Kristy Dishong, Diane Metzgar, Charles Bell, Edward Gilkey, Michael McIntire, Richard Perrine, Darl Selders, Starr Selders

Plumcreek, Shelocta, Pa.: David Baker

Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio: Linda Rittenhouse, Layne Schroeder

Purchase Line, Clymer, Pa.: Edie Hinkle

Rummel, Windber, Pa.: Erika Singer, Matthew Singer, Michael Bushwack, Sharon Bushwack

Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Gib Keeney, Irene Keeney, Tom Lewis, Mary Lewis

Spring Branch, Wheatland, Mo.: Patty Clift

Stover Memorial, Des Moines, Iowa: Naomi Beal

Union Bridge, Md.: Matthew Baile, Stacey Barnett, Donna Barnett, Jolinda Beers, William Lamb, Scott Yingling

York Center, Lombard, Ill.: Julie Farfan, Nina Flores, Tony Leyva

Wedding Anniversaries

Arendt, C. Edward and Jean, Gettysburg, Pa., 55

Beckman, Lee and Deane, Morgantown, W.Va., 60

Binkley, John and Margaret, Pinellas Park, Fla., 50

Britt, Lawrence E. and Cottie J., Eagle Rock, Va., 65

Brown, Kenneth and Chloe, Toano, Va., 55

Carson, Ira L. and H. Louise, Gettysburg, Pa., 50

Fishburn, Alvin and Angie, Lawrence, Kan., 50

Gosnell, Fred and Imogene, New Windsor, Md., 55

Hamilton, David and Velma, Virden, Ill., 75

Hartman, Henry and Betty, Myerstown, Pa., 50

Kauffman, Donald and Rosita, San Juan, Puerto Rico, 50

Kiracofe, Calvin and Marjorie, Lima, Ohio, 60

Manges, Harold and Arlene, Windber, Pa., 65

Moyers, Clarence and Sarah, Elizabeth, Harrisonburg, Va., 50

Myers, Elvin and Dorothy, Largo, Fla., 50

Ober, Jay and Margaret, Lititz, Pa., 60

Reed, Lamar and Wilma, New Paris, Ind., 65

Shaffer, Howard and Florence, Allentown, Pa., 70

Snoke, Vernon and Jeane, Avon Park, Fla., 50

Stauffer, Cecil and Dorothy, Polo, Ill., 65

Steinour, Edward, Sr. and Dorothy, Gettysburg, Pa., 50

Tate, Lanny and Mary, Lawrence, Kan., 50

Wing, Herman and Marilyn, Bridgewater, Va., 50

Deaths

Allen, Alma Ruth, 75, Brook Park, Ohio, Aug. 31

Arnold, Robert, 77, Blue Ridge, Va., Aug. 19

Baker, J. Donald, 74, Franklin Grove, Ill., Sept. 7

Baskin, Doris Kathryn, 72, Colledgeville, Pa., Aug. 27

Bridges, Orpha Vienna Keister, 91, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 18

Briggs, Jack M., 72, Elida, Ohio, Sept. 12

Burke, Ted, 81, Windber, Pa., Aug. 19

Butler, Elizabeth, 83, Ephrata, Pa., July 9

Caldwell, Mary, 74, Roanoke, Va., July 28

Coffman, Gertrude Brown, 85, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 6

Davis, Clarence, 84, Winston-Salem, N.C., July 8

Deter, Ora, 93, Linville, Va., Sept. 8

Dilling, Chalmer C., 88, Penn Run, Pa., Aug. 7

Driver, Charlotte Carol Minnick, 55, Dayton, Va., Sept. 20

Flowers, Gladys B., 99, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 15

Forehand, Ethel, 105, Wheatland, Mo., Aug. 29

Gay, Frances H., 87, Roanoke, Va., Feb. 6

Geib, Homer S., 85, Manheim, Pa., Sept. 5

Gilbert, Mazie Garber, 82, Staunton, Va., Sept. 22

Gilkerson, Estella H., 93, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 16

Harrison, James, 79, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 7

Hieks, Calvin L., 67, Roanoke, Va., May 31

Homan, Naomi Frances Sheets, 90, Mount Solon, Va., Sept. 17

Hostler, Mae L., 78, Manheim, Pa., July 6

Hull, Mary Nell Haga, 79, Woodstock, Va., Aug. 12

Jobs, Normal F. Rhoades, 92, Greenville, Ohio, Aug. 22

Jones, Mildred, 91, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 24

Kagarise, Herman R., 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Sept. 23

Kagey, Edna Rebecca, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 9

Keller, Paul Marcelles, 79, Timberville, Va., Sept. 18

Keller, Paul W., 90, North Manchester, Ind., July 6

Keller, Velda Shippe, 82, Broadway, Va., Sept. 22

Kuszmaul, Clarence Eugene, 81, Westville, Ind., Dec. 27, 2001

Manspile, Christine, 71, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 17

Martz, Viola Bell Emerson, 92, Broadway, Va., Sept. 6

McDorman, Shirley Eyvonne, 66, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 30

Mick, Phillis, 84, Imperial, Neb., July 15

Myers, Raymond, Jr., 75, Dixon, Ill., Sept. 2

Newcomer, Helen M., 81, Rockford, Ill., Sept. 1

Nicodemus, Grace, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Aug. 25

Nottingham, Hazel, 97, Covina, Calif., Aug. 24

Oaks, Raymond H., Sr., 86, Johnstown, Pa., March 31

Over, Clara S., 96, Martinsburg, Pa., Aug. 12

Parker, James E., 90, Roanoke, Va., April 4

Parsons, Mary Stephens, 91, Roanoke, La., Sept. 13

Platter, Fenton Henry, 92, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 6

Pontius, Carol J., 58, Walkerton, Ind., Aug. 1

Powers, Robert, 79, Adrian, Mich., May 15

Price, Chesley William, 86, Broadway, Va., Aug. 27

Prince, Brice E., 88, Morgantown, W.Va., Aug. 11

Proctor, Cristle, 88, Roanoke, Va., July 20

Rabig, Harley, 89, Saint Petersburg, Fla., May 21

Rice, Margaretta, 80, Thurmont, Md., July 18

Robinson, Cecil, 87, Plymouth, Ind., June 8

Rodgers, Lois, 83, Windber, Pa., Aug. 1

Rotruck, Mildred, 89, McPherson, Kan., Sept. 13

Royer, Harold, 95, Greenville, Ohio, June 29

Rutherford, Kenneth Bryan, 72, New Hope, Va., Aug. 29

Schertz, Burtron D., 71, Kokomo, Ind., May 25

Sherman, Jim, 58, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 18

Simmers, Michael Clark, 56, Bridgewater, Va., Aug. 30

Singer, Sandra, 45, Oakwood, Ohio, Aug. 29

Smith, Ralph Vernon, 87, Sugar Grove, W.Va., Sept. 20

Spearman, Max, 70, Homasassa Springs, Fla., July 12

Spitzer, Edna Holsinger, 94, Broadway, Va., Sept. 21

Stickley, Mary Clark, 79, Weyers Cave, Va., Sept. 17

Stout, Virginia, 57, Huntington, Ind., Sept. 8

Strawderman, Grant Dayton, 77, Mathias, W.Va., Aug. 24

Summers, Minor William, 92, Timberville, Va., Sept. 15

Swick, Leona, 76, Johnstown, Pa., May 23

Thompson, Pauline, 88, Lima, Ohio, Aug. 30

Toppel, Nancy, 60, Roanoke, Va., July 20

Wine, J. Albert, 94, Lakeland, Fla., Sept. 15

Zigler, Robert Stanley, 85, Washington, D.C., Sept. 15

Zimmerman, Ralph, 91, Winston-Salem, N.C., Dec. 10

Licensings

Beach, Martha R., Atl. S.E. Dist (Saint Petersburg, Fla.), April 27

Dunham, Doris Hopwood, Pac. S.W. Dist (Bakersfield, Calif.), June 15

Figueroa Ana Isabel, Atl. S.E. Dist (Saint Petersburg, Fla.), April 27

Raker, Robert Curtis, S. Pa. Dist (Greencastle, Pa.), Sept. 7

Schwartz, Marvin Ray, S/C Ind. Dist. (Peru, Ind.), Sept. 14

Short, Randall S., N. Ohio Dist. (Lick Creek, Bryan, Ohio), Aug. 24

Tuttle, Jon McCay, W. Plains Dist. (Quinter, Kan.), Sept. 7

Weldon, Deborah, Pac. S.W. Dist. (Lindsay Community, Lindsay, Calif.), June 22

Ordinations

McCallister, Cara A., S. Ohio Dist. (Beavercreek, Ohio), Aug. 3

Ryder, Philip Lynn, W. Marva Dist. (Bowden Family Worship Center, Bowden, W.Va.), Sept. 7

Placements

Bongard, Merritt, pastor, New Life Christian Fellowship, Mount Pleasant, Mich., Aug. 19

Carter, Jay, from team interim to pastor, Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind., Sept. 7

Gault, Mary, pastor, Sunfield, Mich., Sept. 14

Isaacs, James, pastor, Bakersfield, Calif., March 16

McDonald, Richard A., pastor, Mount Zion and Trinity (yoked), Luray, Va., Sept. 1

Ort, David Allen, pastor, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Sept. 1

Painter, Homer W., pastor, Center, Champion, Pa., Sept. 1

Runkle, Dwayne Allen, pastor, Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind., Sept. 1

Shaffer, John B., from interim to pastor, Quakertown, Pa., Sept. 1

Tevis, Robert E., III., pastor, Cerro Gordo, Ill., Sept. 1

Zepp, Christopher W., pastor of youth and young adults, Mountville, Pa., Sept. 1

Stories a Brethren cemetery tells



Prowling the Brethren cemetery across from the ruins of the old Pleasant Hill church near Girard, Ill., I spotted two stones that spelled trouble. In the Vaniman plot, next to their father, George, and mother, Louisa, were “Chester Melvin, died at Atlantic City, N.J. July 2, 1912, Aged 45 yrs.” and “Calvin, died at Atlantic City, N.J. July 2, 1912, Aged 37 yrs.” What had taken these Illinois men so far away from home? What terrible thing had happened that July day?

I learned that their other brother, Elmer, had left Chester Melvin and Calvin a few days before the accident, sparing him to father a daughter four years later. The daughter, now 86, would sit at her kitchen table and search her memory to tell me the story of her family and the Brethren of Pleasant Hill.

A few months before Chester Melvin was born in 1866, George and Louisa Vaniman had arrived and settled near other Dunkers on the rich farmland of central Illinois. But they had to drive 20 miles to the church where George’s brother was a member. So, even though he had never formally joined the church by baptism, George Vaniman soon was helping to build the new meetinghouse not far from his farm. The congregation would grow so large and vibrant it would host Annual Meeting in 1874, drawing 10,000 people to a member’s farm field, where the Brethren would decide not to allow mustaches, not to engage in the profession of banking, not to send their children to college, not to possess musical instruments, and not to join farmers’ clubs. The editor of the denominational magazine would declare in his next issue that many of the conclusions of this Annual Meeting were not in harmony with his views.

According to the 1956 book *Pleasant Hill*, George Vaniman also had problems with the legalistic tendencies of the Brethren. He didn’t see the point of debating what form baptism should take. But if a family of the church had fallen on hard times he would give them a calf or a colt. He lent a team of horses to a destitute Civil War veteran newly arrived from Tennessee. Over and over he read in his Bible Jesus’ description of the judgment. The questions to be asked are not those being debated by the Dunkers, but are instead: Did you visit the sick? Feed the hungry? Clothe the naked?

George Vaniman’s granddaughter often heard stories of his compassion and generosity. Her parents had planned to name their first child after him, but when the child turned out to be a girl, it took them a few days to come up with a suitable substitute—Georgina. Now Georgina Vaniman Blair tells me another story passed along by her father. It shows a different side of George, who had stood just on the edge of the Brethren, a people always saying their word was as good as their bond. George had made a deal to buy some hogs, which would be weighed and paid for the next day. He instructed his son to go before breakfast to observe the man he bought them from, a good church member.

Sure enough, when the boy arrived the farmer was hurrying through his lot with large buckets of water to fill up the sold hogs before weighing. “You see, everyone has his temptations, son,” George told his boy later. “First we must look out for our own, and sometimes we must sort of look out for the other fellow’s too.”

Louisa Vaniman respected her husband, but wanted to follow her own understanding of right. So in 1894, with George’s approval of the trip, she traveled by herself to Annual Meeting and on her way home visited relatives in Ohio. There she was baptized. She prayed, “Father, I have made my confession before men, and I have obeyed the commandment of baptism. But if I don’t tell George for a while, I reckon you’ll understand.” When he found out, his chief concern was that she not change her style of dress to please the Brethren. She had planned ahead to meet this objection. The rule was that converts could continue wearing their present clothes until they were worn out, then they would change to plain dress. Before she had left for Annual Meeting she had made herself pretty dresses and bonnets that would last, and please her husband, for years to come.

With independent-minded parents like these, it isn’t surprising that their sons would want to explore the world, both geographically and intellectually. Chester Melvin, the oldest, would go to the Brethren college at Mount Morris, Ill., where he discovered *Scientific American* magazine and its ideas on flying machines. After college he would join an opera troupe, travel to New Zealand, pioneer a moving-picture machine in San Francisco, and go to Paris to learn to fly balloons. In 1909 he tried but failed to be the first to reach the North Pole by balloon. So he set a new goal—to be the first to cross the Atlantic in a dirigible. After his first attempt failed and he was rescued at sea, he immediately announced plans for a bigger and better aircraft.

With backing from the president of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Co., Chester Melvin built the largest dirigible in the world. As launch day approached, Calvin and Elmer went east to be part of the national excitement their brother was arousing. But their mother, a widow now, needed help on the farm, so Elmer came home.

Elmer received a telegram before noon on July 2, 1912. The 258-foot airship had begun its attempt to cross the Atlantic when, above the eyes of thousands of horrified spectators, 400,000 cubic feet of hydrogen burst into flames. The dirigible crashed into the water, killing all five aboard—including Chester Melvin and Calvin Vaniman. Their mother took the news bravely, comforted by her faith and the hymn “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Georgina still has her grandmother’s diary, with Louisa’s entry for July 20, 1912, the day after the second of the funerals. It says she “worked in the garden all day.”—FLETCHER FARRAR

The long-out-of-print *Pleasant Hill*, by Ethel Harshbarger Weddle was recently reprinted and is available for \$49 (includes postage and handling) from the Girard Sesquicentennial Book Committee, 119 N. Madison, Girard, Ill. 62640.

“What had taken these Illinois men so far away from home? What terrible thing had happened that July day?”

*A Brethren education focuses on the growth of the whole person ...
... and instills within students a system of values they will carry throughout their lives.*

“INSPIRING Values”

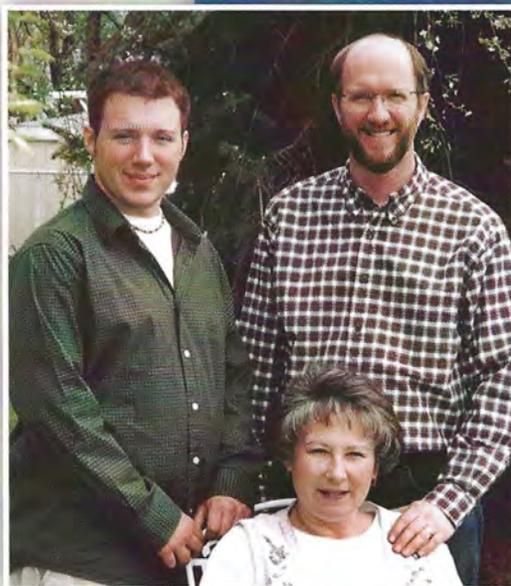


“For both Kim and David Witkovsky, the decision to attend Elizabethtown College in 1974 came from both similar and dissimilar reasons. Kim, whose religious background was Methodist, was not originally looking for a Church of the Brethren college. In fact, her most important reason for choosing a college originally centered on the availability and strength of its medical technology program. Dave became interested in attending a Church of the Brethren college through his father, a Church of the Brethren pastor, and his sister, who was already a student at Elizabethtown. What they shared, in their decisions to attend Elizabethtown, were an appreciation for the beauty of E-town’s campus and the friendly, welcoming feel of the campus community.

The personal interest that E-town’s professors and staff took in both Kim and Dave’s lives had a lasting impact on their academic and vocational lives.

“Through the examples of and interactions with professors, counselors, and religious life staff, we were able to realize that we could integrate our faith and values with our career interests.” Those values of service and responsibility to others, although instilled at young ages, were nurtured and inspired to greater heights through their experiences with these mentors at Elizabethtown.

“It is our hope that we have inspired values in our children as our mentors at Elizabethtown did in us.” Evidently so, as son, Matt, who was elected to the Church of the Brethren National Youth Cabinet for 2003–2004, also chose to attend Elizabethtown College and is a member of the class of 2007.



Matt '07, Kim '79 and David '78 Witkovsky
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania

**“Positive Outcomes” are characteristic of each Brethren College.
To learn more, check us out at our websites listed below!**

Bridgewater College
Bridgewater, Virginia
www.bridgewater.edu

Manchester College
North Manchester, Indiana
www.manchester.edu

Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.etown.edu

McPherson College
McPherson, Kansas
www.mcpherson.edu

Juniata College
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
www.juniata.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary
Richmond, Indiana
www.brethren.org/bethany

University of La Verne
La Verne, California
www.ulv.edu

Brethren Colleges Abroad
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.bcanet.org

“Some of the greatest learning and influences we received in our lives came from the faculty and staff at Elizabethtown College.”



COBCOA

www.cobcoa.org

Brethren Colleges ... LEADING the Way

