

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

MARCH 2004 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Congregational Morale



Is your
church excited
about its
future?

They say that young adults aren't interested in a relationship with God or the church, but...



More than 140 young adults registered to attend National Young Adult Conference (NYAC) during the first month of registration.

They say that young adults don't "give enough back," but...

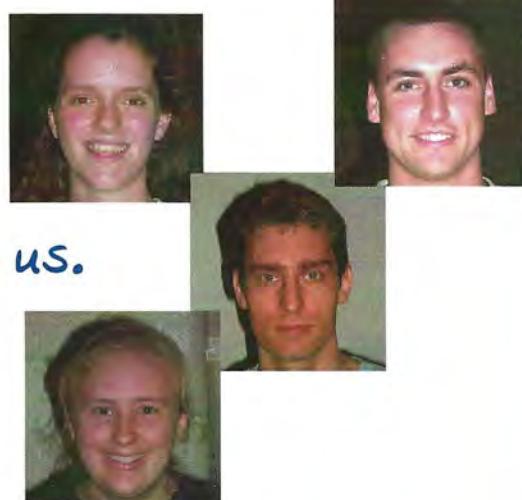
61% of the young adults registered for NYAC volunteered to participate in worship leadership, to sing in the choir, or to do both.



They say that the church is stagnant and lifeless, but...



71% of registered NYAC participants have never before attended a denominational young adult conference.



Don't listen to what "they" say...

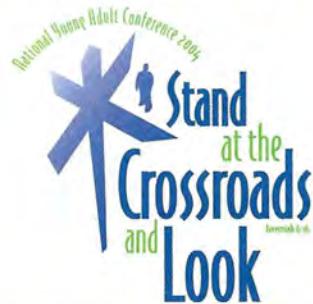
Listen to us.

*Listen to the movement
of the Holy Spirit in our lives.*

Encourage us to stand at the crossroads and look.

National Young Adult Conference 2004

"Stand at the Crossroads and Look..." Jer. 6:16



June 14 - 18, 2004

Snow Mountain Ranch near Winter Park, Colorado

Registration: \$225. Young adults 18 - 35 can register on-line at www.nyac2004.org until April 15.

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER

Attitude is key. A wide-ranging study by New Life Ministries and Christian Community found that significant church growth is much more likely to happen when members of a congregation are excited about that congregation's future. The opposite also proved true—unexcited members were unlikely to engage in outreach or invite people to church. This month's cover is by Debbie Noffsinger of DN Design, Union Bridge, Md.

8 Are people excited about your church's future?

Steve Clapp and Kristen Leverton Helbert have analyzed the data and offer suggestions for evaluating and improving congregational morale. In this month's cover article, they also extend some specific insights for the Church of the Brethren.

12 Dear Decade to Overcome Violence . . .

The World Council of Churches recently declared the United States as its Decade to Overcome Violence focus country for 2004, citing the desire to strengthen and resource churches and movements working for peace in this country. Church of the Brethren DOV coordinator Rachel Peterson has compiled stories of what some Brethren are doing as part of this emphasis.

16 Young adults' spiritual hunger

The vast majority of young adults in their 20s say that faith is important to them. According to this report from Religion News Service, however, many of them aren't finding their spiritual hunger fed at church. "One of the trends we're noticing (is) people are looking for something that's real," one pastor says.

18 Churches strengthen trans-Atlantic ties

For nearly 20 years now, members of the Historic Peace Churches (including the Brethren) have engaged in ecumenical conversations with counterparts across the Atlantic Ocean. Brethren scholar Donald Durnbaugh describes how this series of "Prague Consultations" has sought to renew connections and to lift a combined voice more clearly amid the ecumenical symphony.



Chris Harlinger/CWS

DEPARTMENTS

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FROM THE PUBLISHER

I

In the retail business, the seasons seem to move quickly and predictably from Christmas to storage containers to Valentine's Day—to gardening. Though some parts of the country are still entombed in ice and snow, this is the season of seed catalogs and dreams, the stirring of hope that the earth will awaken soon from its hibernation.



WENDY MCFADDEN
Publisher

Brethren Press has also moved into this season, with a unique book called *Gardening for the Earth and Soul*. Due out in time for spring planting, it is in essence a book about a way of living. It's a how-to manual, and it's a book of reflections, and it's an invitation to practice peace by dwelling close to the land and its people.

"Gardening and caring for creation is one way that Brethren have lived out our faith, knowing that we tend and God provides," writes editor Julie Garber in the preface.

"But gardening is also metaphor for spiritual nurture. It is the basis for physical life because it sustains and renews us, and gardening is a spiritual matter for the same reason—because God's abundant grace sustains and renews us."

A book on gardening seems unusual for a denominational publishing house. But perhaps not so unusual, given Brethren Press's mission to publish books that challenge the Brethren and others "to embrace a practical faith." It makes sense that Brethren spirituality is the kind where you get your hands dirty.

Gardening for the Earth and Soul is the fruit of two people who have years of experience and training in sustainable agriculture, in both Guatemala and the US. Tom Benevento, who created the delicate line drawings and wrote many of the sidebars, is Latin America/Caribbean specialist for the Church of the Brethren General Board. Heather Dean, who wrote the easy-to-follow instructions in the book, is volunteering in a village in Guatemala, serving through the General Board's Brethren Volunteer Service and Global Mission Partnerships.

Their words and images enrich both body and soul. As we travel through the sometimes frozen terrain of Lent, this is a seed catalog worth meditating on.

Wendy McFadden

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AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: The new Fieldcrest Drive cottage project of Brethren Village (Lancaster, Pa.) won an award of merit from the Keystone Chapter of Associated Builders and Contractors. Benchmark Construction Company of Brownstown, Pa., who built the project, received the award.

Atlantic Southeast: A district mission team traveled to Haiti the week of Feb. 20 to provide consultation to 17 churches on the training of pastors. The churches are member congregations of an independent group of churches that calls itself the Free Church of the Nazarene.

Idaho: The Nampa congregation in December authorized proceeding with the possible purchase of a 10-acre parcel adjoining the current church property, for future church expansion.

Illinois/Wisconsin: The district office in December completed a move from a space in the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., to new quarters in the York Center Church of the Brethren (Lombard, Ill.) in order to cut expenditures in the district budget.

Michigan: The Detroit First congregation has arranged to lease its church building to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints while the congregation explores its future.

Mid-Atlantic: The district office settled into its new home in December, relocating to space in the Blue Ridge Building of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. The office had been in a former congregation's building in Ellicott City, west of Baltimore.

Middle Pennsylvania: The Koontz congregation (New Enterprise, Pa.) and the Center for Congregational Ministry co-sponsored a spiritual renewal retreat for parents Feb. 28 in Duncansville, led by Koontz pastor Mike Benner.

Missouri/Arkansas: The district conference moves to a new month and a new site this year, scheduled for July 23-25 at Southwest Baptist University. The district had been meeting on the Lake of the Ozarks in September for many years.

Northern Indiana: The Camp Creek congregation in Etna Green held its

first Camp Creek Run for the Lung. The Camp Creek youth and local businesses and individuals sponsored the event in conjunction with the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation. The 23 walkers and runners raised \$1,100.

Northern Ohio: General secretary Stan Noffsinger will be part of district clergy meetings March 23-25 at three locations through the district, plus a pair of evening worship services.

Northern Plains: The district board travels to the far north every three years, holding one of its regular board meetings in the Montana-North Dakota region of the district. This year's trip will be April 15-18.

Oregon/Washington: The district is planning a mission trip/workcamp to Tijuana, Mexico, in August, in cooperation with Brethren-related organization Compañeros en Ministerio.

Pacific Southwest: The Imperial Heights congregation (Los Angeles) will host a district-wide "Experiencing Worship" event April 16-17 to share resources related to worship, spiritual formation, and evangelism. It will include several keynote sessions and workshops.

Southern Ohio: The district decided not to hold its School of Christian Living this year due to small attendance and difficulty securing leadership in past years. Alternatives are being explored.

Southern Pennsylvania: The district is undertaking a project to move the vacant Miller's Meeting House of the Lower Cumberland congregation from its current location to Camp Eder, where plans call for it to be used as a camp chapel.

Shenandoah: The district's 12th annual Disaster Response Auction will take place May 14-15 at the Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, Va.

South/Central Indiana: A "Redefining Normal" mini-conference will be held



The Gettysburg (Pa.) congregation had a successful "CAN" campaign this past fall to aid Church of the Brethren-supported ministries in Honduras. The goal was nearly \$5,000 to buy apple trees, banana plants, hens, and roosters, but the final tally came in at more than \$7,000. Witness commission chair Charles Bennett said the congregation was "humbly proud" of the results. Above, children from the congregation display the updated total during the campaign.

April 23-24 at the Markle (Ind.) congregation. It is being sponsored by the two Indiana districts and the denomination's Small Membership/Rural Church Leadership Team. Dr. Gary Newton will be keynote speaker.

Southeastern: The theme for the 2004 district conference is "Making Disciples," from Matt. 28:19. Tim Coulthard is serving as moderator this year.

Southern Plains: Joan Lowry is serving as interim district administrative secretary this year while the district board considers a new board structure and future staffing needs.

Virgina: District congregations have contributed more than \$26,000 toward Hurricane Isabel relief efforts, topping the goal of \$25,000. The strong hurricane hit the region last fall.

Western Pennsylvania: District congregations are being invited into a "Prayer Challenge" for 2004, intentionally spending more time in prayer for the work of Christ and the church.

Western Plains: Irven Stern, recently returned to the district after an interim pastorate in California, has been called to fill in as district moderator for this year after Martin Gauby resigned, citing an upcoming move to Idaho.

West Marva: Samuel Cassell will be the speaker for this spring's revival services at the Shiloh congregation (Kasson, W.Va.) April 8-11. The event will also include two Bible study sessions.

Nevin Dulabaum



Eugene Lichy and Sarah Ullom-Minnich look together as Lichy searches for himself in a photo of the attendees of the 1943 Annual Conference, held at McPherson Church of the Brethren.

BBT honors McPherson on pension anniversary

The choice of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren as host for Brethren Benefit Trust's fall board meeting this past November was a timely one. Sixty years earlier the 1943 Annual Conference, meeting in the same location, approved the creation of the Brethren Pension Plan.

Following the board meeting, several BBT board members and staff remained to worship with the McPherson congregation on Nov. 23. As a gesture of their appreciation to the congregation, and in culmination of the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the Pension Plan, BBT president Wil Nolen and board chair Dick Pogue presented the church with a framed photo of those gathered for the 1943 Conference in the McPherson church sanctuary.

"Scores of people have looked at the photo since we received it," co-pastor Chris Whitacre says. "We have it on display in the Good Shepherd Room, where we see conversations taking place as people recognize someone in the picture." Whitacre says even the church sanctuary "is relatively unchanged since the photo was taken."

Nolen said it was "fitting" for the board to meet in McPherson during the anniversary year.

"Our heartfelt appreciation goes out to the McPherson congregation for its hospitality during our meetings," Nolen said, "and for the long-term significance the church has had in the life of the Pension Plan." —Nancy Miner

Joan Huston

Members of Mt. Wilson Church of the Brethren's youth group spent a sunny fall day picking up fallen corn in the field of one of the congregation's members. The project benefited CROP.



Mt. Wilson youth are "all ears" in responding to corn challenge

Last October, David Radcliff (former Brethren Witness director, now director of New Community Project) spoke at Mt. Wilson Church of the Brethren, Lebanon, Pa. During the Sunday school period he showed some slides, including one of North Koreans gleaning cornfields for stalks and husks that they could eat.

A farmer in the congregation, Stan Bucher, ruefully commented about the corn lying in his own field after it had been downed by Hurricane Isabel. He said whole ears of corn were on the ground, but it was "not worth" the salvaging effort.

About 20 junior and senior high youth and their leaders responded by organizing a party to pick up the corn—about half a ton in all—which they "sold" back to Bucher for a contribution to Church World Service's CROP program.

—Joan Huston



Judy Funkhouser and Ellen Messick of the Midland congregation wade through a sea of donated boxes to find one just the right size for a gift they were wrapping.

Midland wraps up a gift for the community

Midland (Va.) Church of the Brethren gave its local community a gift for Christmas—150 beautifully wrapped gifts, to be exact.

Twelve members of the congregation donated their time, wrapping paper, boxes, bows, nametags, and gift-wrapping expertise free of charge at the annual Christmas Craft Fair held at nearby Grace Miller Elementary School in Bealeton, Va.

The free gift-wrapping idea was the brainchild of Ellen Messick, who said she always thought it would be great to sponsor free gift wrapping during the Christmas holidays, to remind weary shoppers of the real spirit of giving and to offer them a warm smile. Her son, Jake, attends the elementary school, and when Messick heard about the craft fair the spark of her idea was reignited. It fit perfectly into the congregation's desire to do more servant evangelism in its community.

Most customers at the gift-wrapping booth were children. Many of the adults with them had a hard time believing they could get something for nothing, initially standing at a distance from the booth and

searching for a gift-wrapping cost, or walking by two or three times and finally coming in to verify that not even a donation was expected.

Customers brought their gifts to the booth, left their name and a description of the gift, and returned 10 to 20 minutes later to pick up their gifts boxed and wrapped with decorative bows added. Each customer also received a brochure from the church, including information on its mission, small-group ministries, location, and Sunday schedule.

This was the first year for Midland's participation in the fair, and they've already had their booth fee refunded by the school and been invited back next year.—**Regina Bryan**

REMEMBERED Wendell Flory

Wendell P. Flory, who served as a Church of the Brethren missionary in China and India in the 1940s and '50s, died Dec. 14 in Bridgewater, Va. He was 83.

Flory was himself the son of Brethren missionaries and was born in China. He returned to the country in 1946, served there through 1949, then went to India from 1952 to 1958. He also served as a pastor of several congregations in Maryland and Virginia.

He was well-studied, earning a bachelor's degree from Bridgewater College in 1940, master's degrees from Bethany Theological Seminary and Yale University, and a D.Min. from Bethany. He was director of church relations for Bridgewater in the 1980s after serving three years on the college's board of trustees.

Flory served on the Church of the Brethren General Board from 1990 to 1995 and recently served on a General Board study committee exploring relationships with Brethren groups in India. The committee's recommendation was affirmed by Annual Conference last summer.

He and his wife, Marie, had four children. One of them, Mary Jo Flory-Steyr, is current director of Ministry for the Church of the Brethren General Board.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) students **Crystal Waggy** of Goshen, Ind.; **Wendy Matheny** of Peoria, Ill.; and **Jeremy Van Deman** of Indianapolis received fellowships from the Fund for Theological Education to support their consideration of ministry as a career. Waggy and Matheny are members of the Church of the Brethren. Each of the three received a \$1,500 award for education expenses; they are among 70 fellows named nationwide.

- Geiger Church of the Brethren, Friedens, Pa., on Oct. 26 celebrated **pastor Gerald Deffenbaugh's** 50 years in ministry. The event included special music, meditations on Deffenbaugh's ministry by Western Pennsylvania District executive Ron Beachley and others, and a covered dish meal. A \$250 donation was made to Somerset Area Van Ministries in Deffenbaugh's honor.

- The **Lebanon Valley Brethren Home**, Palmyra, Pa., is celebrating its 25th anniversary throughout this year. Festivities began Feb. 21, the anniversary date of the home, with two Living History presentations. The home's new president, Jeffrey Shireman, was introduced to the home and the community at the presentations.

- **Enos Heisey**, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor now living at Lebanon Valley Brethren Home, this fall received a 2003 Lifetime Achievement Award from People to People International. Heisey served three decades on the organization's board of trustees.

- **Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministries Center**, Sharpsburg, Md., is making progress in retiring a large debt left from the camp's startup a decade and a half ago. About \$193,000 of the debt was retired from January to October 2003, with a projected remaining balance of \$625,000 by year's end.

- **Camp Eder**, Fairfield, Pa., marked the 25th anniversary of its Fall Festival in October, serving more than 750 meals of pit-roasted pig and turkey and raising more than \$16,000 in an auction.

- The Carroll County (Md.) Chamber of Commerce on Nov. 25 honored the **Brethren Service Center**, located in New Windsor, with a Hats Off award for 60 years of service to the world. The chamber celebrates special milestones of its members each year at an awards ceremony. Kathleen Campanella accepted the award on behalf of the employees and volunteers at the center.



From the moderator: Unity in Jesus Christ

More than half of all Church of the Brethren district conference themes in 2003 related to unity. Harriet Finney's sermon at Annual Conference also called us to work at true unity in Jesus' name.



CHRIS BOWMAN,
2004 Moderator

Reflecting on this, we might rightly wonder: Is unity something Brethren possess, or is unity something we hope for? In all these district conferences is our little family of faith celebrating our existing unity, or are we longing for a unity we do not yet have?

Sometimes unity seems in short supply. One can point to Conference decisions with votes split almost evenly for and against. Or we can hear Brethren speaking passionately

from very different and divided perspectives. It is easy to assume that any Brethren talk about unity is merely a yearning for that which we have not yet achieved.

At other times, in spite of language to the contrary, we feel a spiritual tie that binds us together. We use the metaphor of family, calling each other brother or sister, in order to remind ourselves that we are Blood relatives. In this light, our conversation about unity is more of a celebration of the community we have.

In the Bible we find the Greek word for unity, *henotes*, used in only two places in the entire New Testament. Both of these are in the fourth chapter of

destroys the unity of the Spirit squanders the precious gift of unity for which Jesus prayed and which God has graciously given.

The passage in Ephesians continues, however, to say that the gifts Christ gives are intended, "to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, *until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God*, to maturity, to the full stature of Christ" (4:12-13).

This second unity, the "unity of the faith and knowledge," is not something we already have. It is something we are to be building in the body. We are not expected to have already achieved unity of truth and light, faith and knowledge. Our dis-unity is not necessarily a failure. It is, however, a clear sign that we have not achieved the full truth and light of Christ.

Fortunately, the very gifts of ministry Christ has given us are helping move us toward that glorious day when we have fully matured in faith and have achieved the full stature of Christ. In building this unity of faith and knowledge we long for, says Ephesians, we dare not abandon the unity of Spirit we have already been given. One cannot pursue unity with tools that destroy the unity of the Spirit in the process.

Along a similar line, Eugene Peterson emphasizes that we cannot come to the truth and the light in Jesus without adopting the way of Jesus (John 14:6). Peterson writes, "It has always been more difficult to come to terms with Jesus as the way than with Jesus as the truth, more difficult to realize the ways our thinking and behavior get fused into a life of relational love and adoration with neighbor and God, God and neighbor" (Christian Century, Nov. 29, 2003).

This merging of "what" and "how" we are building in the body of Christ in the Church of the Brethren can be found in our district conference themes. We are pointing to Ephesians 4 and the confession that "there is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." The gift we have been given and the gift we long for are bound together in this one, single-minded passage calling the church in Ephesus to grow up into Christ.

It should be noted that when we move to the Old Testament, the word "unity" pops up only once: (Psalm 133:1 KJV) "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" 

Chris Bowman is the 2004 Annual Conference moderator. He is pastor of Martinsburg (Pa.) Memorial Church of the Brethren.

"One cannot pursue unity with tools that destroy the unity of the Spirit in the process."

Ephesians. Here we see that both the "here-and-now unity" and the "not-yet-achieved unity" are knit together in the very same passage.

The passage begins by emphasizing that we are to maintain the "unity of the Spirit" in the bond of peace.

"I therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, *making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (4:1-3).

Reading this we are reminded that the unity of the Spirit is something we have *already been given*. It is something we already have. We are not charged to create, capture, or cultivate this unity; we are commanded to maintain it. Unity is something God has already provided.

Anything that—intentionally or unintentionally—

QUOTEWORTHY

"But I remember a commandment, 'Thou shall not kill.' How much is that soldier's life worth, And whatever happened to peace on earth."

from a new song by country singer Willie Nelson,
"Whatever Happened to Peace on Earth."

"The most important act of peacemaking? Your next one. Few of us will ever be called on to do great things, but all of us can do small things in a great way."

Journalist/peace educator Colman McCarthy, in an interview with *Hope* magazine (quoted in *Context* by Martin Marty)

"Jesus was a great communicator, and many people didn't understand....God's call to us is to communicate difficult things."

Committee on Interchurch Relations member Bob Johansen, speaking to the Church of the Brethren General Board

"If we want to grow faithful disciples, we must pay attention to what we grow them in."

Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden, on the need for a new denominational children's curriculum

"The more districts I go to, the more I like being Brethren."

Annual Conference moderator Chris Bowman, speaking about his visits around the denomination this year

"It's just really repulsive to me. I think there could be a substantial movement against it, if someone would organize it."

Amish expert and Elizabethtown (Pa.) College faculty member Donald Kraybill, quoted in *Mennonite Weekly Review* on UPN's planned reality show "Amish in the City"

"Let's get into a little religion here. Don't you think Jerry Falwell reminds you a lot more of the Pharisees than he does of the teachings of Jesus? And don't you think this campaign ought to be about evicting the money changers from the temple?"

Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean, speaking to supporters in Iowa. He was quoted by *The Boston Globe*. (RNS)

"We have great opportunities to do wonderful things for the people of God."

new National Council of Churches president Thomas L. Hoyt Jr., speaking at his installation service

CULTUREWATCH

• **The National Study of Youth and Religion** found that of US teens ages 13 to 17 who have access to the Internet, three times more report using the Internet for religious purposes than for pornography. Forty percent of those teens who say that religious faith is extremely important to them report using the Internet to visit religious web sites a few times each month or more often.

19 percent had neither a person nor a machine to answer calls. The Barna Research Group, based in Ventura, Calif., called each randomly selected Protestant church in the study at least five times during business hours over the course of two weeks. Calls to 16 percent of the churches reached an answering machine each time. The telephone study had a margin of error of plus or minus 2 percentage points.

• According to a recent Harris Interactive Poll reported in *USA Today*, religious service attendance is highest in the Midwest. Forty-five percent of Midwesterners said they regularly attend religious services, versus 40 percent in the South, 30 percent in the Northeast, and 27 percent in the West.

• Of 3,400 Protestant churches phoned nationwide during December, a human being could not be reached at 55 percent, and

• Fifty percent of Americans believe that giving one's time to charity is more important than giving money, a poll by Thrivent Financial for Lutherans has indicated. Twenty-two percent of those surveyed said money is the more important gift to charitable causes and 23 percent said time and money had equal importance. The survey's results are based on telephone interviews with a nationwide sample of 1,000 adults by Harris Interactive. (RNS)

Believers

Ideas and trends in faith and values

Religion and Public Policy

Most Americans think religious leaders should not try to influence government policy on abortion, but are more divided on issues such as school prayer and the death penalty, a Gallup Poll shows.



In a poll of 1,000 U.S. adults, 60 percent said religious leaders should not attempt to influence government policy on abortion, compared to 38 percent who think they should.

Americans' view of religious leaders' role in influencing government policy

On abortion

Should be involved 38%
Should not 60%

On the death penalty

Should be involved 45%
Should not 52%

On prayer in schools

Should be involved 53%
Should not 46%

Views of weekly churchgoers

On abortion

Should be involved 51%
Should not 47%

On the death penalty

Should be involved 53%
Should not 41%

On prayer in schools

Should be involved 67%
Should not 32%

Source: The Gallup Organization

By Christina Denny and Monica Seaberry
© 2003 Religion News Service

Congregational morale and church growth

Are people excited

By Steve Clapp and Kristen Leverton Helbert

During the past month, we've heard the following comments made by three Church of the Brethren members:

- "I would invite people to come to church, but I just don't feel that good about what happens on Sunday morning. The sermons don't do much for me, and our choir is too small. We sometimes

When members are excited about what is happening in their church and overall morale in the congregation is high, it becomes much easier to achieve significant church growth.

spend 20 minutes on joys and concerns with people telling me more than I wanted to know about their hemorrhoids and their travel plans."

- "I'm not willing to serve on our board again. We meet the definition of insanity: we keep repeating the same

behaviors, hoping for a different result. Change is the enemy for us."

- "I'm not optimistic about the future for our church. I can't even get my own young adult children to participate."

The people who made those comments are in three different congregations in different parts of the country. All three churches have been experiencing

exciting, and the pastor knows just what to say to touch my life."

- "People in my church have really changed in the past five years in their warmth and acceptance of new people. Visitors keep talking about how welcome they feel, and some of our new members are our most enthusiastic evangelists."

- "I think our church has learned how to accent the most positive features of our heritage. Our peace emphasis, our involvement with Heifer Project, and our ability to accept people who hold differing opinions make us very attractive to a lot of those looking for a church home."

The above comments come from three other congregations, and those congregations are all growing! When members are excited about what is happening in their church and overall morale in the congregation is high, it becomes much easier to achieve significant church growth. When people are unenthused about what is happening in their church, they are far less likely to invite their friends or to have the energy to engage in outreach efforts.

ing membership decline for at least 15 years. Contrast those observations with the following enthusiastic declarations from three other Church of the Brethren members:

- "I can't wait to get to church on Sunday morning. Worship is always



about your church's future?

Congregational studies

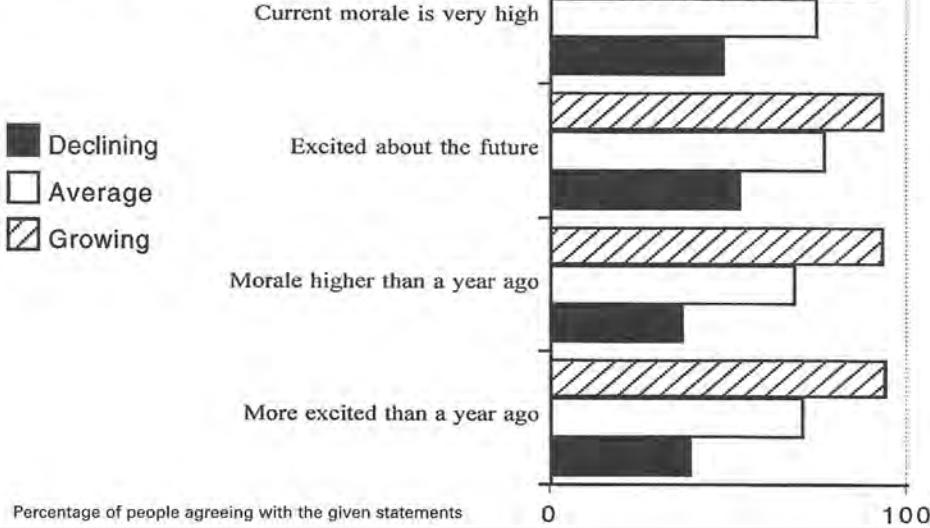
In studies of almost 1,500 congregations in North America, New Life Ministries and Christian Community have asked more than 275,000 active members about

their view of church morale and about their own enthusiasm for the church's future. Those studies include more than 100 congregations and more than 10,000 members from the Church of the Brethren.

There are significant differences in response when one looks at churches with declining memberships and churches with growing memberships in comparison to North American averages, as the following chart shows. These differences hold true across geographic and denominational lines.

In churches that are growing, more than 90 percent of the active members agree that they are excited about their church's future, that the morale of the congregation as a whole is high, and that they feel more excited about the church than they did a year ago. Of course, it's easier to maintain high morale in a church that is growing than in one that is declining.

Church Morale



Congregational self-esteem

It's easy for any of us to become focused on the negative rather than the positive. When that happens for most of the congregation, then low morale and energy are often the result. Congregations, like individuals, develop images that can be very powerful.

The church needs to set specific, attainable, measurable goals and work for their completion. Success nurtures more success. Rather than taking on all the weaknesses identified for a congregation, identify specific, positive changes that can be made.

People who are involved in congregations with high self-esteem tend to be more enthusiastic in reaching out to friends, and to have more energy for the work of the church. People in congregations with low self-esteem have lower energy and do not always feel comfortable inviting people to share in church events. It's likely that low congregational self-esteem is one of the barriers to church growth or vitality if several of the following are true in a congregation:

- A large number of members are quick to respond to most suggestions for innovation or improvement by saying things like: "That won't work here" or "People won't support that."
- People continue to talk positively about a pastor of 15 or more years ago as though that individual were the standard for measuring everything today.
- Most of the effort and money of the church goes to institutional maintenance rather than to outreach or mission.
- Problems with finances are a frequent topic of discussion, and the solution to most financial problems is to cut spending rather than find a way to generate more income.

- One or two very dominating leaders are permitted to exercise an excessive amount of control over decisions that are made.
- When people are heard talking about their church to those outside the congregation, the comments are likely to be of a negative, disappointed, or powerless nature.
- Relatively little is done to celebrate the positive things that happen in the life of the church.
- The church's physical facilities have been permitted to deteriorate and have an overall feel of neglect.
- Many members feel there are cliques or exclusive groups that make one feel excluded.

Raising congregational self-esteem

1. The pastor and other key leaders must become aware that the congregation is suffering from low self-esteem. A checklist like the one just shared can help create that awareness. Without the knowledge that low congregational self-esteem is presenting a barrier to church growth, it's easy for leaders to attempt the implementation of strategies that will actually further decrease the church's self-esteem. Too much emphasis on the problems of

the church will further depress people and make them even less enthusiastic about reaching out to others.

2. The pastor, key lay leadership, and (sometimes) a consultant from outside the congregation need to help in the process of a realistic assessment of the church—with an emphasis on strengths. The problems in the church certainly need to be identified, but the same process that identifies the weaknesses also needs to identify the strengths of the congregation. An outside consultant is not always necessary for that task, but such a person can often speed up the process, and the enthusiasm of that individual may help the church's enthusiasm. The consultant could be a person who specializes in such work for his or her living, a caring member of denominational staff, or a neighboring pastor.

3. Though the pastor can't be expected to turn the church around alone, a proactive stance and a positive style by the pastor can have significant impact. The pastor can exercise a positive ministry of encouragement and also can help the congregation have realistic expectations.



Debbie Notsinger

There is a general tendency in churches to overestimate the amount of change that can be accomplished in a single year and to underestimate the amount of change that can take place in five years. The pastor can help people learn to emphasize the strengths of the congregation rather than its weaknesses.

4. The initiation of a spiritual gifts program can bring improved self-esteem and enthusiasm to individuals and to the church as a whole. A good spiritual gifts program helps people more clearly identify the gifts they have been given and the ways those may be used in the life of the church. This can be a very energizing process for a congregation. There are many excellent spiritual gifts assessment tools, including one in the New Life Ministries publication *Preaching, Planning, and Plumbing*, which is available from Brethren Press (800-441-3712).

5. The church needs to set specific, attainable, measurable goals and work for their completion. Success nurtures more success. Rather than taking on all the weaknesses identified for a congregation,

identify specific, positive changes that can be made—either correcting weaknesses or building on strengths. Congregational Life Teams and district staff can give help in this area of need.

6. Be sure that the perception of cliques or exclusive groups isn't proving a barrier to healthy congregational morale. In the congregational studies referred to earlier, the frequent perception of members that there are exclusive groups or cliques that make one feel unwelcome almost always correlated with a declining membership. Unfortunately, that study shows that Church of the Brethren congregations are more likely than most to have such a problem. Many of our churches are very family-centered with many members who are related to one another and who have been in the same congregation for a long period of time. The close bonds that exist among these people can be a great source of strength and caring for the congregation, but those bonds can also cause newer members and visitors to feel excluded. We need to be sure our social networks are truly open to newer people in the church. When inviting people to go out for

Sunday brunch, include new people as well as old friends.

A rich heritage and a positive future

One of the authors of this article grew up in the Church of the Brethren. The other came to the denomination from the United Methodist Church. Both strongly affirm the wonderful heritage of the Church of the Brethren and the tremendous caring for one another that is so typical of its congregations.

While there are many changes that some of our churches need to make in order to move into a positive future, strong congregational morale is largely produced by a healthy awareness of our strengths. Excitement about our church and our denomination enriches our own lives and makes us more likely to reach out to others. **W**

Kristen Leverton Helbert grew up in Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind., which is the present church home for Steve Clapp. Helbert is director of New Life Ministries, an Anabaptist agency focused on church vitality. Clapp is on the board of New Life Ministries, the president of Christian Community, and author or coauthor of more than 30 books on congregational life.

Dear Decade to Overcome Violence

Congregations share

Compiled by Rachel Peterson

T

He Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) is an effort, arising in all parts of the globe, in which local congregations and entire denominations are finding creative ways to engage the issues of violence that surround us every day. Some are responding to domestic violence, some to immigration issues, some to conscription and the wars and rumors of wars that face us. What issues of violence are your congregations facing?

Congregations that join the DOV effort in the Church of the Brethren are choosing to consciously engage violence in its current forms. These

congregations will receive assistance and support from DOV staff as they move forward with goals based on the conditions they face. Congregations that join the Church of the Brethren DOV effort do not need to have a particular agenda. If a congregation is already engaging local and global violence with the Good News, then we help them do it more boldly. If a congregation is struggling to discern God's call through the "Living Peace Church" resolution passed at Annual Conference, joining DOV is one way to answer that call.

The following letters are reports written from local congregations about the ways DOV has taken shape in their congregations or districts. May they inspire you, as well as provide ideas for action.

Taking part in the Decade involves understanding the importance of relationships within the local community and around the world. Because DOV was conceived by the World Council of Churches, participating congregations also join the larger, global Christian community. They know they are moving in solidarity with many for the same objective: stemming the tides of violence in our world by countering it with Christ's commandment to love. Violence may still exist in 2010, at the end of the Decade to Overcome Violence, but maybe—if we work hard toward overcoming the violence within and nearest to ourselves—we will see the day when what we hope for becomes possible.

In Christ's love and peace,

Rachel Peterson, DOV coordinator, New Windsor, Md.

Matt Guynn, On Earth Peace staff, Richmond, Ind.

Phil Jones, director of Brethren Witness/Washington Office, Washington, D.C.

2001-2010



DECADE TO OVERCOME VIOLENCE

Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren

Dear DOV,

We have worked in partnership with Casa de Esperanza for several years, educating the community about the issues of domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. It has been a very meaningful and productive experience for our congregation and for the staff at Casa. The executive director of Casa even became a member of our congregation about a year ago. Our congregation has become known as a place where those who are hurting can come and be accepted and loved into healing.

After attending a candlelight vigil for the survivors and victims of domestic violence, where there were displayed quite a few T-shirts decorated by the victims and survivors—adult women and children—I decided



ercome Violence...

their stories of building peace

to bring the visual home to our congregation. Each shirt told the story of rape, beatings, incest, or other forms of violence.

We borrowed several dozen of the T-shirts from Casa. One Saturday afternoon, Anne Palmer (the congregation's DOV congregational organizer) and I met at the church and hung the T-shirts on clothesline all around the sanctuary. They were there when folks arrived for worship the next morning. Some folks walked around, reading the shirts before worship began. My sermon focused on the reality of domestic violence and called attention to the T-shirts, stating that the white ones were in memory of a woman or child who died as a result of domestic violence. All of the shirts were quite graphic. I encouraged members to take time after worship to read the shirt and envision and pray for the women and children represented by them.

Many did. Grown men had tears running down their faces—some had to walk away because it was too much. I think it was a powerful way to make the issue of domestic violence real and tangible. It honored those victims and survivors who had told their story in art and words.

I hope there is something here that is helpful to you in understanding some of the ways the Live Oak congregation is trying to take some small but positive steps toward overcoming the violence in our community.

God's blessing to you as you continue to work with the Decade to Overcome Violence!

—Barbara Ober, pastor

Live Oak pastor Barbara Ober is surrounded by T-shirts created by victims and survivors of domestic violence as she preaches on the subject.

Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Decade Workers,

Our congregation's previous DOV congregational organizer, Mike Collins (currently in Brethren Volunteer Service), had wanted to start a DOV-inspired peace and justice group in the church for over a year. He spoke to me several times about it, and Mike can be very persistent. I agreed to work with him to achieve his dream. We held our first meeting in September 2002, with about 10 people attending.

I think our group, the Peace Action Team at the Palmyra Church of the Brethren, has helped our pastors to increase awareness of peace and justice issues among our members. Our three-part "Understanding Palestine" series, featuring a film, discussion, and talks by Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) members Art Gish and Rick Polhamus, drew large crowds and taught us more about life today amid war in the Middle East. Other successful ventures have been sending health kits to Iraqi children, honoring peacemakers (both Brethren and non-Brethren) periodically during worship, and submitting informative articles to our monthly church newsletter, "The Envoy." We will soon establish a "Peace Place" in our church, where magazines, newsletters, and other information on peace and justice concerns will be available for people to take and read.

Steve Bortner, congregational DOV organizer

Olympic View Community Church of the Brethren, Seattle, Wash.

Greetings,

A few weekends ago, we had a Holiday Gifts Bazaar with about 20 booths, half from the church and half from the community. Contributions for booth space went to the local food bank. One of the booths was

"It (DOV) helps our churches to fulfill our peace witness."

Phil King, district DOV organizer for Western Pennsylvania District

for SERRV and Fair Trade products. One of the booths was also run by a representative of SNOW—"Sound Non-violent Opposition to War," one of the Seattle-area organizations working for peace. An artist is producing beautiful greeting cards with the "Peace" message and is donating them to be sold in support of SNOW efforts. We have been a host to the neighborhood meetings of SNOW as well.

Interestingly, it is a woman from our congregation who, with her husband, designed and distributed the first couple thousand "No Iraq War" signs that have ended up being used all across the country and in some other countries.

This congregation is involved in various programs, including supporting the Northaven Retirement Apartments, a nonprofit, affordable retirement apartment complex, and providing the use of its building for various community events, like the Holiday Gifts Bazaar mentioned above. It is also sponsoring a youth mission trip to Tijuana, Mexico, next August, and partnered with the Salvation Army Giving Tree program to provide toys, clothing, and other items for children for the Christmas season.

Our involvement in these and other things are partly in response to our desire to promote DOV. Or is it that DOV dovetails with what we want to be about in any case?

Keep up the good work,

—John Braun, pastor and DOV congregational representative

Rachel Peterson



On Earth Peace co-director Barb Sayler, left, converses with Rebekah Seilhamer and Sarah Markey at December's Decade to Overcome Violence training event in New Windsor.

Presentations by noted peace workers Bernard Lafayette Jr. and David Jehnsen highlighted the event, which was coordinated by Brethren Volunteer Service worker Rachel Peterson along with On Earth Peace and General Board staff. Worship resources were provided by Jeff Carter, pastor at Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, and David Radcliff of the New Community Project. The event also included shared meals, shared stories, and a shared dialog about how the DOV program could best be structured in the Church of the Brethren.

On Earth Peace and the General Board are also working closely together to answer the call from the 2003 Annual Conference to be a "Living Peace Church" by deepening existing programs, developing new efforts, and reaching out to other agencies within the church. Beginning in April 2004, a quarterly resource called "Coming to Life: Worship Resources for the Living Peace Church" will be distributed to all congregations. It will be available in hard copy and online.

For more information on the Decade, contact Rachel Peterson at 410-635-8709 or dov_gb@brethren.org, or view the website at www.brethren.org/dov.



Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Dear Church,

"At Beacon Heights, we believe Jesus Christ calls and empowers us to be servants in our community and world. We want to share in word and deed the Good News of God's love and care for all people." —from the church's website.

Beacon Heights has "Peace Initiatives," which is a program of the church that informs individuals about opportunities for peacemaking. There is a separate newsletter and e-mail list highlighting these initiatives, as well as a page on the website.

The church set a goal to explore "ways to address violence in Ft. Wayne." One way that we have worked at this goal has been to encourage diversity in a variety of ways. The church has had a partner relationship with the Mision Cristiana Church in Managua, Nicaragua. Beacon Heights also dedicates one-third of its budget to local, as well as global, outreach projects. There is even a preschool program that "encour-

A workshop for organizing district and congregational representatives for the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), titled "Overcome Evil with Good," drew 48 participants to New Windsor, Md., Dec. 5-7. This second DOV training event for Brethren was sponsored by the General Board's Witness/Washington Office, On Earth Peace (OEP), Bethany Theological Seminary, and the H.C. Gemmer Christian Foundation.

Olympic View pastor John Braun shares stories with children of his congregation.

ages participation of families from a variety of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds."

One event typifies the spirit of multi-culturalism at Beacon Heights. This past November, the church hosted an Eid and Thanksgiving event for Afghan refugee families at the church (Eid is the Muslim celebration at the end of Ramadan). Members were invited to bring a dish, and the Afghan families made a traditional feast. I organized the event, mainly because of my work with the refugees, as well as the fact that I had lived in Afghanistan during my time in the Peace Corps. The church members and the Afghan families shared food as well as their humanity with one another. It was a moving experience for all of us. I shared the power of it at the Decade to Overcome Violence Training Event in New Windsor, Md., in December.

—Terry Dougherty, DOV congregational organizer

Southeastern District

Hello All,

DOV activities for us have included a DOV workshop at a district youth retreat, a visitor from the Church of the Brethren Iraq delegation who came to talk to us before the war began, a violent toy turn-in, a DOV young adult retreat, participation in community peace vigils, DOV Sundays, district conference reports and insight sessions, and one congregation sending over 50 packets of rice to the president before the war urging him to feed our enemies instead of bombing them.

One thing we are planning for the coming year is a project that we have given the working title "Love Around the World." We are encouraging congregations to choose one Sunday per month to focus on a different area of the world. On the given Sunday, we want to provide education and awareness about peace and justice issues in that particular area, as well as to provide an opportunity to take action related to the issues raised. For example, we want to focus on our home community one of these Sundays, and we will probably collect cans for a local food pantry on that day. Also, we hope to invite a guest speaker to talk about the death penalty on another Sunday, and we will look at what actions we as a congregation could take. Other Sundays we will look at areas of the world where current issues might be creating a need for advocacy or relief.

Peace to you,

—Kim Chaffin, district DOV organizer

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Brethren young adults Chris Fitz, left, Doug Chaffin, and Chanda Edwards join an impromptu music session at the 2003 Young Adult Conference.



Young spirit not always

It's not that they don't care.

In a recent study, 80 percent of people in their 20s said their faith is very important in their lives. Nearly 60 percent claimed to have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Three-fourths of the age group told Ventura, Calif.-based Barna Research Group that they prayed during the past seven days.

But in a typical week, just three out of 10 twentysomethings attend church.

Only 30 percent of adults in their 20s donated something to a church during the past year; the same percentage holds for those who have read the Bible during

any given week.

Religious leaders weren't surprised by the statistics.

"I think it's pretty much straight up with what we see here," said the Rev. Scotty Jernigan, pastor of The Crossroads Church at Belforest in Daphne, Ala. "They have not seen where church relates to, and where Christianity relates to, their everyday life."

Bottom line, Jernigan said, is that they're looking for something relevant at church and coming up short.

"One of the trends we're noticing (is) people are looking for something that's

real," said Charlie Granade, singles pastor at Dayspring Baptist Church in Mobile, Ala.

"College students are looking for a worship service where there's nothing fancy," Granade said, adding that his church offers such an experience during its "Unplugged" service on Monday nights. During those services one person may play a guitar, another may lead a devotional, but "the focus is on God," Granade said. "I think people respond to that. It's not about bells and whistles."

If something appears fake to twentysomethings, Granade said, they sense that and leave. "Our whole deal is, let's be real about God," Granade said. "Let's be real about the problems we face."

Jamey Crosson, 24, said he and his peers grew up wanting to be popular and "rule the school." Now, he said, he worries that mind-set is creeping into some churches, and individuals are using worship services to promote themselves. Crosson doesn't like it.

Instead, he said, he's working with Granade to create a worship service at Dayspring Baptist Church where believers can "just meet with the Lord and have him deal with us on an individual basis."

"We want to enter into a house of

Congregations must respond to openness

It would be a tremendous loss if our congregations fail to understand and respond to the deep spiritual hunger of young adults today. This generation is like none other we've seen in recent years in terms of their openness to God. This article is an invitation for us to look at that openness.

A recent Gallup Poll indicated that 80 percent of young adults surveyed said they were interested in growing spiritually. What an opportunity for our churches!

I hope everyone reading this article will ask themselves: How can we develop a congregational climate that is more open to young adults? How can we better reflect God's love to young adults who are searching?

Chris Douglas, director of Youth/Young Adult Ministry, Church of the Brethren General Board

g adults' usual hunger ays fed at church

By Kristen Campbell

prayer," he said. "We want to confess. ... We want to cry out and declare that we need his help. ... We want to be as real before him as possible."

Sally Morganthaler (who spoke at several events at the 2002 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference) addressed such desires in her book *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers Into the Presence of God*.

"Church is a place where we are supposed to be able to meet God, but often we don't meet God there," Morganthaler observed. "Young people want to encounter the 'other' at church, but they are not finding it there. They're finding programs, they're finding games, they're finding cute things to do, but they're not finding an experience with the other they assume is there somewhere in the world."

"But just because they don't find it at church doesn't mean they're going to stop their search. They're going to find it somewhere, and it's the church that is missing out."

Rob Couch, a minister at Christ United Methodist Church in Mobile, concurred that congregations are losing out by the absence of young adults who have a "unique experience of God" and great

enthusiasm.

In the past, Granade said, some congregations may not have made much effort to reach young adults as the group was viewed as relatively non-committal and poor financial contributors.

While religious leaders acknowledged that young adults may be fairly transient or financially strapped, they said twentysomethings shouldn't shy away from getting involved in congregational life.

In fact, leaders said that while many young singles may not be able to be churches' major financial supporters, they're often in a prime position to volunteer their time by serving at a soup kitchen, for example.

Alene Ferguson, 29, said she used to join a group of young adults from Dayspring Baptist Church in serving at 15 Place, a service center for homeless men and women in Mobile.

"It was just wonderful," she said. "We really got to minister to them."

Ferguson said that in looking for a



From left, Gwen Edwards, Alwin Christian, and Mamta Chitnis visit at the 2003 Church of the Brethren Young Adult Conference at Camp Eder. A larger conference for Brethren young adults is planned for June.

church, she wanted to find a friendly community with a singles group that offered fun, social activities as well as opportunities to minister to those in need.

"Most people are going to go out and do something," she said. "You're looking for the friendships and the companionships. ... I can't think of a better place to make friendships." ■

Kristen Campbell writes for Religion News Service.

Czechs and balances

'Prague Consultations' bring together voices from a shared heritage

By Donald F. Durnbaugh

Centuries-old connections have been revived and expanded through a series of high-level ecumenical conferences held in Europe over the past two decades.

Representatives of the Historic Peace Churches that grew out of the "Radical Reformation"—Brethren, Friends, Mennonites, and Hutterian Brethren—have maintained substantial dialog with comparable churches in Europe through the meetings, which began in 1986.

They have especially involved churches from what has been called the "First Reformation," a term coined in the 1950s to designate church bodies whose beginnings predate the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Those groups

include the Waldensians, the Moravians, and several Hussite movements (especially the Evangelical Church of Czech Brethren), all dating from the 12th to the 15th centuries.

To date, seven international conferences have been held in Europe: the first three in Prague; the next two in Geneva; the sixth in Strasbourg, France; and the last, just concluded in late November to early December 2003, again in Prague. In shorthand reference, the series of discussions has been called the "Prague Consultations."

Numerous Church of the Brethren members have participated in the series of conferences, including H. Lamar Gibble, Murray L. Wagner, David B. Eller, Dennis L. Slabaugh, Shantilal Bhagat, Jeffrey A. Bach, Lauree Hersch Meyer, and Donald F. Durnbaugh. Hersch Meyer and Durnbaugh have been the most regular participants. Active Mennonite participants from the United States were the late Marlin E. Miller, Larry Miller, and Walter Sawatsky, and from the Quakers, Hugh Barbour.

The initiative for the series came from a 1984 visit by Mennonites to the Comenius Theological Faculty in Prague (sponsored by the Czech Brethren), as part of their effort to reach out to Christians in Central and Eastern Europe. Several Czech church leaders, severely limited in travel and conversation in Communist-dominated Czechoslovakia, were eager to reach out to Anabaptist churches to test whether they together had "been given a heritage worthy of renewal and ecumenical consideration." The result was the calling of the first consultation, which met in

Prague in January 1986 with 22 participants from seven nations and eight different denominations.

Two presentations describing the history and character of the Hussite/Czech Brethren movement, on one hand, and the Radical Reformation, on the other, sought to trace comparable convictions. In a final statement, participants agreed to move toward a "deeper and more committed fellowship," believing that they had "been called together by our Lord Jesus Christ."

Those meeting in Prague agreed to a second meeting that took place, again in Prague, in June 1987. The focus of discussion was the relationship between eschatology (beliefs about the end times) and social transformation. Rather than considering that the Kingdom of God could only be expected to appear in the next world, those at the consultation affirmed that "God is already at work in history." Eschatological hope impels Christians to join "God's action toward justice, freedom, and peace, knowing that God challenges every status quo." Again, those attending agreed the dialog must continue.

The third meeting, including many of the previous participants, was held in Prague two years later, in June 1989. Using the theme "Christian Faith and Economics," this consultation wrestled with concerns for economic parity and fairness in a world with ever-increasing gaps between the rich and the poor, both between nations and within nations. The discussion became very direct and practical, as conference members committed themselves to urge their churches to accept a radical guideline of not more



Walter Sanderly



Church of the Brethren representative Donald Durnbaugh, left, points out a spot of interest during a tour of Tabor, Czech Republic, during the latest "Prague Consultation."

Prague conference series.

It was not surprising, then, that the next conference (Prague VI, held in Strasbourg in February 2000), while continuing the justification/sanctification discussion, emphasized how dissenting church bodies approached these themes. The conference theme "New Life in Christ" signaled a return to some of the concerns expressed in earlier consultations.

Although some at the Strasbourg meeting asked whether the series of conferences had run its course, members agreed another conference should be held. This took place in late 2003, this time again in Prague. Its theme was "The Significance of Reforming and Prophetic Movements for Church and Society."

Attendance was smaller than at Strasbourg, but discussion was spirited. Participants agreed that discussions, if continued, should have a different format. Importantly, all participants concurred that the series of conferences held from 1986 to 2003 had significant consequences.

As the final communique stated, "The Prague Consultations created for the first time a platform for voices from the First and Radical Reformation traditions to be heard within the symphony of ecumenical conversation." Its result was an enriched "vision of Christian unity, expressed in academic reflection, shared testimonies from separate histories, spiritual fellowship, and deepened friendship." ■

Donald F. Durnbaugh is a noted historian and former Bethany Theological Seminary faculty member. He currently serves as archivist at Juniata College and lives in James Creek, Pa.

than a 1 to 3 differential in incomes after taxes between the poorest and the richest. Members assented once more to keep the conferences going, although the fourth meeting was not held until November 1994, when a different course was taken.

The venue changed from Prague to Geneva, largely because one of the main promoters of the discussions, professor Milan Opocenský of the Comenius faculty, had in the meantime been called as general secretary of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, with his office in Switzerland. Another change was a broadening of the range of participants to include highly placed theologians from the Lutheran and Reformed faiths. From the beginning of the Prague conversations, participants were eager to bring their shared concerns to the broader ecumenical community.

Konrad Raiser, then general secretary of the World Council of Churches, was

active in this consultation. The Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity (Rome) sent an observer, and Baptists and Methodists also took part. This time the focus was on the Sermon on the Mount, to discuss how varied readings of this primary biblical document affected ethical decisions.

The next conference was called "Prague V," although the meeting was again held in Geneva, in February 1998. It was sponsored by the Mennonite World Conference, the Lutheran World Federation, and the World Alliance of Reformed Churches. The theme shifted to the theological doctrines of justification and sanctification—issues then being debated both between Lutherans and Reformed, and between Lutherans and Catholics. Members of the Historic Peace Churches and representatives from Africa and Asia felt that this theme shifted discussions away from the main focus of the

The most recent "Prague Consultation" took place in late November and early December 2003, back in Prague. Church of the Brethren member Donald F. Durnbaugh was among those attending, and made a presentation on "The Witness of the Historic Peace Churches." Durnbaugh is also serving on a Continuation Committee to plan future gatherings for the group.

Brethren Service Center aids relief for Iran earthquake

Service Ministries staff at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., in early January packed and shipped a container-load of medicines, medical supplies, and health kits to survivors of a massive earthquake in Bam, Iran. The emergency shipment was airlifted to arrive in Iran Jan. 9.

Brethren Service Center executive director Roy Winter said Service Ministries staff worked with partners Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA) and Church World Service (CWS) to facilitate the shipment, which included 75 IMA Medicine Boxes, 25 IMA/Bristol-Myers Squibb Disaster Medicine Boxes, and about 8,000 CWS Health Kits. The 100 IMA boxes alone are valued at \$550,000.

"Whenever there is great tragedy, I always have a moment of profound sadness," Winter said. "While this lingers, I also find myself experiencing a sense of awe at the willingness of people to respond so very quickly to human need. When we work together, it is amazing what is accomplished." The General Board aided the response with a \$35,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant.

The shipment launches a long-range response commitment for CWS, which announced a \$500,000 appeal for survivors of the devastating Dec. 26 earthquake, estimated to have killed as many as 60,000 people. About 70 percent of the houses in Bam were destroyed by the 6.6-magnitude quake, Iranian State Television reported. CWS is responding to a direct request from the Iranian Red Crescent through the Middle East Council of Churches.

"Medical and hygiene supplies are vitally needed now by the thousands of survivors still struggling

General Board Service Ministries employee Randy Koontz uses the Brethren Service Center lift in January to help rush an aid shipment to a devastated part of Iran.

Chris Herlinger/CWS



Church World Service Emergency Response Program director Rick Augsburger speaks with Middle East Council of Churches staff member Hamlet Sarkissians, right, and Ali Rahimi of the Iranian Red Crescent at an emergency material storehouse in Bam, Iran.

and unprotected in what is essentially a demolished city," CWS Emergency Response Program director Rick Augsburger said soon after the quake. "We are acting immediately."

Augsburger said complete recovery from the earthquake will take at least five to seven years. This latest emergency response in Iran is part of CWS' longstanding presence in the Middle East, including support to the people of Iraq and Afghanistan.

Kathleen Campanelli



Annual Conference unveils 2004 logo, names preachers

Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee (P&AC) has announced the lineup of preachers and worship leaders for the 2004 Conference, to be held July 3-7 in Charleston, W.Va.

Moderator Christopher Bowman, pastor of Martinsburg (Pa.) Memorial Church of the Brethren, will deliver the message for the opening service Saturday evening, with moderator-elect Jim Hardenbrook, pastor of Nampa (Idaho), serving as worship leader.

Other preachers during the week will be Bethany Theological Seminary faculty member Dena Pence Frantz on Sunday morning; James Washington, pastor of Faith Center Fellowship, Whitehouse, Texas, on Monday; Tim Button-Harrison, co-pastor of the Ivester congregation, Grundy Center, Iowa, on Tuesday; and Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.) Baker Institute director Andrew Murray at the closing service Wednesday morning.

Worship leaders for those services are Nancy Fitzgerald of Nokesville (Va.) Church of the Brethren on Sunday; Sonja

Griffith of First Central Church of the Brethren, Kansas City, Kan., on Monday; Bethany student Jim Buckles on Tuesday; and Paul Roth of the Linville Creek congregation, Broadway, Va., on Wednesday.

Choir director Jesse Hopkins of Bridgewater (Va.) College and music coordinator Scott Duffey of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren were previously announced.

Jonathan Emmons of Rocky Mount, Va., will serve as organist and Robin Mundey of Frederick, Md., as keyboard player. P&AC member Judy Epps of Runnels, Iowa, is worship coordinator this year.

A logo based on the centuries-old Alexander Mack Jr. seal has also been unveiled. Working with moderator Chris Bowman, P&AC member Rosanna Eller McFadden designed the logo featuring the familiar cross, heart, and grape bunches in the center. It is encircled by the words of the theme: "Loving God and Neighbor. Heart, Soul, Mind, Strength."

The logo will appear on the Annual Conference booklet, a banner in the worship and meeting hall in Charleston, and other materials. A downloadable electronic copy of the logo is available at www.brethren.org/download.htm.

Annual Conference Council cares for 2003 action items

The Annual Conference Council met Dec. 8-9 in Elizabethtown, Pa., to address items including the council's response to an unanswered portion of a query sent to Conference from Michigan District, a revised draft of the Annual Conference paper on The Role and Qualifications of Local Church Moderators, next steps toward a revision of the denomination's Manual of Organization and Polity, and items related to preparation for the 2004



Conference in Charleston, W.Va. The council was charged by 2003 Conference delegates with the task of responding to a number of questions raised in a Michigan query titled, "Clarification of Confusion." The request for clarification related to both procedural and theological issues in the denomination's policies for calling and disciplining set-apart ministers.

After considerable discussion relating to each question, the council felt that answers should come from a larger group than the council itself, and that a consultation on ministry issues, involving especially the General Board Office of Ministry and district executives, should occur as soon as possible.

Aware of the Michigan issues and similar concerns throughout the denomination, the council made plans to hold a session at the 2004 Conference in which individuals and groups will have "opportunity to share with the council and fellow Conferencegoers concerns, observations, and suggestions relating to denominational life and ministry." On Earth Peace will help to facilitate the discussion.

As asked by the 2003 Conference, the council assembled a committee of key people to help revise the paper on local church moderators. With the help of this ad-hoc committee, the council revised the paper for consideration by the 2004 Conference. The new paper provides for the moderator to work in whatever structure the congregation has, including the possibility for moderators to be called from beyond the local church. The paper still maintains the traditional requirement for moderators to be members of the Church of the Brethren.

At the invitation of the council, Wayne Miller had been working at revising the 2001 Manual of Organization and Polity, primarily gathering materials for a section that will provide information on the Annual Conference agencies. Miller asked to be relieved of further responsi-

bilities for the revision, so the council asked Conference secretary Fred Swartz to form a committee to help him complete an initial draft of the revision.

The initial draft will be posted on the Annual Conference web page prior to the 2005 Conference, when a new denominational Review and Evaluation Committee is to be called by Conference. A new manual will not be published in hard-copy form until after the next Review and Evaluation Committee has made its report.

The council also received the resignation of council member Sandy Bosselman, who cited unexpected responsibilities at home and work. Annual Conference delegates will be asked to elect another district executive to fill the vacancy on the council.

Mennonite Publishing joins in on new children's curriculum

Brethren Press has secured an important partner as it moves forward with plans to develop a new Anabaptist children's curriculum for use in Sunday school classes and other Christian education programs. Mennonite Publishing Network (formerly Mennonite Publishing House), which represents Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada, has agreed to join the effort as a cooperative publisher. The first joint development meeting was held in November.

Plans call for the new curriculum to be launched in fall 2006. It will succeed the highly successful "Jubilee: God's Good News" curriculum, which has been in use for more than a decade. Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden says the new curriculum will "build on the best of 'Jubilee'" while strengthening the church-home connection and meeting the needs of teachers who often have minimal training and little time to prepare.

With the new commitment from the Mennonites, Brethren Press has been able to extend the contract of curriculum project editor Anna Speicher through the end of 2004. Speicher initially agreed to a two-month contract last fall. Brethren Press continues to work at securing additional funding for the project.

BBT board moves toward new credit union relationship

In a significant move toward the establishment of a Church of the Brethren credit union for all denominational members and their families, the Brethren Benefit Trust board in November approved becoming the sponsor organization of Brethren Employees' Credit Union (BECU).

By approving a comprehensive business plan that outlines the sponsorship role and goals during its Nov. 21-22 meetings in McPherson, Kan., the board also agreed to infuse BECU with \$250,000 of capital to help increase the size of the credit union over the next five years.

BBT's sponsorship role, approved in October by the BECU board, was expected to be ratified in February 2004 by BECU members during the credit union's

annual meeting. This step will increase the partnership relationship between BBT and BECU established in early October when the organizations signed an agreement for BBT to serve as BECU's third-party administrator (TPA). This TPA agreement calls for BBT to assume all credit union staff and office responsibilities beginning April 1.

BBT's sponsorship of the credit union will give the financial organization official Annual Conference status within the denomination, opening the door for expansion of its charter to include all Church of the Brethren members. Dennis Kingery was hired to fill BBT's newly created director of Credit Union Operations position beginning Feb. 15.

The BBT board also adopted the basic structure of a strategic plan to guide the agency's major initiatives within the context of its mission and vision statements

over the next five years. The plan focuses on seven priorities that support the well-being of the Church of the Brethren, its agencies, employees, and members.

In other business:

- As health-care costs continue to rise, Brethren Medical Plan staff said they continue to explore ways to keep insurance premium increases at a minimum. Insurance Plans director Jeff Garber reported that in light of the significant increase in premium Brethren Medical Plan members are receiving for 2004, a restructuring of benefit options may be necessary. One possibility being investigated is offering a health reimbursement arrangement (HRA) in conjunction with a high-deductible option through the Congregational Employee Plan.

- The board approved a lump-sum Supplemental Income for Equitable Annuitants grant of \$131,159 to be distributed among eligible retired lay employees of the General Board.

- The board approved a 2004 expense budget of \$2,625,875 (with a net of \$100,000 in Credit Union TPA revenue and \$20,000 in other revenue). In addition, the board approved \$348,250 for credit union grants and BBT capital expenditures.

The BBT board next meets April 17-18 in Elgin, Ill.

Ecclesiology conversation process moves forward

The cross-denominational group working on a series of "ecclesiology conversations," exploring what it means to be the church, met again Jan. 15-16 at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind. Representatives of Annual Conference and all five of its agencies were present, along with several members of the Council of District Executives—the body that initiated the effort.

Agenda items at the January meeting included sharing input obtained from various groups within the denomination, discussing ways to secure grants to fund the events being planned, and working on plans for a launching event in 2005 or early 2006.

Brethren Press is developing a guide for a study process that will enable groups to wrestle with questions and share stories. The committee expects to test the process in small groups at the launching event, which will be national in scope and will include worship times with some major keynote speakers. A subcommittee is working on details for the event.

After a period of regional events and opportunities for congregational groups and others to give input through the study process, a large-scale culminating event is envisioned for 2007. Organizers hope it will bring together a vision that can bring renewal for the church at all levels.

Walt Wiltschek

Virlina District executive David Shumate, left, shares thoughts with a group planning a series of ecclesiology conversations for the denomination as fellow district executive Mark Flory-Steyr looks on.

Smucker withdraws membership, but pain in Michigan continues

One chapter in the denomination's ongoing painful debate over the homosexuality issue ended recently when Matt Smucker, who made history as the first openly gay man to be ordained in the Church of the Brethren, said he would pursue ordination in the United Church of Christ (UCC). Smucker said he was too "physically drained" by the fight to continue it.

Smucker was ordained by the Skyridge congregation in Kalamazoo, Mich., in June 2002 after an affirmative vote by the Michigan District board. A 2002 Annual Conference decision upheld in 2003, however, said the denomination would "not recognize" the licensing or ordination of any person "known to be engaging in



WORLDWATCH



homosexual practices."

Michigan District conference in August approved a petition affirming the Annual Conference decisions and called for the ordination and licensing of any known homosexuals in the district to be discontinued. Smucker's ordination in the Church of the Brethren was terminated following the decision.

"I don't feel the call to stand in the middle any more," said Smucker, who works at a UCC seminary in Chicago and received dual ordination in the UCC last year. "In this case, it's too personal. It's affected lots of parts of my life in ways I don't want to repeat." Skyridge held a "service of lament and blessing" in November to say their farewells as Smucker moved his membership.

District leaders say the issue has left deep scars in Michigan, which will take a long time to heal. Annual Conference moderator Christopher Bowman and moderator-elect Jim Hardenbrook made a "pastoral visit" to Michigan in early January, after receiving several contacts from district leaders and with the affirmation of the Annual Conference Council.

Bowman and Hardenbrook visited five churches over a four-day visit Jan. 5-8, which was intended to be pastoral in nature rather than bringing, arguing, or enforcing any Annual Conference legislation or interpretation. Marie Willoughby, Michigan District executive, scheduled the conversations.

At each location, Bowman and Hardenbrook felt they were received warmly and that feelings were shared passionately. "I am impressed by the commitment of the brothers and sisters in Michigan to their faith and to each other," Bowman said.

"Our visit allowed us to share in some small way the pain of division felt by the faithful Brethren on both sides of the current crisis and to offer the encouragement of the wider church."

"The divisions within the Michigan District are real and deep," Hardenbrook said, "but so is their commitment to Jesus and the church. The desire to restore unity, while not universal, is evident. I encourage the whole denomination to make a concerted effort to pray for the people and leaders of the Michigan District."

1. Columbus, Ga. More than 10,000 people, including a group of more than 100 from the Church of the Brethren, participated in a demonstration outside the gates of Fort Benning Nov. 21-23 to protest the actions of the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation—better known as the School of the Americas. The General Board's Brethren Witness/Washington Office coordinated a Saturday night gathering for more than 80 people, hearing from Palestine peace activist Brian Avery. On Sunday, Brethren groups and individuals marched in a long processional.

2. San Antonio, Texas. Asset-based thinking and community exploration formed the focus of this year's Ecumenical Stewardship Center winter leadership seminar, which had as its theme "Enough! Toward the Uncluttered Life." The winter event, held Dec. 2-5, is one of several stewardship-related conferences sponsored each year by the center, of which the Church of the Brethren is a partner.

3. Tokyo, Japan. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) worker Peggy Gish, a member of the Church of the Brethren, accepted the Yoko Tada Human Rights Award for her work with CPT at a Dec. 18 ceremony. Gish has spent much of the past year as part of a CPT presence in Iraq. Japanese journalist Masakazu Honda nominated Gish for the award after he interviewed her in Jordan last March. Three Yoko Tada awards are presented each year.

4. Iraq. Collaboration among Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA), Mennonite Central Committee, and Episcopal Relief and Development (ERD) has resulted in a

\$25,000 ERD grant to support surgical services provided by a hospital in Baghdad, Iraq. The hospital has experienced a severe shortage of medical supplies. A General Board Emergency Disaster Fund grant of \$26,000 was made to Mennonite Central Committee in January to continue support for rebuilding a school in Baghdad. The school serves 370 children who are day students, and 80 older children who receive vocational training in the evenings.

5. Nigeria. Six US Brethren joined others from Europe and about two dozen Nigerians Jan. 18 to Feb. 14 to continue construction on the Comprehensive Secondary School at the EYN (the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) headquarters near Mubi. Jeff Mummau is in his 11th year as coordinator for the annual workcamp, sponsored by the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office.

6. Switzerland. Habitat for Humanity International has been welcomed as an international Christian organization by the World Council of Churches (WCC). Millard Fuller, founder and president of Habitat, visited the WCC headquarters in Geneva Jan. 26-27 to explore opportunities for cooperation between the two organizations. "Everyone is needed if we are to rid the world of shacks," Fuller said.

7. Jackson, Miss. Delegates to this year's National Council of Churches General Assembly witnessed the installation of new NCC president Thomas L. Hoyt Jr., endorsed consumer boycotts of two companies' products, and approved several resolutions as they met Nov. 4-6. The delegate body included four members representing the Church of the Brethren.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar. 4-6 Fellowship of Brethren Homes Annual Forum, Greenville, Ohio

Mar. 5 World Day of Prayer

Mar. 5-6 Level I Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Elizabethtown, Pa.

Mar. 7 Brethren Press spring curriculum quarter begins

Mar. 11-14 Organizing For Peace event, La Verne, Calif.

Mar. 13-15 General Board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Mar. 16-17 Annual Conference Council meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Mar. 19-21 Association of Brethren Caregivers board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Mar. 20-25 Youth Christian Citizenship Seminar, New York and Washington, D.C.

Mar. 21 One Great Hour of Sharing offering

Mar. 26-27 Level I Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Frederick, Md.

Mar. 26-28 Eastern Regional Youth Conference, Elizabethtown (Pa.) College

Mar. 26-28 Roundtable Regional Youth Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) College

Mar. 30-Apr. 1 District Disaster Coordinators seminar, New Windsor, Md.

Apr. 2-4 Regional Youth Conference, McPherson (Kan.) College

Personnel moves

Theresa C. Eshbach has announced her retirement as executive director of Institutional Advancement at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., effective July 2004. She has been directing the school's work in institutional advancement since January 1993.

During her 11 years at Bethany, Eshbach also was part of the leadership team that orchestrated the school's relocation from Illinois and aided its financial recovery from several years of difficult budgets. She oversaw an office that is responsible for financial development, deferred and major giving, alumni/ae and congregational relations, and, for a significant period of time, student recruitment and development.

• **Lowell Flory** will serve as executive director of Advancement and Gift Planning for Bethany Theological Seminary effective summer 2004. Flory will have administrative responsibility for annual fund development, gift planning, alumni and congregational relations, publications, and public relations.

Flory joined Bethany's Institutional Advancement staff in 2000 with responsibility for gift planning, working with individuals as they develop their estate plans. Such gift planning will remain his responsibility. He also will teach an occasional course in organizational and leadership development.

A Church of the Brethren member and former Annual Conference moderator, Flory holds degrees from McPherson (Kan.) College and the University of Kansas. He is a licensed member of the Kansas Bar. Flory came to Bethany from McPherson, where he had served on the faculty since 1983, chairing the department of business and economics.

• **LeAnn Wine** was called as the General Board's director of Financial Operations and assistant treasurer, effective March 8. She has most recently been a staff accountant with the firm of Trout, Ebersole and Groff, LLP in Lancaster, Pa.

Wine, who grew up in Enders (Neb.) Church of the Brethren, said this new role will fulfill a long-range goal to work within a not-for-profit organization. She is a graduate of McPherson (Kan.) College, where she was a tutor and volunteered accounting services to a variety of charities.

Until Wine could begin, **Duane Steiner** contracted with the General Board to fill the post in a part-time interim capacity. He began working with outgoing director Dennis Kingery, who accepted a position with Brethren Benefit Trust, on Jan. 27. Steiner previously served as executive director of Annual Conference before retiring in December 2002, and before that as director of development and treasurer/business manager for Bethany Theological Seminary.

• **Jeffrey L. Shireman** was named president of Lebanon Valley Brethren Home, Palmyra, Pa., effective Feb. 9. Shireman served most recently as executive director of Crane's Mill Retirement Community in West Caldwell, N.J., and has 20 years of experience in senior care. He serves as an evaluator for the Continuing Care Accreditation Commission and has been active in senior care provider associations such as the Pennsylvania Association of Non-Profit Homes for the Aging, the New Jersey Association of Non-Profit Homes for the Aging, and the American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

• **Sharon E. (Shari) McCabe** was named chief executive officer for The Cedars Inc. retirement community of McPherson, Kan., effective Jan. 1. She is currently CEO of Kansas Masonic Home in Wichita. From 1997 to 2000 she was administrator for the Cedars Health Care Center.

McCabe is a graduate of Barton Community College and Kansas State University, and earned a Mini-MBA certificate from Wichita State University. She and her husband, Perry, live in Wichita.

• **Jay Shell**, administrator of Health Services at Brethren Retirement Community, Greenville, Ohio was named the new CEO/president of Fahrney-Keedy Memorial Home in Boonsboro, Md., effective Jan. 1. Shell has been with Brethren Retirement Community for nine years. He and his wife, Pennie, are members of Castine Church of the Brethren in Arcanum, Ohio. They planned to move to the Hagerstown area.

• **Howard Royer**, recently retired as director of Interpretation for the General Board, has agreed to serve as manager of the agency's Global Food Crisis Fund on a part-time contract basis. Royer, who lives in Elgin, Ill., has given five decades of services to the General Board and previously served on the Global Food Crisis Fund grants committee.

One Great Hour of Sharing offering emphasizes miracle of multiplication

Sunday, March 21, is the suggested date of the General Board's 2004 One Great Hour of Sharing offering. This year's theme, "God Uses all Gifts for BIG PURPOSES," is based on John 6:9.

"Whether it's five loaves and two fish or the gifts that the One Great Hour of Sharing evokes, miracles happen when people give," Funding staff Ken Neher and Carol Bowman say in the cover letter of a packet sent to congregations.

Those information packets were mailed in early February. Each packet includes a colorful poster, a sample offering envelope, a sample colorable fish coin box, worship resources, and children's materials. Standing orders for these materials were sent simultaneously.

ONCAMPUS**Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)**

James L. Keeler of Timberville, Va., retired president and CEO of WLR Foods Inc., was elected by the Bridgewater board of trustees as its new chair. Keeler succeeded W. Wallace Hatcher, who recently ended 18 years of service as chairman of the board. Keeler is a 1957 Bridgewater graduate.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

The year-long 75th anniversary celebration of Elizabethtown Blue Jay athletics officially kicked off with a series of basketball games on Jan. 24, after an initial celebration planned for December was postponed by wintry weather. Additional events planned for 2004 include the opening of the Kevin Scott Boyd Blue Jay Baseball Stadium.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata's Habitat for Humanity campus chapter was featured in the February/March 2004 issue of Habitat's magazine, *HabitatWorld*. The article highlighted a group of students and Juniata president Thomas Kepple finishing a 14-mile walk to promote Habitat.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The University of La Verne's Reading and Language Arts Specialist Credential Program (RLASCP) received a boost from The Rose Hills Foundation, which in January approved a grant of \$250,000 to be disbursed over the next five years.

Manchester College

(North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester has received a \$750,000 grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. for its growing collaboration with Wabash County and North Manchester economic development efforts. The four-year grant will allow the college to develop a wide-reaching local program of student internships and entrepreneurial support.

McPherson College

(McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson, by far the smallest of the colleges associated with the Church of the Brethren, is enjoying an enrollment upswing this year. This fall's full-time equivalent student count was 424—an increase of 12 percent over a year earlier.

**Coordinators of 2004 workcamps agree to stay on for another year**

A team of three young adults—two of them familiar faces—will serve as coordinators for the 2005 youth and young adult workcamps offered by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry Office.

The 2004 coordinators, Beth Rhodes and Cindy Laprade, have agreed to continue as part of the team for another year. Rhodes and Laprade are both from Virlina District. Rhodes is a member of the Central congregation in Roanoke, Va., and Laprade is a member of the Antioch congregation in Rocky Mount.

They will be joined for the 2005 planning by Ben Kreider, who served as an assistant coordinator last summer. Kreider is a member of Annville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and plans to graduate from Indiana University of Pennsylvania this May.

Details on the nearly two dozen 2004 workcamps being offered, some of them already filled, can be found at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps/.



The 2004 youth/young adult workcamp coordinators, Cindy Laprade, left, and Beth Rhodes, will be staying on another year.

Regional youth conferences dot spring, summer schedule

- **The 2004 Roundtable regional youth conference** for senior high youth in districts stretching from Maryland to Florida and Puerto Rico will be held March 26-28 at Bridgewater (Va.) College. Manassas (Va.) pastor Jeff Carter will serve as keynote speaker on the theme, "The Next Chapter...A Future with Hope." Joseph Helfrich will provide musical leadership.

- **Eastern Regional Youth Conference**, for youth in Pennsylvania and the Northeast, will be March 26-28 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The duo Craig and Jake Live will provide keynote worship leadership with the theme, "Uncluttered: Letting Go...Letting God..."

- **McPherson (Kan.) College** will offer a Regional Youth Conference for youth in the Plains districts and Missouri/Arkansas April 2-4. The theme is "Simply." Matt Guynn, Lee Krahenbuhl, and Billy Jonas will provide leadership.

- **Regional Youth Conference at Manchester College**, North Manchester, Ind., will take place for youth in the Midwest April 17-18, shifting from a two-night format to one night this year. The theme is "Seeking, Thirsting, Longing." Christy Waltersdorff, Jeremy Ashworth, Josh Brockway, and district youth representatives will speak.

- **Regional Youth Conference, spanning most of the territory west of the Rockies and held only once every four years**, is slated for Aug. 4-8 in San Francisco. The theme will be "Living in God's Hands Together."



It's not too early to begin planning for Church of the Brethren Youth Sunday, designated for May 2. This year's theme is "Seeking, Thirsting, Longing," based on Psalms 63:1. Resources from the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office can be found online, at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/YouthSundayS.htm.

CBS' "Joan of Arcadia" helps viewers encounter God

It is ironic that someone who watches very little television would be writing a review of a TV program. Although I find little to watch on TV in general, I have been captivated by a program that premiered last fall. "Joan of Arcadia" is an exceptional show that lifts up a personal relationship with God in a unique and creative way.

The Joan of the title is a 16-year-old girl who lives in the fictitious city of Arcadia with her mother, Helen, who works in the high school office; her father, Will, the new police chief; her brother Kevin, who was paralyzed in an auto accident; and younger brother Luke, who is a self-professed "man of science." They are a close family with their share of squabbles, disagreements, and misunderstandings, but are held together by a deep love and respect for one another.

One day on the way to school Joan is approached by an attractive, teenaged boy, and they begin talking. The more he talks, however, the more uncomfortable she becomes. When he tells her things only she would know, she gets frightened. And then he tells her that he is God. Of course she doesn't believe him. It takes a lot to convince her, but finally she is willing to begin to accept the fact that he may, indeed, be God. He tells her that he really doesn't look like this, but that he came to her in a form that she would recognize and be familiar with.

And so begins Joan's relationship with God. Each time God comes to speak with her it is in a different form: an African-American lunch lady in the school cafeteria, an elderly white woman in a bookstore, an Asian man trimming the trees in the school



CHRISTY WALTERSDORFF
Pastor

yard, a white guy wearing a hot dog costume outside a snack bar, and my personal favorite, an 8-year-old girl with thick glasses, mismatched clothing, and an attitude. Talk about incarnation!

All of these different personas put flesh on the promise that each of us are created in the image of God. Joan never knows when God might appear or in what human form, so she begins to look for God in everyone—and so do we, the viewers. Sometimes she is mistaken, but over time she is learning to recognize God, especially when God speaks her name.

In each episode God has an errand for Joan: join the chess club, build a boat, try out for the cheerleading squad, go to a dance with the school bully. She is often confused by the requests, but by the end of the show she understands how her actions and choices have affected the lives of others, for better or worse. She says "Yes," and then God works through her to make a difference in the world.

At a recent youth retreat we watched two episodes, and I asked the youth what I should write for this review. One said, "Tell them Joan rocks!" (That means he really liked the show.) The teenagers in our group

All of these different personas put flesh on the promise that each of us are created in the image of God. Joan never knows when God might appear or in what human form, so she begins to look for God in everyone—and so do we, the viewers.

thought the show was a realistic portrayal of their age group. They thought it was relevant and asked important questions about God and faith.

If I could add anything to the show I would involve the family in a strong faith community and provide a pastor or other spiritual guide to walk with Joan on her journey with God. Certain situations and language portrayed in the show may be offensive to some people and may not be appropriate for younger children. **M**

JOAN OF ARCADIA

NETWORK: CBS

BROADCAST TIME:

FRIDAY,

8 P.M. EASTERN/PACIFIC;

7 P.M. CENTRAL

Christy J. Waltersdorff is pastor of York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill.

The first question needs to be about the frame of mind with which worship was attended. Was I expecting someone to put on a show? Do I feel entitled to have every moment of worship custom-tailored?

The opinions expressed in "Letters" are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.

Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER.

Anonymous letters will not be considered.

Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org. Please include hometown and phone number.

Eclectic worship allows connection

While I agree with the letter in the December issue of MESSENGER stressing the importance of meaningful worship, I am concerned that the tone of the letter is part of the reason our churches are becoming segregated according to musical taste.

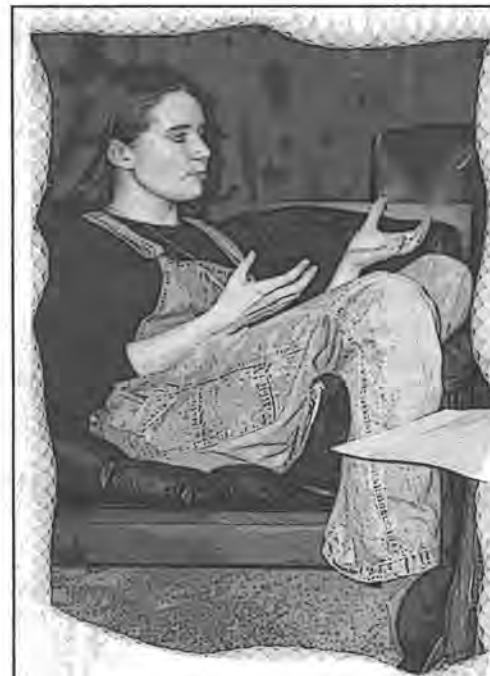
Just as it is wrong for an older church member to automatically reject any aspect of contemporary worship practices, it is just as narrow-minded for those who prefer contemporary styles to discard everything traditional. These attitudes are simply different sides of the same coin. There are many beautiful truths expressed in 200-year-old hymns, and referring to those hymns with disdain is immediately divisive. Perhaps it is this all-or-nothing approach that makes it so difficult for anyone to be open to new ideas.

At the age of 44, I am able to appreciate both styles of worship, and I shouldn't have to choose. An eclectic, blended worship service allows the participant to experience the many facets of relationship with God. Yes, we should come to worship to praise Him, but we should also come to reflect, confess, and learn. We are instructed to praise Him with a joyful noise, but we are also to be still and know God. Worship should provide the opportunity for both. Worship is a time to connect with the church family, present and past, and our traditions allow that connection to be complete.

I believe older members need to be open to new styles of worship, but I am frightened by the thought that we may have a younger generation among us who

has decided that Bach really wasn't that good after all. I am also concerned by the attitude of coming to church to be entertained. If one leaves worship unfulfilled, the first question needs to be about the frame of mind with which worship was attended. Was I expecting someone to put

on a show? Do I feel entitled to have every moment of worship custom-tailored to my preferences? Appreciation of eclectic worship requires each individual to discipline themselves, acknowledging that even if a particular moment in a service isn't as meaningful to me, it is to someone else.



Since our beginning in 1974,
On Earth Peace
has focused on preparing youth in the Church of the Brethren to know and to do "the things that make for peace."

We provide weekend retreats, teach Sunday School, lead youth gatherings around the denomination, and offer creative ways to engage youth in Jesus' message of peace and justice.

Biblical
Faithful
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... Peace Retreats, part of a Living Peace Church tradition

For more information about how to attend or host a peace retreat at your church, please contact On Earth Peace:

www.brethren.org/oepa/peaceretreats.html

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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).



Living in the Shadow of Suicide

Fierce Goodbye

What does the Bible say on the topic of suicide? What does it not say? **G. Lloyd Carr** began to ask these questions after a daughter-in-law died by suicide. He embarked on a thorough canvassing of the scriptures and church history on this topic, which helped him on his grief journey.

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That alone is reason enough to accept the validity of the moment.

I am always nervous when I sense the belief that everything new is good and everything old is bad, just as I am with the opposite mind-set. We can achieve variety and balance in worship, allowing each worshiper to find aspects that connect for them. We can also refuse to give in to the current culture of selfish entitlement by showing respect for preferences that differ from our own. That is what a community should look like when it comes together in the name of Christ.

Julie Hollenberg
Westminster, Md.

Don't change the name

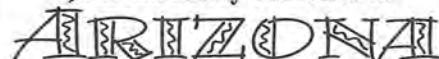
We at Panther Creek Church of the Brethren (Roanoke, Ill.) are very proud to be the Church of the Brethren ["Name committee wants discussion," April 2003 letters]. It has nothing to do with men alone. In the 1800s we were very much on fire, and still are, though smaller. All our ladies feel very much included.

So please do not change the name of our church. It would only make more confusion on who we are!

We have lots of wonderful things the Church of the Brethren is known for. We just need to be more Christ-like and care for others! Thank you.

Margaret Yordy
Roanoke, Ill.

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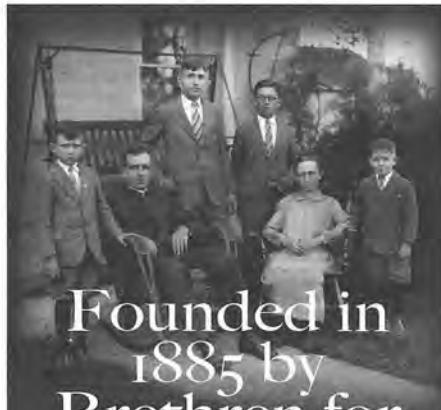
Name shouldn't hold us back

I wanted to write to give some more thoughts on the Brethren name change, which has continued to come up and then subside, like the tides.

I must admit that my family and I probably would have never visited a Church of the Brethren as we searched the "Yellow Pages" five years ago when we moved to Harpers Ferry, W.Va., from Virginia Beach, Va. The name just wasn't an attention-grabber for us, especially in a positive light, even though we knew nothing about the denomination. We did eventually get invited, and have remained ever since!

One would think that a name should not be a factor and especially "the" factor that others regard the Brethren! Why, our good deeds and outreach should be fostering an atmosphere to "outsiders" that we, the Church of the Brethren, are doing the good work peacefully, simply, together.

For whatever reason, society isn't hearing of the good works, and this can be said of most any other denomination. It is a fact we must deal with, and always continue to seek ways to present ourselves in a good light: as beacons for Christ.



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LETTERS

Pondering the situation of the Brethren name, I was reading my Bible one evening and came across Mark 9:35: "And he sat down, and called the twelve, and saith unto them, 'If any man desire to be first, [the same] shall be last of all, and servant of all.'" Once I read this, I thought wouldn't that be a wonderful denominational name!

"Servants of Christ!" After all, the Church of the Brethren specifically focuses on the New Testament teachings, and "Servants of Christ" is truly what we are called to be!

These are simply my ruminations, and I think the church is much more than a name that should be pleasing to "outsiders" when read or heard. The Brethren name has a deep and rich history and truly reflects our heritage. But if pride is what keeps us from looking toward the future—

CLASSIFIED ADS

ANNUAL CONFERENCE: Air-conditioned coach will be traveling from Elizabethtown to Charleston via I-81 and I-64. Pick-ups along the way are possible. For information, please write to Ken Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, or email kreiderk@etown.edu.

Jamaica Mennonite Church announces openings for two family practice physicians to work in church clinics: Good Tidings Mennonite Church, Kingston (urban), and Joyland Mennonite Church, St. Elizabeth (rural). Physicians are responsible for overall health of patients and oversight of nurse assistants and medical records personnel. Physicians must be currently licensed, committed to the Anabaptist faith, available for 3-5 years, and start by September 2004 or as soon as possible. For information, contact Beth Brunk, HR Coordinator, Virginia Mennonite Board of Missions, Harrisonburg, Va., 540-434-9727 or info@vmbm.org.

Travel with Wendell and Joan Bohrer, BOHRER TOURS, to Alaska following Annual Conference, July 8 - 20, 2004. Fly to Fairbanks, ride the sternwheeler down the Chena River. Visit Denali Park, Mt. McKinley, cruise from Whittier to Vancouver visiting Glacier Bay, College Fjord, Skagway, and Ketchikan. Write the Bohrs at 3651 US Hwy 27S #589, Sebring, FL 33870; tel/fax 863-382-9371; e-mail rdwbohr@aol.com.

from changing our name to something that can draw others to "check us out"—then we are not truly following the teachings of the New Testament, the foundation of our denomination.

No matter what the name, we are truly Brethren in every sense of the word, and I love my church and all we stand for!

Jeffrey Cole
Harpers Ferry, W.Va.

What about other "other babies"?

This letter references the Christmas meditation, "The Other Babies of Bethlehem" [December 2003], in which is recounted the biblical story of Jesus, the babe of Bethlehem, who is spared while 20 to 30 innocent boys 2 years and under are brutally murdered by order of Herod.

This article begs another comparison: 20 to 30 innocent boys brutally murdered two millennia ago but still remembered, and 30 million innocent unborn babies brutally murdered in America in our time, many not remembered. Abortion. Legal. By man's law. And still going on! Ugly. Evil.

Yes, we need to note such evil.

We know of man's injustice. Are we so foolish, to believe a just God does not note such evil? The killing of his children? Will there be no consequences? Has the God who caused Israel and Judah to be taken into captivity and dispersed to the farthest horizon because they disobeyed changed his standards?

What about these "other babies"? Come, MESSENGER, break your silence.

William E. Hayes
Denver, Pa.

Editor's note: The most recent Annual Conference statement against abortion, adopted in 1984, can be viewed online at www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/84Abortion.htm.

Prayer, mutuality key to relationship

I was heartened to read of the friendship between Nate Polzin and Doug Reichenbach, both Church of the Brethren ministers in the Michigan District, and the way they maintain mutual respect for each other in spite of their different perspec-

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EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 6-22)

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SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (August 9-24)

IRELAND (September 3-14)

SWISS-VOLHYNIAN MENNONITE HERITAGE
(September 15-29)

LANDS of the BIBLE (September 17-30)

CHINA (October 3-19)

FALL FOLIAGE TOUR of NEW ENGLAND
(October 5-11)

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tives on the homosexuality issue [December 2003 editorial].

I have taken classes at Bethany with Nate, and was a neighbor and colleague of Doug's in our mission school in Nigeria. My assessment of both men is that they are spiritually and biblically grounded to a very high degree, and yet their faith journeys lead

them in different directions on some issues.

Your editorial states that their method for maintaining mutual respect is "to be careful not to misrepresent the other's views, and to state the other's viewpoint in a way that the other person finds agreeable." The formula sounds simple enough, but I would guess that a fair amount of prayer and

"Holy Spirit"-leading guides their actions. Sounds like a good plan, not only in the church, but in the political and other arenas we function in daily. Thanks for upholding these people as an example of "another way of churching."

Lois Ruth Grove
Eldora, Iowa

TURNING POINTS

Please send information to be included in Turning Points to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-323-8039 ext. 206; clements_gb@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Central, Roanoke, Va.: Virginia Haffen
Chambersburg, Pa.: Chad Murry, Chaven Hull, Brooke Jacobs, Jill Momm
Circle of Peace, Peoria, Ariz.: Josie Faus, Gene Dougher, David Kendall, Jennifer Kendall, Brent Steiner, Stephanie Steiner, Michael Holt, Victoria Holt
Coventry, Pottstown, Pa.: Corinne Derstine, Darian Elliott, Wesley Elliott, Larrissa Elliott, Derek Farman, Meredith Monahan, Rebekah Elliott, Penny Morton

Douglas Park, Chicago, Ill.: Jorge Montez
Florin, Mount Joy, Pa.: Briana Dohner, Shane Roseberry
Geiger, Friedens, Pa.: Brandi Johnson, Jonathan Johnson
Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.: Beverly Hanson
Lincolnshire, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Mary Ashworth, Phil Bleeker, Josiah Hinkle, Emory Kitner, Nick Kowalenko, Karie McNeil, John Pollock, Cindi Pollock, Paul Pollock, Ricky Ritter, Greg Ryder, Ben Schwabrower, Jessica Smithson, Stephanie Zent
Lynchburg, Va.: Joretta Driskill, Nancy Ellyn Farrar, Reynell Farrar

Manassas, Va.: Michael Byrne, Kerry Byrne
Maple Spring, Eglon, W.Va.: Kevin O'Connor, Michelle O'Connor, Eddie Wolfe, Darlene Wolfe, Gary Bookout, Alice May Bookout, Laura McCasky, Kristin McCasky, Tatiana McCasky, Rachel McCasky, Ryan Feather, Tyler Harsh

Marsh Creek, Gettysburg, Pa.: Brandon Rosenberry
Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa.: Abby Kreider, Brok Greenleaf
Modesto, Calif.: Amy Jacobs, Kristy Wood, Shawn Wood
Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.: Edward Dolph
Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio: Todd Clemens, Judy Clemens,

Kyle Clemens, Lisa Brown, Crystal Liechty
Pottstown, Pa.: Wayne Rosen, Sue Rosen, Sue Hoffman, Nicole Moyer, Gladys Dunlap
Reading, First, Reading, Pa.: Charles Helbling, Carole Helbling, Michael Kauffman, Jackie Kauffman
Sheldon, Iowa: Helen Clover, Cory Osterbahr, Steve Dagel, Molly Dagel
Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Hilary Leaf, Darin Leaf
Snake Spring Valley, Everett, Pa.: JoAnn Dibert, Dean Dibert, Michele Dibert, Ashly Koontz, Joe Imler, Chris Imler, Carly Schnably, Cole Schnably
Trotville, Va.: David Clark, Robert Mann, Chris Rago, Jodie Rago
Wilmington, Del.: Donald Knieriem, Jr.

Anniversaries

Broman, George and Marilyn, Dixon, Ill., 55
Brougher, Olin and Mary, Martinsburg, Pa., 65
Eberly, Wayne and Wilda, Harrisburg, Pa., 50
Graybill, Irvin and Dorothy, Troutville, Va., 50
Heckman, Ben and Faye, Chambersburg, Pa., 50
Kinzie, James and Mable, Roanoke, Va., 65
Mackey, Wilbur and Florence, Chambersburg, Pa., 60
Pierce, Sam and Doris Ann, New Windsor, Md., 50
Richwine, Jay and Jean, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 50
Sales, Harold M. and Roliene, Adair, Ill., 60
Stephens, Graham and Thelma, Troutville, Va., 50
Wilson, David and Sara, Camp Hill, Pa., 50

Deaths

Allman, John William, 57, Eglon, W.Va., Sept. 22
Baker, Vaughn, 74, Mount Joy, Pa., Oct. 19
Bard, Harold, 90, Brookville, Ohio, Dec. 18
Baskerville, Ruby, 88, Salem, Va., Dec. 27
Bassett, Harry W., 89, Hollsopple, Pa., Dec. 7
Baughman, Ralph, 86, Lakeville, Ind., Nov. 14

Hoover, Katherine, 78, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Oct. 23
Hoover, Patricia, 66, Elkhart, Ind., Dec. 16
Hostetler, Denny B., 73, Somerset, Pa., Nov. 6
Hurtt, Brandy, 23, Belle Center, Ohio, Oct. 11
Iseberg, Geneva, 87, Martinsburg, Pa., Sept. 27
Jackman, Mildred, 87, Independence, Mo., Nov. 8
Kauffman, J. Clair, 88, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 2
Kreider, Evelyn, 76, Willow Street, Pa., Dec. 29
Lentz, Marlin R., 72, York, Pa., Jan. 4
Mason, Nora Keith, 91, Bealeton, Va., Dec. 17

McBride, Dorothy, 84, Bryan, Ohio, Jan. 1
Medearis, Charles, 80, Elgin, Ill., Nov. 21
Meek, Don, 77, New Cumberland, Pa., Oct. 28
Miller, Alva, 96, Lima, Ohio, Jan. 2
Montgomery, Mary Louise, 78, Rocky Mount, Va., Nov. 9
Myers, Franklin M., Jr., 53, York, Pa., Dec. 26

Neal, Mary Eleanor Koontz, 85, West Valley City, Utah, Dec. 19

Newnam, Barbara C., 71, Troy, Ohio, Dec. 21

Parsons, Avenell J. Roth, 77, Eglon, W.Va., Sept. 2

Pease, Catherine, 83, Dundee, Ill., Jan. 5

Pepple, Dee E., 79, Omaha, Neb., Dec. 19

Peters, Hazel Marie, 84, Roanoke, Va., Jan. 14

Puterbaugh, Laurabel, 91, Dayton, Ohio, Dec. 14

Ritchey, Melvin S., 81, Mundelein, Ill., Dec. 28

Rocke, Ronald, 65, Elgin, Ill., Aug. 27

Sapp, Diane, 48, Crownsville, Md., Dec. 23

Seese, Madeline E., 80, Windber, Pa., Dec. 3

Shaw, Bertha N., 90, Martinsburg, Pa., Oct. 25

Slaubaugh, Lela May, 77, Horse Shoe Run, W.Va., April 13, 2003

Smeal, Barbara, 67, Bainbridge, Pa., Dec. 12

Smith, Grace, 92, Mountain Home, Idaho, Nov. 6

Smith, Robert, 83, San Diego, Calif., Nov. 7

Snyder, Anna, 88, Akron, Ohio, Oct. 27

Spurgeon, Fayron L., 93, Parkersburg, W.Va., Aug. 26

Stallings, Donna Lee Graybill, 75, Wenatchee Valley, Wash., May 24

Stauffer, Moses, 83, Palmyra, Pa., Dec. 23

Suffel, Rex, 79, Ney, Ohio, Dec. 26

Tobias, Mary, 74, Wyomissing, Pa., Dec. 18

Tooker, Leone, 94, Modesto, Calif., Dec. 4

Treece, Edgar F., 84, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 28

Trostle, Luella, 94, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 15

Walther, Leona H., 78, Claypool, Ind., Dec. 25

Weighley, Milton, 85, Friedens, Pa., Dec. 19

Whirledge, Ernest E., 79, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 4

Whitmer, John H. Jr., 77, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 25
Willis, Mildred, 91, Somerset, Pa., Jan. 3

Wilson, Mary Sealover, 91, New Oxford, Pa., Jan. 2

Wisler, Vernon M., 85, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 27

Woodie, Fred, 86, Troutville, Va., July 19

Zigler, Patsy, 72, Bryan, Ohio, Dec. 27

Licensings

Bollinger, Susan, N. Plains Dist. (Lewiston, Minn.), Nov. 30
Roudebush, Martha J., Southeastern Dist. (Trinity, Blountville, Tenn.), Dec. 7
Schaefer, William, N. Ohio Dist. (Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio), Jan. 4

Staton, William Henry, Jr., Shen Dist. (Bethel, Keezletown, Va.), Nov. 30

Walker, Judy M., W. Pa. Dist. (East McKeesport, Pa.), Dec. 7

Orordinations

Dinterman, Dale, Ill./Wis. Dist. (La Place, Ill.), Oct. 4

Erbaugh, Wendy Noffsinger, N. Ind. Dist. (Elkhart City, Elkhart, Ind.), Nov. 23

Nissly, Glenn, W. Marva Dist. (Maple Spring, Eglon, W. Va.), Dec. 7

Walker, Larry E., W. Pa. Dist. (East McKeesport, Pa.), Dec. 7

Placements

Doss, Martin C., from pastor, Fairview, Mount Clinton, Harrisonburg, Va., to pastor, Dayton, Va., Jan. 15

Leatherman, Paul N., Jr., pastor, Edgewood, New Windsor, Md., Jan. 1

McCoy, Shelby Faith, from pastor, Connellsburg, Pa., to pastor, Rockhill, Rockhill Furnace, Pa., Jan. 1

Price, Anthony Eugene, from interim to pastor, Round Hill, Toms Brook, Va., Jan. 1

Reed, Robert William, pastor, New Haven, Sparta, N.C., Dec. 14

Schafer, William, pastor, Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio, Jan. 4

Tubbs, John, from General Board, mission coordinator, Nigeria, to pastor, Lorida, Fla., Jan. 1

Faces in the cloud

On the wall outside my office hangs a row of portraits. Under them are names like Henry Kurtz, James Quinter, Edward Frantz, Desmond Bittinger, and Kenneth Morse. They are the former editors of this magazine and its predecessors, and I've been looking at those faces a lot lately.

I've wondered how they felt and what they thought as they worked on their first issue of MESSENGER. I've wondered what the church was like then, and how they saw the magazine fitting into denominational life.

It's a bit scary following in the footsteps of those who have been stewards of this venerable publication. It's also something that excites me to no end. I confess that in the weeks since I was called to this position I've occasionally caught myself with a smile on my face thinking, "Wow! I get to work on MESSENGER today!"

Having those faces on the wall smiling back at me (or at least looking back with their proper, straight-faced Brethren-ness) helps to make the daunting part of the job a little less so. Knowing that today's work builds upon the rich foundation they laid as fellow servants in Jesus Christ provides both comfort and challenge.

I've been doubly privileged to have worked alongside two of the more recent editors, Howard Royer and Fletcher Farrar, over the past four-plus years. They are both talented communicators with a deep passion for the church, and I've learned much from their wisdom and leadership.

Thinking about these predecessors brings to mind the "great cloud of witnesses" referred to in Hebrews chapter 12. It's a rich passage that continues with an exhortation to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us" with our eyes fixed upon Jesus (NIV).

Former seminary professor and church leader Bob Neff (who is to Bible study what John Madden is to football



WALT WILTSCHEK
MESSENGER Editor

analysis) delved into this text during a session at the 2002 National Older Adult Conference. He noted its placement immediately after chapter 11's roll call of the heroes of faith, people who had already "run the race."

The race implied here then, Neff said, is a relay race. The baton is passed from one runner to the next along the journey. "The handoff is key," Neff said. "The key point is where you must look back to receive, and look ahead as you get it, already moving."

After years of covering sports for several newspapers, I've seen quite a few track meets and quite a few relay races. Many of the handoffs go as planned, some more smoothly and faster than others, while occasionally you'll see the baton bounce off the track as a handoff is botched.

As the editorial baton is handed off here at MESSENGER, I hope it feels like a smooth exchange. We will seek to draw upon the best of our heritage—that cloud of witnesses—while also looking forward. You'll see some changes in the magazine, beginning with this issue: new columns, a relocated news section, some new features and new faces. We hope you'll share with us what you like, and what you don't. We're also busy processing a reader survey that many of you completed last year.

Above all, I and the rest of the staff solicit your prayers and support as we run the latest leg in this

We will seek to draw upon the best of our heritage—that cloud of witnesses—while also looking forward.

marathon-sized relay, seeking to be faithful to the call we've been given. I extend the charge to each of you, too, as you care for the part you have been given in this sacred trust we call the Church of the Brethren.

Sports Illustrated has a feature titled "Faces in the Crowd," spotlighting ordinary people doing exceptional things in their own, local settings. May we each be "Faces in the Cloud," doing exceptional things in God's name for the church of today and for those who will follow.—Ed. **M**

COMING NEXT MONTH: A look at the love feast, the challenges and blessings of ministry, remembering Hazel Peters, and an assortment of other news and reflections.

*To see the world through the eyes of others while discovering the best in oneself...
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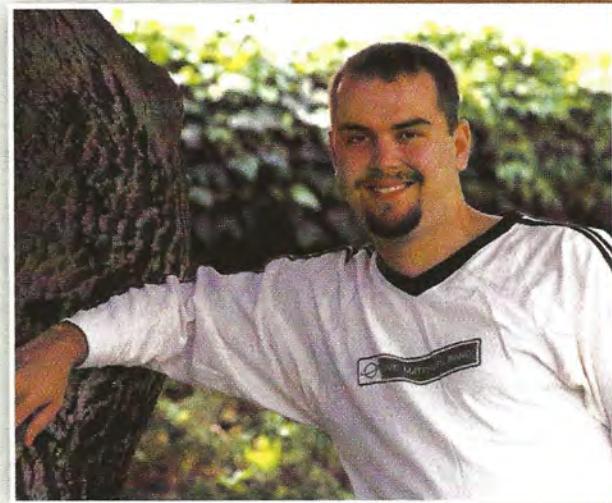
Growing up in Pennsylvania, Shane Haldeman never imagined that he would attend college in California, but today he is a graduate of the University of La Verne. When asked to comment on ULV, the first thing he talks about is the faculty and the way they mentored him throughout his college career.

“I got to know my professors on a personal level,” he says. A biology major in the Honors Program, Shane’s rigorous curriculum prepared him for teaching high school biology.

Shane took advantage of multiple opportunities to be involved on-campus and in the community. Through the nationally ranked ULV men’s volleyball team, the campus choir, the Phi Delta Theta fraternity, the La Verne Church of the Brethren choir, and as a youth advisor for the local Church of the Brethren youth group. These activities taught Shane about leadership and the benefits of being part of an extremely diverse community.

“I enjoyed getting to know a lot of different people from different backgrounds. It helped me branch out from what I know and put my life in perspective.”

Shane credits his time at the University of La Verne for helping him to grow and change. “I gained a lot of knowledge, but I also gained a lot of experience,” he says. “I learned about self-reliance, adaptability, and to really love life. I would not have given up my four years there for anything.”



Shane Haldeman '03
Lancaster, Pennsylvania

“I’ve learned about self-reliance, adaptability, and to really love life.”

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