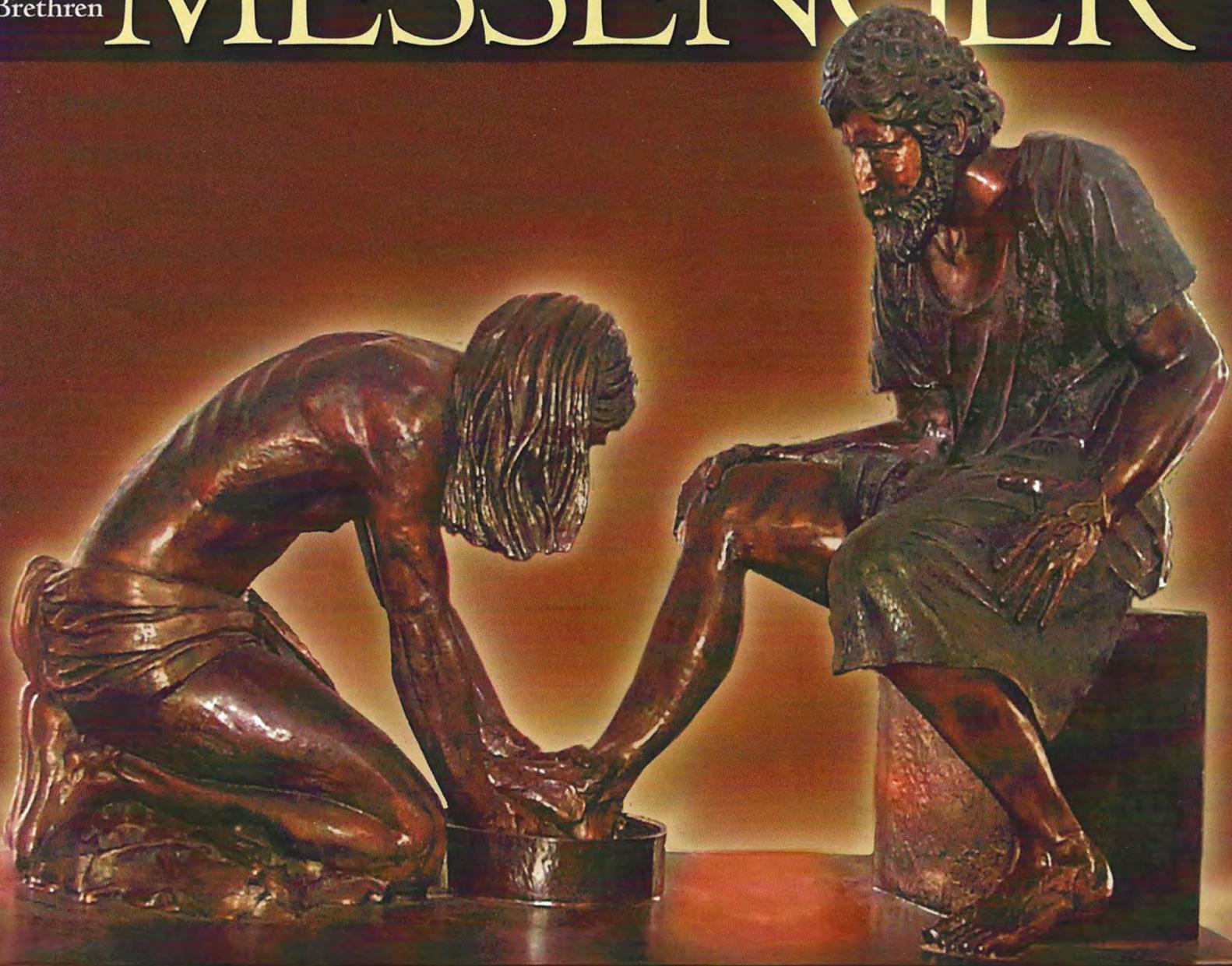


APRIL 2004 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER



In remembrance of me
Reflections on the Brethren love feast

The Love Feast



Compiled by **FRANK RAMIREZ**

The love feast is based on a simple premise: disciples do as Jesus commands. We examine our lives, wash feet, eat a simple meal, and take communion. Through stories, memories, scriptures, and photographs, the love feast is remembered and renewed, extending the invitation to all to come to the Lord's table.

Here is a glimpse into the corporate memory of this central ritual of our faith. A perfect gift for new members, deacons, church leaders, and all who find their Christian home with the Brethren.

\$19.95 paperback #8208

\$49.95 limited edition hardcover #8240



Brethren Press

1451 Dundee Avenue

Elgin, Illinois 60120-1694

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Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

Editor: Walt Wiltschek Publisher: Wendy McFadden Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: The Concept Mill



G.L. Croom/Courtesy of BHLA

8

8 Back to the waters

Why do Brethren love the love feast? Frank Ramirez looks at the past and present of this central piece of Church of the Brethren life, from the early Brethren's controversies over the fine points of its observance to its meaning for the church today. In a sidebar, pastor Larry Dentler shares his personal recollections, asking "What is it about love feast?"

14 Pastors, pulpits, and placements

Filling the ministerial leadership needs of congregations, particularly smaller congregations, is a challenge for many denominations. The Church of the Brethren has faced those challenges, too, and some struggles continue. There are good signs however, with new training options, new avenues for calling, and a fresh Lilly grant.

16 A gift that keeps on multiplying

A bequest left to Atlantic Southeast District is bearing significant fruit for ministry. Haitian Brethren in Florida, among others, are now able to pursue God's calling in their lives. "I want to help the people through ministry, doing everything in the name of Jesus," Miami Eglise de Freres Haitiens member Jean Nixon Aubel says.

18 A passion for people

Hazel Peters, one of the driving forces in Brethren Service in the 20th century, and Don Rowe, who guided the construction of the current district structure of organization, both passed away in the early months of 2004. MESSENGER remembers their contributions to the church with a look at their lives and legacies.

ON THE COVER

Holy Week, which falls the first full week of April this year, is a high point of the liturgical calendar for every Christian denomination. It holds special significance for Brethren, as Maundy Thursday typically marks the observance of the love feast, with its symbols of the Last Supper of Jesus and his disciples. A pair of articles in this month's issue look at the love feast, and a poem by Nancy Jones celebrates the promise of Easter. The cover image is of a sculpture titled "The Divine Servant," ® a copyrighted and trademarked creation of artist Max Greiner Jr., used by permission. His sculptures are located at numerous sites around the country; this particular one stands in front of St. John Neumann Catholic Church in Miami.



Chad Ambrosius

DEPARTMENTS

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W

hen our family set out for the Grand Canyon one year, we spent several days sight-seeing along the way. We tented in places whose scenery was breathtakingly different from the prairie back home—high desert, mountains, even a small canyon that looked impressive enough to people from Illinois. As we made our way from place to place across the Southwest, one family member or another would suggest that we linger a day or two longer. Once we set up camp, it seemed so easy to stay.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

But our camping was intended to be a journey to a destination. Certainly we wanted to see as much as we could between here and there, but the goal was the Grand Canyon.

Our youngest had the most difficulty comprehending that we needed to leave each spot and likely would never see it again. She wasn't sure she wanted to move on. I had to hold in front of her the vision of a place that she could not possibly imagine.

The road to the resurrection is like that. Though we take this journey each year, we still find ourselves becoming too comfortable camping in the wilderness. We settle for less than abundant life. We settle for less than the resurrection.

Many of us become satisfied to stay where we are, forgetting what lies beyond. But fellow pilgrims urge us on. We are reminded to shake off our lethargy and pull up the tent stakes. Lent is a journey we take together, reminding each other of the destination.

*Christ is risen! Shout hosanna!
Celebrate this day of days.
Christ is risen! Hush in wonder,
all creation is amazed.
In the desert all surrounding,
see, a spreading tree has grown.
Healing leaves of grace abounding
bring a taste of love unknown.*

—Brian Wren

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Wendy McFadden

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Subscription rates:

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

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

MESSANGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Entered as periodical postage matter Aug. 20, 1918, under Act of Congress of Oct. 17, 1917. Filing date, Nov. 1, 1984. Member of the Associated Church Press. Subscriber to Religion News Service & Ecumenical Press Service. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. MESSANGER is published 11 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren General Board. Periodical postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and at additional mailing office, April 2004. Copyright 2004, Church of the Brethren General Board. ISSN 0026-0355.

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



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: The New Beginnings Christian Fellowship church plant of the Chiques congregation, Manheim, Pa., held its first Sunday worship service Jan. 4. The plant, meeting in a member's home, received fellowship status from the district later in January.

Atlantic Southeast: More than 130 people attended a symposium entitled "Lost in Florida: Rekindling Your First Love for Jesus Christ," at St. Petersburg First Church of the Brethren Jan. 31. Featured speakers were James Myer of White Oak Church of the Brethren, Manheim, Pa., and Paul Munday, pastor of Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren.

Idaho: The district's executive board has decided to wait for someone from within the small district to "come forward to possibly serve" as district executive. Former executive Earl Traugher retired last fall. Betty Winchester is serving as board chair.

Illinois/Wisconsin: The district for several years has been encouraging participation in "Way of Christ" weekends to deepen one's Christian life and faith. Spring weekends took place for men and women in late March.

Michigan: The district's annual "Brethren Beliefs Retreat" for youth in grades 5-8 took place March 19-21 at Camp Brethren Heights.

Mid-Atlantic: The 36th annual School of Christian Growth sponsored by Church of the Brethren congregations in northern Virginia took place over four weeks in February, with five adult classes offered.

Middle Pennsylvania: As a resource for the district's two-year Growing Faithful Disciples emphasis, four volunteers have been trained to work with congregations to help identify spiritual gifts through a congregational discernment process. Volunteer team members are Jerriann Heiser Wenger, Harold Bowser, Chris Knapp, and Duane Rhodes.

Missouri/Arkansas: Congregations in the southern part of the district were invited to a Leap-Year gathering on Feb. 29 at the Greenwood congregation, Mountain Grove, Mo., for music, food, and sharing.

Northern Indiana: The district board has committed to a special prayer focus from early February through district conference in September, lifting up individ-

ual congregations or a denominational ministry each week.

Northern Ohio: Vicki Smith led this year's district pastors-spouse retreat, presenting a spiritual gifts seminar titled "Meant to Be You." About 50 people took part in the Feb. 15-17 event.

Northern Plains: The Stover Memorial congregation (Des Moines, Iowa) hosted its annual Music Fest Feb. 22, featuring choir anthems or other musical selections from area Brethren congregations interspersed with congregation hymn singing.

Oregon/Washington: The Sunnyslope congregation, Wenatchee, Wash., regularly marks an unusual holiday with a special meal. The congregation held its Ground Hog Dinner on Jan. 30.

Pacific Southwest: The Camp La Verne board, wrestling with tight finances and limited facilities, is in the process of a proposed merger of the camp operation with the Mennonite's Camp Keola. A one-year interim operating agreement is in place.

Shenandoah: The district's third annual Kick-Off Dinner for Disaster Response took place March 20 at the Bridgewater Retirement Community's Houff Center. "The Faithful Men" singing group provided entertainment.

South/Central Indiana: A district search committee is working on finding a successor for retiring district executives Ron and Harriet Finney. Interviews were tentatively slated for mid-April.

Southeastern: Plans for a new Hispanic church plant have the district board excited, according to district co-executive Martha Roudebush, and is providing energy for the district.

Southern Ohio: Several sponsors and donors in the district make possible an annual youth advisors' retreat/training event. This year's event took place March 12-14 in Dayton with the theme "Understanding Today's Youth Culture."

Southern Pennsylvania: The 2004 meat canning project, held in conjunction with Mid-Atlantic District, takes place in mid-April at Christian Aid Ministries in

Ephrata, Pa. The annual effort produces tens of thousands of pounds of meat for distribution to those in need.

Southern Plains: The spring rally and board meeting was held at the Clovis (N.M.) congregation March 26-28 and included the ordination of Clovis pastor James Kelly, who recently completed the Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) program.

Virginia: The annual Roanoke-area Awakening Services shifted to a new format this year, moving to the first weekend of Lent Feb. 26-28. The Oak Grove congregation hosted the event, with General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministries director Chris Douglas as keynote speaker.

Western Pennsylvania: The district offered a free workshop on "Islam from a Christian Perspective" March 13 at Center



Construction on the "Friends Center" being developed by San Diego Church of the Brethren and area Friends (Quakers) members and others began in February after years of planning. The center, on the San Diego congregation's land, is being designed as a place to foster peace, justice, and spiritual growth. Organizers hope for completion by 2006.

Hill Church of the Brethren in Kittanning. Dr. Ronald D. Shafer of Indiana University of Pennsylvania led the session.

Western Plains: District men's and women's retreats took place in Kansas in March, with the men led by Glenn Timmons and members of the district's Renewal Steering Team in McPherson and the women led by Peg Lehman and Joyce Petry in Hesston.

West Marva: A district Bible study took place March 21 at the Gortner Union congregation near Oakland, Md. The theme was "Good News: How to Let the Secret Out."

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Send them to MESSENGER, Attn: In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Sharon Lance



Southern Pennsylvania District executive Joe Detrick, left, took part in the ordination for Bob Baldwin at the Huntsdale congregation in October.

He became actively involved in the church, and 11 years ago he was licensed to the ministry. His full-time job as an elementary school teacher gave him flexibility in his summers, and his ministry came to include the Hidden Valley Scout Reservation in central Pennsylvania. He served on a committee that developed an open-air chapel at the reservation and developed a mission statement for it, and he became a full-time summer resident chaplain.

When Baldwin went through the ordination interview process in Southern Pennsylvania District, he knew that Scout ministry was where he felt called. An interview committee member noted Baldwin's passion for that work, and the committee affirmed it, possibly making him the first ordained Scout chaplain in the denomination.

Baldwin was ordained at Huntsdale this past October, and "Chappy Bob" now continues his summer ministry at Hidden Valley in addition to

Sharon Lance



Brethren heeds God's call to 'be prepared'

When Bob Baldwin, a member of Huntsdale Church of the Brethren near Carlisle, Pa., felt God's call to ministry, it was a unique one.

Baldwin had long been involved with the Boy Scouts, ever since he was a Scout himself more than 40 years ago. That experience, in fact, gave him his introduction to the Church of the Brethren. His troop met at the Huntsdale church, and a member there eventually invited him to Sunday school.



Sunday evening vesper services through the year. His wife, Debe, sometimes assists with music. His "congregation" includes people of many faith backgrounds and constantly changes.

"Scouting is so interwoven with church for me," he says. "This is where God wants me to be right now." —Walt Wiltschek

Kansas congregation issues mite-y challenge

The rural Maple Grove Church of the Brethren, located on the windswept Kansas plains near the Nebraska line, absorbed a Sunday sermon about "the widow's mite."

"You think two cents isn't much, but I know some who drive 50 miles into Hays to save that amount per gas of gasoline," pastor Leon Neher told the congregation. "Those two pennies per day add up to \$7.30 each per year, or \$350.40 from all the members on our roll."

For these members, most of whom are senior citizens, the recent droughts in Kansas caused the surface of their wheatfields to resemble a

moonscape. Nevertheless, the congregation voted "yes" to doing a Mission Cents Offering for one year. On the first Sunday of each month, members deposit their loose change or small bills into the Mission Cents basket.

Next, the members voted to send their challenge to Church of the Brethren congregations everywhere. Longtime member Harold Currann urged them, "Let's not take a dime from our church treasury for this mailing." Before the third Sunday in January, when 19 members—including 94-year-old Ruth Myers—followed the monthly fellowship dinner with stuffing, labeling, and stamping those Mission Cents Challenge invitations, the treasurer reported the cost was covered.

While the Maple Grove congregation voted to send 50 percent to the General Board's missions, 25 percent to district missions, and 25 percent to the local Norton/Norcatour community, its challenge includes no specific designations for other congregations.

If the entire denomination responds to Maple Grove's Mission Cents Challenge, nearly a million dollars will be collected from members each contributing only "two copper coins" per day. "That could be considered a miracle!" Neher said. —Irene Shull Reynolds

Bob Baldwin, ordained in the Church of the Brethren last fall, leads vespers at the Hidden Valley Scout Reservation chapel in Pennsylvania.



u Neher

Members of the Maple Grove congregation in Kansas gather behind the fruits of their labor following a "challenge" mailing to the denomination.

us food, and we had almost 50 feet stacked up on tables."

Elder said the church recognized the need for a local food pantry over the last couple years since Upper Des Moines Opportunity and O'Brien County S.O.S. closed the doors of their Sheldon offices.

He said the food pantry is one way to fulfill the mandate the Bible calling for people to care for those less fortunate.

"The Scripture calls us to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit the prisoners," he said. "There's a need in Sheldon that I think sometimes we look past. We don't want to see that. We say, 'Well, Sheldon doesn't have that need.' It has opened our eyes to the need we have locally." —Derrick Vander Waal, *Sheldon Mail-Sun*

January Thanksgiving for Waynesboro

A 2003 Thanksgiving collection of food took place in the Waynesboro, Pa., area, but the Waynesboro Church of the Brethren church board elected to defer their ingathering of food until January, when local food pantry shelves would be empty.

Church members Bill and Mary Mott have been working with the food pantry out of the church and said "Empty" accurately described the shelves in January. Spearheaded by Francis Nogle and the Men's Fellowship, a plea was made in January to replenish the shelves.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- The **Reuel B. Pritchett Museum** at Bridgewater (Va.) College celebrates its 50th anniversary with events during the college's alumni weekend on Apr. 17. A reception open to the general public will take place in a tent just outside the main entrance to the historical museum, which is housed in the lower level of the student center building. The museum hosted nearly 800 visitors in 2003.

- **Jane Yount**, coordinator of Disaster Response for the General Board, completed her term of service as chair of the Maryland VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster) Dec. 31. Yount was honored Dec. 12 with a Governor's Volunteer Service Certificate from the State of Maryland. The certificate read: "In appreciation of your efforts to ensure the vitality of the community where you volunteer, your contribution to citizens of Maryland and your support of Maryland's long tradition of citizen community involvement."

- **Lakeview Church of the Brethren**, Brethren, Mich., is marking its centennial this year. The congregation, established soon after Brethren farmers settled the area, plans a variety of events to celebrate its 100th birthday. Members Don Stroup and Bob Hamilton are growing "Brethren beards" for the occasion. The *Manistee (Mich.) Advocate* recently highlighted the anniversary.

- The Richmond (Ind.) congregation has an unusual and perhaps unprecedented situation this spring, with both pastor **Kelly Burk** and associate pastor **Jim Buckles** engaged to be married later this year—not to each other.



The 300-member congregation was encouraged to give five items each to the collection, for a total of 1,500 items. When the end of the month arrived, three pickup trucks loaded up 1,926 food items.

—Lillian Good

A pickup truck full of food awaits delivery in the Waynesboro, Pa., community in January.

Moving forward requires divine imagination

Imagination is at the heart of the church's future. Yesterday dubbed as the disreputable school-age cousin of "day-dreaming," today imagination is being rewarded handsomely in business.



GLENN TIMMONS

For the church, the reward for imagination is the possibility of a new future. Churches often look to their past to determine their future; faith, however, looks to imagination, to seeing what is not seen. Faith is believing that a discerned image can become real by taking actions to make it so.

Today, more than ever, effective and faithful ministry is dependent on the creative imaginations of leaders in congregations. Farsightedness, anticipatory learning, and discernment are all necessary in order to be captured by a clear vision for a preferred future and a focused mission.

On my return from a recent trip to northern Indiana, I heard a radio interview with the author of a new book called *Plan B*. The book looks at the big issues all governments are facing, today and certainly in the future. As was pointed out, "Plan B" implies a "Plan A," a plan that may not be working any longer, even though different results are desired.

The biblical narrative is like that. We have a Plan A and a Plan B. One presumes the other, and builds on the other. There is a point at which there is a radical departure from the conventional wisdom of the day, when God does an entirely new thing. The Light came into our darkness. And the biblical norm for those who follow the Light gets acted out in the form of servant leadership.

Many of our congregations seem to be holding on to Plan A, where the ethos is, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." But the church tends to forget its own Story. There was

"Faith is believing that a discerned image can become real by taking actions to make it so."

and is a day when God chose to use divine imagination in that emerging story, in our received narrative.

As a reminder, the church has two enduring resources from which we can find direction and proclaim good news to a hurting, yearning world—resources that are to become a natural part of our behaviors.

The first resource is scripture. This is not just the printed words, but the power of the living Word in the hearts and minds of disciples. The church is called to be yeast in the dough, salt in society, light to the city. It is that simple, and that challenging.

There was a time when the poets and prophets looked back to the old traditions, articulating their enduring relevance. Plan A was big. The way forward to a new future was to go back, to get back to the way it was.

Tradition has its place, not of replication but of re-orientation. Heritage has its role: It gives roots to fruit-bearing. Continuity has its place, but scripture also points to discontinuity, to transformation.

Voices like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the second part of Isaiah proclaim a new beginning with a fresh, re-creative action of God. They point to an action revealed in Jesus of Nazareth, an ancient-future action of God's reign—both present and future tense.

This newness was discernible, but seen only with eyes of faith. First it was the divine imagination of the prophets, poets who wrought the new thing God was and is doing. New poetic imaginations evoked new realities in the community of faith. Then Jesus himself evoked an alternative future, a new wine requiring new wineskins.

As then, so now. Our imaginations have the potential to enable us to see, to bring into being a new, discerned future and to evoke new possibilities seen even in the darker moments and harsh realities. Since the future is where I am going to spend the rest of my life, that is the direction I choose to face, pointing to what is real and taking action.

This leads to the second resource. It is the heart of the Brethren understanding of Jesus and of faith. It is found in the drama and lifestyle of feetwashing. It is the ritual that defines us as an alternative community. It tells us who we are, in a world that would squeeze us into its own mold (and has, more than we like to admit).

It is a ritual drama that gives light to darkness, because it is a ritual that points to God's own creative imagination in Jesus and the role of servant leadership in a world of upward mobility, of power over others, even violence. Jesus turned conventional wisdom upside-down by kneeling down rather than climbing over.

Today is a new day. It is a day of new opportunity for the church at every level to invest its life in the co-creative use of divine imagination—imagination grounded in the resources of our received narrative and its norms for discipleship. In these two resources we see God's divine imagination at work. They hold the potential to get the church, our church, beyond its internal maneuvering and debates to a new understanding of and appreciation for who we are in Christ.

Scripture enables us to see the Light, and see by the Light. Feetwashing, when embodied, gets us beyond our pre-occupation with self, even with our survival, to once again focus the energy and mission of the church toward a cynical world that is waiting, even longing, for a life-giving alternative. **W**

Glenn Timmons retired in December as executive director of Congregational Life Ministries for the Church of the Brethren General Board. He lives in Elgin, Ill., and is a member of the Highland Avenue congregation.

QUOTE WORTHY

“While public furor has always been over the ‘authenticity’ of the Hollywood Jesus, the overlooked issue is really what this Jesus says about America, where we are and where we are going.”

—Hamilton College (N.Y.) religious studies professor Steve Humphries-Brooks, who teaches a course titled “The Celluloid Savior”

“We are not able to declare categorically that so and so has a first class ticket to hell. We shall be surprised at those we meet in heaven whom we least expected to be there and perhaps also by those we do not find there whom we had expected to be there.”

—Retired Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu in the Longford Lecture, delivered Feb. 17 in London (RNS)

“We’re human. We get attached to stuff. Pretty soon our stuff takes control rather than our spiritual life or whatever we believe should be truly ruling our lives.”

—professional organizer Pamela Holland of Dallas, quoted in a Religion News Service story by Mary Jacobs

“My faith demands that I listen to people, find out what their needs are, and do something about it.”

—Evangelical Lutheran Church in America minister Mary Louise Frenchman, a Native American, addressing a National Council of Churches Mobilization to End Poverty forum

“We’re in the capital of the most powerful nation on Earth, yet we recognize the limits of all earthly power. God serves his own purposes and does not owe us an explanation.”

—President George W. Bush, speaking to the annual National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. (RNS)

“I’m from a different faith tradition, and this could never happen in the church I came from. I’m so glad to be part of the Church of the Brethren.”

—pastor attending a Ministry of Reconciliation workshop on “Leadership in Times of Controversy,” where people with differing viewpoints shared in a “safe and prayerful space”

“We must own this together as a common challenge.”

—part of a Church World Service release on the global AIDS epidemic

CULTURE REVIEW

- **The UNICEF 2003 *Child Poverty in the Developing World*** report notes that in developing countries, 91 million children under age 5 suffer from severe malnourishment, while 134 million of those between ages 7 and 18 have never been to school (reported in *Sojourners*).
- **Church World Service** says that more than a quarter of a million people take part in its annual CROP WALK events. Over the past 15 years, these walkers have raised nearly a quarter of a billion dollars for disaster relief, development projects, and hunger-fighting programs.
- **USA Today** reports that director Andrew Adamson plans to film a big-screen adaptation of **C.S. Lewis’ *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*** this year in New Zealand. It is expected to be the first of five movies based on Lewis’ *Chronicles of Narnia* series.
- **Americans who are actively religious** rated themselves as more satisfied with life than those without faith in a recent Gallup Poll. More than 70 percent of all respondents said they are satisfied with their lives. Of those surveyed who identified with a religious community, 77 percent said they are satisfied, while the results dropped to 62 percent for nonreligious respondents. (RNS)
- **A US Conference of Mayors** survey of 25 large cities found a 17 percent increase in requests for emergency food assistance, according to Associated Press. Denver, Colo., had the largest increase for such assistance, up 48 percent.

Believers

Ideas and trends in faith and values

Catholic and Protestant Church Attendance

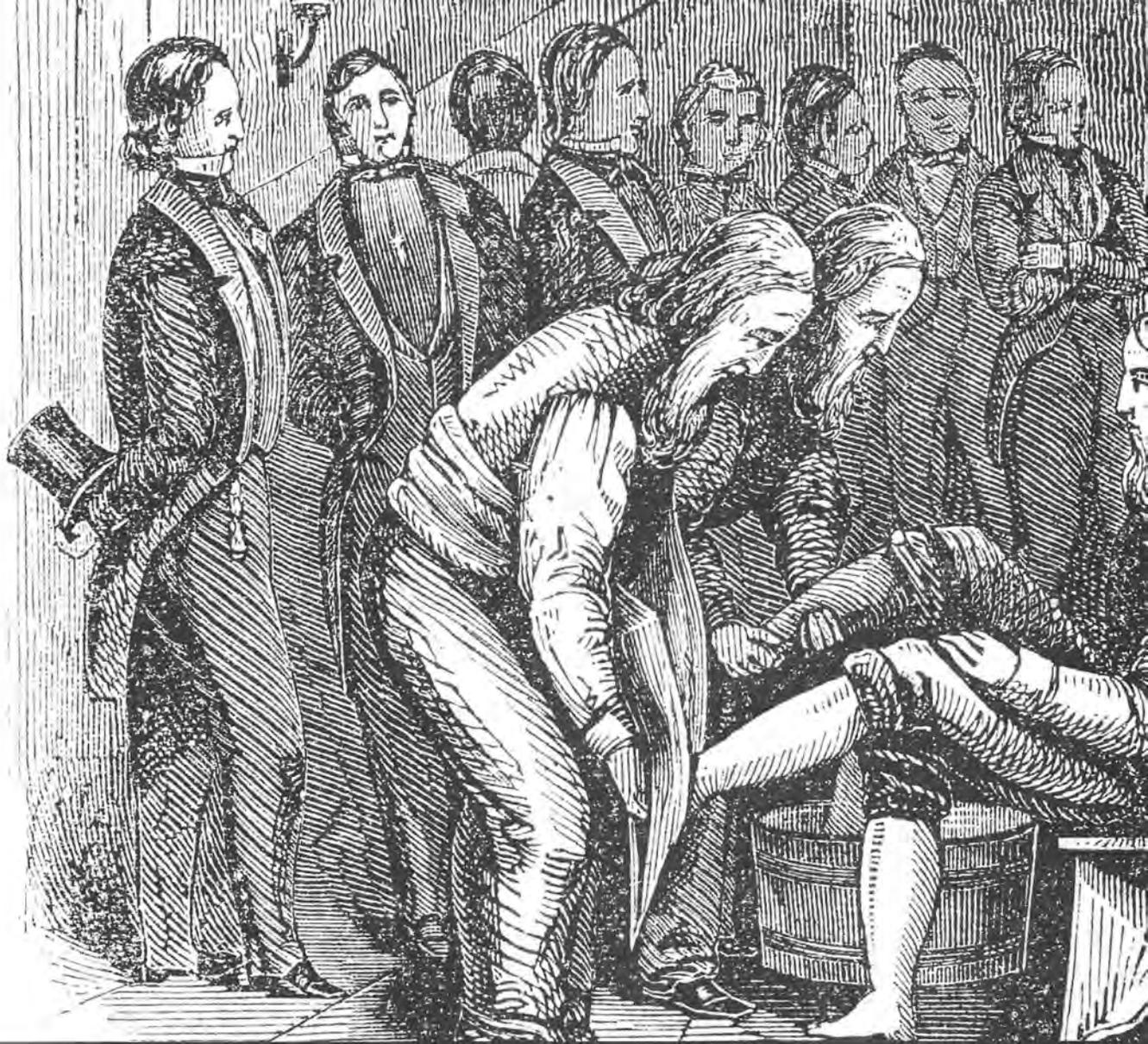
More Protestants than Catholics now attend church on a weekly basis, according to polls taken by the Gallup Organization.



- ❑ After the clergy sexual abuse scandal broke in January 2002, Catholic weekly church attendance reached an all-time low of 35 percent. By November 2003, attendance had climbed back to 45 percent.
- ❑ During that period, Protestant attendance remained fairly stable at around 47 percent.
- ❑ In 1955, however, almost twice as many Catholics as Protestants attended church on a weekly basis, 74% to 42%.
- ❑ In 2003 40% of Catholics said they attended church last week while 47% of Protestants said they attended church last week.

Source: The Gallup Organization

By Christina Denny and Monica Seaberry
© 2004 Religion News Service



By Frank Ramirez

Back to the waters

When writer Phebe Gibbons caught a train to Lancaster County, Pa., in 1871 to visit a Brethren love feast, she prepared herself to enter what she thought would be a strange world. As a reporter for major women's magazines, she intended to write about what would no doubt be a strange, perhaps even bizarre, practice by an obscure religious sect.

What she experienced was the equivalent of a three-day slumber party. It was multicultural. She was astonished to discover folks named Murphy back when the Irish were nearly as reviled as blacks. It was filling. The food and coffee never stopped. It was multi-generational. Venerable patriarchs and matriarchs held court, to be sure, but children

Regina Bryan



hollered during worship ("Want Pappy, Want Pappy," one toddler complained while mom struggled with him), infants were breast-fed, teens courted. The family reunion included relatives, friends, and relative strangers.

It was, in short, a feast based on love. Because she was not a baptized member of the Brethren she could not participate in the actual communion service, but Gibbons was surprised to discover that she was drawn into everything—endless cups of hot coffee and plates of sweet pie, as well as hearty meals, sermons in German and English, inspiring hymn singing, good fellowship, and a giggly sleepover in the church attic with the women (the men were sleeping only a few feet away beyond a partition).

In some ways Gibbons' description of a 19th-century love feast is one of the most important documents available to Brethren. Henry Holsinger wrote a clas-



This drawing by G.L. Croome appeared in Peter Nead's *Theological Writings* in 1850. It shows onlookers, distinguished by their "worldly clothing," observing the Brethren ritual of footwashing from the perimeter.

Love feast remains at the heart of who the Brethren are

sic description of the service, but it was with an eye to providing an idealized portrait. Gibbons was more concerned with the cutlery, cold cuts, and condiments.

The love feast is an essential Brethren practice. Though it is a movable feast, it is also holy ground. The best thing of all is that we don't have to kill anybody to preserve our holy ground from infidels or interlopers. Just the opposite, this is a place where all people can come together, remove their shoes, and meet Jesus.

The eight co-founders of the Church of the Brethren engaged in joint Bible study and determined that this central ordinance is required in order to follow the words and example of Jesus. Nearly 300

"The Brethren tradition is one of the few that has had the insight and courage to seek to restore the apostolic, New Testament church form of celebration of the Lord's Supper."

—Ben Witherington III, "Making a Meal of It: The First Century Social Setting," from *The Lord's Supper: Believers Church Perspectives*, p. 153

years into the Brethren experiment we seem to agree that the love feast—consisting of footwashing, the *agape* meal, along with bread and cup communion—remains essential. It's not convenient, it

feels archaic or strange to some, and it's a little bit frightening, but Jesus told us to do things this way, and for Brethren that's good enough.

Which is not to say that the conversa-

Courtesy of BHLA





Women at the Mt. Carmel congregation in Green County, Va., partake of the cup during love feast in the mid-20th century.

tion over the supper hasn't been a little heated at times. While Brethren were in agreement that the meal should take place, from the beginning we have struggled over the fine print.

Do we wash feet first, second, or third in the sequence? What shall the menu consist of? Is communion bread punctured with sets of three, four, or five holes? With whom do we share the holy kiss, or do we share it at all? Can sisters break bread with each other, or can they only have it broken for them? Is the wine fermented or flat? May only Brethren participate, or is the feast open to all Christians or indeed all people? Are children full participants, or may they even attend? Do we wash feet, or are there circumstances where handwashing will

What is it about love feast?

By Larry M. Dentler

I'm 7, and I wait eagerly for my family to return from love feast at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. When Grandma arrives, she opens her black purse. Inside, wrapped in a napkin, is a buttered roll from the love feast table. Why does this anticipated roll taste better than any other? What is it about love feast?

I'm 12, just baptized, and my stomach's full of butterflies for my first love feast. Arthur kneels down before me with some difficulty. His calloused carpenter's hands wash my young feet. I'm in awe. He rises, embraces me, places a gentle kiss on my cheek and whispers in my ear, "Larry, my boy." What is it about love feast?

I'm 20; a licensed minister. I'd made plans to go to a concert. (I hate to admit it was "Sonny

& Cher"!)

When I realized that it was the same night as love feast I was distressed! My pastor and mentor, Bill Gould, with a grandfatherly smile, said go ahead and go to the concert. I did. I had a terrible evening. My heart was at love feast. What is it about love feast?

I'm 32, in my first days of my first pastorate, with North Liberty (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. I've got butterflies again. When it's time for the meal, I'm shocked. They talk! Conversation around the

Phil Grout



table! Not hushed at all like at Mechanicsburg. I sit back and take it in. Somehow it seems right. I look around at the candlelit faces of my new church family. What is it about love feast?

I'm 40; it's soon time for my first love feast with my new congregation, Bermudian. I've asked the choir to sing. I get word that Brother Glenn is unhappy. Glenn is the last of our "free ministers" from the days of nonsalaried, plural ministry at Bermudian. I go to his shop. We sit around the woodstove and make small talk. Finally I raise the issue. Glenn's eyes moisten. He says, "We've never had the piano played at love feast." This gentle brother isn't being obstinate. He's not trying to cause trouble. I see in his eyes a sense of loss. What

is it about love feast?

I'm 50; Bermudian has planted a new congregation, Lake View Christian Fellowship. Most who attend have no Brethren background; many have no church background. On their own, they went to a local tinsmith and had a "five-prong fork" made so they could make their unleavened bread "right." Love feast here is very different, yet just right. I'm sitting in a circle of chairs as brothers wash each other's feet. Here are men who just a short while ago had never even heard of love feast. They kneel before each other. They embrace. I find my heart stirred with praise and awe. What is it about love feast?

I'm 52, and Bermudian's youth are leading love feast tonight. For the first time in my

do? The debate has been rancorous at times, to say the least.

One of my favorite stories about the love feast concerns the contention in the 19th century between those who believed that two brothers or sisters should wash the feet of several believers (called the double mode) versus those who thought each should wash and be washed in turn (the single mode). Abraham Harley Cassel, who preserved Brethren history because of his passion for book and document collecting, held out for the single mode.

Annual Meeting sent elder D.P. Sayler to consult Cassel and his library to settle the matter. Sayler conveniently managed to arrive while Cassel was out. Rather than wait for the antiquarian he was

observed to walk into the library and walk out again. He then departed as quickly as possible and was able to report, evidently with a straight face, that he had been through the famed Cassel collection and had found nothing to contradict the double mode!

In the midst of another energetic debate, Alexander Mack Jr., son of one of the co-founders, had to remind those

engaged about one key word in the ordinance: love. Mack wrote, "Therefore, dear brethren, let us watch, and be careful, and above all preserve love; for then we will preserve light" (*The Brethren Encyclopedia*, p. 148).

Some wonder if the love feast, with its emphasis on doing things the Jesus way, is outdated. Over the course of the last century many Brethren retreated to "back

J. Henry Long/courtesy of BHLA

A member of the Evergreen congregation in Virginia kneels down for the feetwashing service in 1951.



13 years as Bermudian's pastor I sit among the people for love feast. But there at the front table is my 15-year-old daughter, Jessie, and my 14-year-old son, John. There are tears in my eyes as I share these sacred ordinances again. What is it about love feast?

...

It's been written that it is hard to fully understand the Brethren without attending love feast. I agree!

Our faith ancestors searched God's Word with a desire to "be" the church the New Testament defined. They studied the writings of primitive Christianity desiring to "be" like the church in the earliest days of Christianity. Love feast was shaped by that passion.

They were stubbornly legalis-

tic about doing love feast "right." At first feetwashing came after the meal. But careful study in the original Greek led to the realization that the text implies the meal was on the table, but not yet eaten, when Jesus rose to institute this new ordinance. We changed. What is it about love feast?

There are subtle variations in love feast traditions in each congregation. Yet each place has a sense that they are carrying forward the tradition as purely as if it was handed down to them from Alexander Mack himself! In our humanness we've argued, fought, and separated over love feast details. In some places we've let the awe slip away. In others we've refused to allow love feast to breathe fresh for new generations of sisters and brothers.

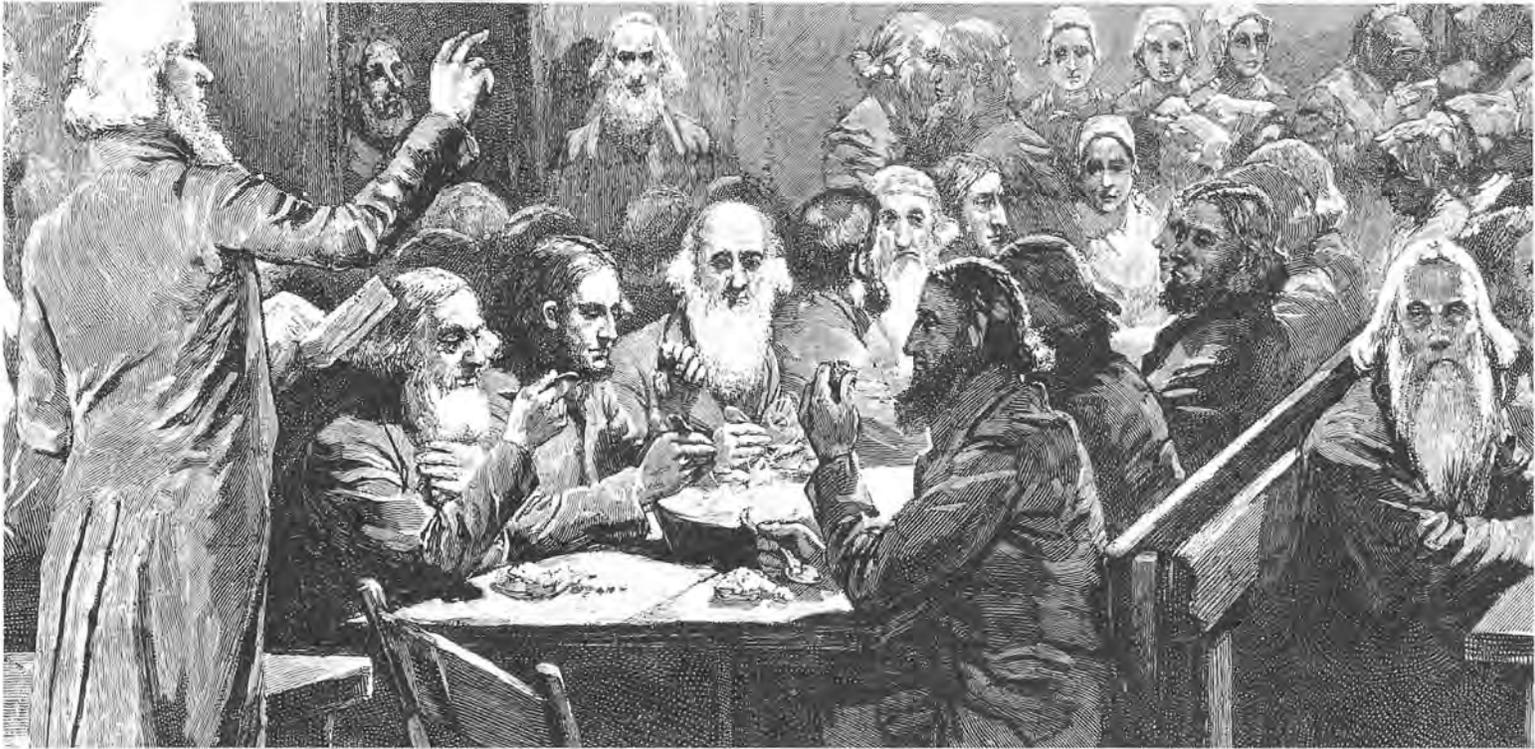
Whenever the place of love feast is diminished in a congregation, something of what it means for them to be "Brethren" is lost. What is it about love feast?

...

You're many ages, young to old. Your congregation is preparing to celebrate love feast. Perhaps you've not missed a love feast for 50 years (except for that Sonny & Cher concert!), or it has been a while, or this will be your first

time. Spend some time in prayer. Read and reflect upon John 13-15. Pray for your leaders as they prepare. Invite someone who usually doesn't attend. Ask the Lord to let the ordinances speak to you in fresh ways. In the examination, the feetwashing, the meal, the holy communion draw near to Christ again. There really is something about love feast! ❗

Larry Dentler is pastor of Bermudian Church of the Brethren, East Berlin, Pa.



Andrew W. Cordier, who helped draft the charter of the United Nations, and who for 17 years served as one of its top officials, credited the Brethren love feast as being a formative experience for him. In a 1960 interview with Church of the Brethren member Inez Long, now of New Oxford, Pa., Cordier said:

"Utter sincerity, utter fairness, and utter integrity are basic to communication, and I first learned them as prior conditions to coming to the love feast tables. At these tables, after applying the rules of Matthew 18, the Brethren dramatize the idea of brotherhood under God.

Phil Grout

"I saw these concepts acted out before my eyes, by people I loved and trusted, from the time I could remember. The ideas stayed with me. . . . Such concepts of brotherhood at the conference tables of the United Nations give peace a fighting chance."

—from *Preaching in a Tavern*, compiled by Kenneth I. Morse and published by Brethren Press in 1997

of the neck communion": bread and cup served in a sterilized environment with the participants facing forward. There are even those who consider the old way embarrassing.

Perhaps. But I think for good or ill the love feast is at the foundation of every choice we make as Brethren, and is essential to defining us for who we are. The love feast demonstrates that when it comes to discipleship, obedience, and service, there is no place we will not go in the name of Jesus.

The early Brethren were not the only ones who thought so. An extraordinary body of evidence makes it clear that early Christians practiced the elements of the love feast.

In the world of the New Testament, dusty roads insured that even those who had bathed would arrive at social events with dirty feet. One either washed one's own feet, or a slave was forced to do it. When Jesus girded himself with a towel he provides the first example in all of the ancient literature where someone of superior station bends a knee to wash the feet of someone of lesser stature. Jesus turned the world upside-down, and continues to do so to this day.

In the first church early Christians believed their sins were forgiven with baptism, but wondered what happened to

the sins they committed after becoming a believer. In contrast to the infinite mercy Jesus proclaimed, there were those such as the writer of *The Shepherd of Hermes* who suggested forgiveness might be offered only once after baptism. Indeed, some in the ancient world delayed baptism until they were sure they were dying, for fear their sins would be beyond forgiveness.

Because Jesus said, "One who has bathed does not need to wash, except for the feet, but is entirely clean (John 13:10), the feetwashing became a symbol of God's continuing forgiveness. The journey through the love feast became a trip back to the waters—the waters of baptism, and God's open-ended forgiveness.

The common meal was just as revolutionary. The Roman Empire was every bit as fractured a culture as our own. There were many layers to society: rich and poor, slave and free, male and female, Jew and Gentile, Roman and Celt. Interaction was tightly controlled. Yet the evidence of Paul's letters in the Bible and early Christian art is clear—the meal named "love" brings together all elements of society to one table. Love feast is meant to cross cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender lines.

It's not easy. Brethren scholar Graydon F. Snyder, in his book *Inculturation of the*



This drawing by Howard Pyle, titled "A Love Feast Among the Dunkers," was originally an illustration for Harper's Weekly in 1883.

"...Brethren would rather re-enact life in their worship than merely watch clergy carry out a prescribed liturgy....There is perhaps no better form of Christian education and no better 'service' than actually acting out our worship."

—Graydon F. Snyder and Ken Shaffer Jr., *Texts in Transit II*, pp. 121-122

Jesus Tradition, makes it clear that when it came to Jew and Gentile there were some serious food issues involved, but a meal of bread and fish was acceptable to both cultures. Love feast takes effort, but it works.

There will continue to be questions about how to conduct the love feast—in silence, or with the warmth of conversation; with children present, absent, or elsewhere entertained; in darkness or in light; with mutton, beef, fish, or asparagus. As long as these discussions are based on scripture, they are healthy and welcome.

Some might suggest that a more "spiri-

tual" approach, without recourse to actual physical feetwashing and a meal, is just as appropriate. Maybe it's the old faith versus works thing. But all along, our New Testament has been telling us that it's faith *and* works, because you can't have one without the other.

It's like the old story of the daredevil who turned to a spectator and asked, "Do you believe I can push this wheelbarrow across this tightrope above Niagara Falls?" The spectator paused and said, "Yes, I believe you can." The daredevil replied, "Good. Climb in the wheelbarrow."

Walt Wiltschek



Regina Bryan



Love feast is believing the Bible means what it says, that Jesus is serious, and that our only recourse in the face of a world determined to worship the false gods of power and violence is to humbly jump aboard with the daredevil Jesus on his cross and ride for all we're worth.

This is who we are: disciples of Jesus. Our decisions on war and peace, simplicity and wealth, praise for God and rejection for the world, come from our determination to walk behind Jesus.

Dunking a foot into that feetwashing basin in an essential step on the journey—the journey with the Lord of love. **W**

Frank Ramirez is pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, author of several books, and a member of the Church of the Brethren General Board.

Frank Ramirez compiled a variety of stories and other historical information for *The Love Feast*, a 166-page book that gives insight into this traditional Brethren ordinance. Published in 2000 by Brethren Press, the book remains available for purchase at \$19.95 each paperback, \$49.95 hardcover. Call 800-441-3712.

General Board staff member Greg Davidson Laszakovits, left, washes the feet of colleague Ed Woolf during General Board meetings.

Pastors, pulpits, and placements—Oh my!

By Walt Wiltschek

Meetings ministerial leadership needs of congregations remains a challenge, but with signs of hope

One of the recent "People Spots" from church consultant James W. Moss Sr. asked the question, "Where do pastors come from?" As many congregations that have had to fill an open pulpit can attest, they don't grow on trees.

Finding and keeping quality pastoral leadership has proven a challenge for most denominations. An Evangelical Lutheran Church of America report last fall showed 2,456 congregations in that denomination without a full-time pastor, more than double the number 15 years earlier. The United Church of Canada reported a 14-percent drop in the number of people being trained for the ordained ministry in 2002.

"The church hasn't declared a crisis yet, but I have," United Church staff member Bob Wallace told the denomination's magazine, *The Observer*. Wallace noted 284 congregations in that denomination without an assigned minister.

Similar concerns have affected the Church of the Brethren. A report in 2002 indicated 98 openings for pastors in the Church of the Brethren, with only 32 pastoral profiles in the denominational system. General Board director of ministry Mary Jo Flory-Steury says that gap has narrowed to about 75 openings and 36 profiles as of February, a good sign, but she expresses concern that many congregations may be bypassing the placement system.

"One of the real struggles smaller congregations have is that the placement system as we know it doesn't really fit for them," Flory-Steury says. "Not a lot of pastors are willing to consider moving for a half-time or less ministerial placement. It may be time to get creative, and take a good look at the placement system."

Herman Kauffman, district executive minister for Northern Indiana and one of the denomination's longer-tenured executives, says he has experienced similar challenges.

"I have not had too much trouble placing pastors in congregations searching for full-time, solo pastors, although there are fewer candidates interviewed and the process takes longer," Kauffman

says. "The major problem I have is finding candidates for congregations in search of a part-time pastor, associate pastor, or youth pastor."

With the high percentage of small congregations in the Church of the Brethren (80 percent of its congregations average 90 people or fewer in worship, according to General Board Congregational Life Team member Jim Kinsey), finding pastoral leadership for those congregations is a growing concern.

A November 2003 *Christian Century* article observed that most empty pulpits are in such congregations, which aren't as attractive since "they are isolated geographically, and they don't pay much in salary or benefits."

Only about half the denomination's pastors are paid at the denomination's salary scale, according to a 2001 survey by the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, and most part-time pastors work more, often far more, than the hours for which they are contracted.

Geography also plays a part, with congregations west of the Mississippi, and even some areas of the Midwest and South, often having somewhat more difficulty in calling pastors. Flory-Steury says it's hard to get many pastors to look west of the Indiana-Illinois line for placement.

Jonathan Shively, director of the Brethren Academy

Jim Chagares



Bethany Theological Seminary president Gene Roop, left, congratulates Becki Whittaker of Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren as she completes a Certificate in Theological Studies program in 2002.



Atlantic Northeast District executive Craig Smith, top right, leads a consecration and licensing service for Charlene Rauch (kneeling second from left) and Clay Moyer (kneeling far right) at Indian Creek Church of the Brethren, Harleysville, Pa., on Feb. 15. Also kneeling are spouses Terry Rauch, left, and Linda Moyer. Church board chair Eugene Wampler, deacon chair Brooke Alderfer, and pastor Mark Baliles (top row, left to right) also took part in the service.

ination—and only 13 percent of those serving as pastors—were women, despite a much higher number of women being trained for ministry. The resolution noted a reluctance among some in the church to accept women in leadership positions, despite a 1958 Annual Conference statement calling for equality.

Shively also wonders whether the current numbers settle for maintenance of the church, sim-

ply filling the holes left by retirement, rather than looking at a larger picture.

for Ministerial Leadership, says that regardless of geography, “the age of going to a neighboring district or halfway across the country to get your pastor seems to be less of a trend.” That’s in part, he says, because many potential pastors—especially those coming to ministry as a second career—are less willing to uproot their lives. Another factor is the high costs of relocation, which many congregations can’t afford to pay.

There is good news amid the challenge, however. In 1999, Flory-Steury’s predecessor as director of ministry, Allen Hansell, established a goal of calling 500 men and women to the ministry in five years, by the end of 2003. While that figure was not quite reached, significant progress was made. Ministry Office statistics show 413 Brethren newly called into ministry or received from other denominations during that period.

Still, some raise caution amid good statistics. Not all those called will complete ministry programs, and some will likely choose ministry routes other than pastoral ministry.

Another concern was expressed in a 1999 General Board Resolution on Women in Ministry, which observed that only 15 percent of licensed and ordained ministers in the denom-

“Calling the leaders for the future church while also calling for the current church is really, really important,” Shively says. “If our only goal is to maintain what we’ve got, we’re not plugged into a big enough vision.”

Pushing the missional envelope, he says, will require calling what church planting consultant Jeff Wright calls the “Gonzo nut-cases” of ministry—people who don’t necessarily fit the traditional mold.

“I think we drive a lot of people out of church because we don’t recognize their gifts as good for ministry, or because they scare us,” Shively says. “They don’t fit neatly within our expectations of the church and what the church looks like, not in terms of being rebels, but in a diversity of experience and perspective; not seeing things as they are, but as they might be.”

Moss, in his December 2003 People Spots Online piece, suggested that each local church has a “debt” to the larger church in terms of ministry service. For each year a congregation has received service from a pastor, he says, that congregation should produce pastors who provide at

BY THE NUMBERS

In its fall 2003 *Seminarian* newsletter, Bethany Theological Seminary provided the following statistics about its student body:

For the graduate school program, 77 were taking classes at the main Richmond, Ind., campus and 20 through the Susquehanna Valley Satellite based in Pennsylvania. Fifty-eight of these students were in a Master of Divinity program; 30 of them were Brethren college alumni (led by 13 from nearby Manchester College). They represented 16 of the Church of the Brethren districts plus Nigeria and 19 other denominations.

In the Brethren Academy program, 102 students were enrolled in Training in Ministry (TRIM) and 16 in Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM). Nine people graduated from the Academy in 2003.

SUSTAINING PASTORAL EXCELLENCE

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership's new Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program will be designed to engage "excellent pastors" in ways that enrich their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, relational, and physical health.

Marcia Shetler



A search for a coordinator of the program was under way this winter.

The program will feature two long-term professional growth experiences for pastors:

- A "Vital Pastor" program will invite small groups of pastors to design and implement their own learning plans, with the aim of enhancing and sustaining self-identified competency areas such as biblical study, preaching, and pastoral care.
- An "Advanced Foundations of Church Leadership" program will engage cohort groups of 10 to 12 pastors in learning experiences to improve their leadership capacities.

More information is available at www.brethren.org/bethany/pastoralexcellencemain.htm.

least that many years of service to other congregations.

In a 2003 Mennonite Church USA article by Laurie L. Oswald, Eastern Mennonite Seminary associate dean Sara Wenger Shenk noted that the church's calling system "has eroded in the last couple of decades," and that congregations must be more intentional in encouraging people, especially young people, to consider pastoral ministry.

The Church of the Brethren has made strides in this area in the past decade. The General Board's Ministry Summer Service program for young adults considering ministry has proven to be a dynamic and popular one, matching young adults with mentors in a ministry setting. Bethany Theological Seminary's Exploring Your

Call program starts earlier, planting seeds with high school-aged youth. Many districts have also presented workshops or other events focused on calling.

The Brethren Academy, meanwhile, has grown rapidly in the past few years. It now offers 10 or more Academy-level courses each year, many in convenient locations near concentrations of churches and some offered online. Bethany's Susquehanna Valley Satellite based in Elizabethtown, Pa., and the Christian Growth Institute in Virlina District have both been certified as Academy-level systems, with other programs exploring certification.

Fifteen to 20 churches are in the Education for a Shared Ministry (EFSM) process at any given time, according to



A gift that keeps on multiplying

Former pastor's foresight and generosity fuel leadership

"I want to be obedient to God's call," says Pedro Fravien, a member of Eglise des Freres Haitiens (Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren). "I want to pastor a church, or wherever God leads. I want to be responsible in the congregation where I am at."

Thanks to a generous bequest, Fravien and others can now pursue God's leading with ministry studies in their native Creole language.

The bequest of more than \$100,000, from the estate of former Sebring (Fla.) pastor John C. Middlekauff, was left to Atlantic Southeast District in 2001 for the distinct purpose of bringing revitalization and new growth opportuni-

ties. The committee responsible for strategic planning on use of these funds placed a high priority on leadership development.

A three-year grant went to the Theological Institute in Puerto Rico to aid the school in providing stipends for professors, and for other continuing education workshops to be presented. Another grant has allowed a growing number of people in the district, eight at last count, to enroll in the Training in Ministry (TRIM) program. And Eglise Des Freres Haitiens has now been able to provide training to members who are already involved in the life of the church, but have dreams of church

planting in the US and in Haiti.

"I *have* to work at the church," says Marie Claudine St. Georges, another Miami Haitiens member. "I am ready for everything that I am asked to do." And Jean Nixon Aubel says, "I want to help the people through ministry, doing everything in the name of Jesus."

Others echoed these feelings, and they gave a hearty, resounding "Yes" when asked if the training they were receiving through the South Florida Center for Theological Studies was helping them grow in their Christian faith after several semesters of study.

That original class from Eglise Des Freres Haitiens was composed of 15 students. Twelve completed the first course, "Introduction to the Old Testament." Illness and moves further reduced the number in later classes to eight, but enthusiasm in

Atlantic Southeast is one of the smaller districts in the denomination, with 24 congregations spread across Florida and Puerto Rico. The multicultural district has about 1,900 members, according to 2002 *Yearbook* statistics.

Shively, taking advantage of a three-year program where members of a small congregation receive training along with the pastor who studies while in service. More than 100 people were enrolled in Training in Ministry (TRIM), a flexible program designed especially for those without an undergraduate degree, this past fall.

"There are a lot of wonderful things going on in districts and congregations in calling, considering vocation, and so forth," Flory-Steury says.

For the most exciting highlight of 2003, though, she points to a new initiative that will support experienced pastors. Titled "Sustaining Pastoral Excellence" (see sidebar), it will become reality thanks to a \$2 million Lilly grant awarded to the Brethren Academy in November.

The grant is designed to help pastoral leaders who exhibit "qualities of health and vitality in ministry" to build supportive relationships and to enhance conversations on pastoral excellence throughout the denomination. At the same time, Clergy Renewal Grants from Lilly are helping individual pastors engage in Sabbath Rest encouraged by new guidelines adopted by Annual Conference in 2002.

"We continue to struggle with a number of different things," Flory-Steury says, "but there are some good signs." ❧

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER and an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.

FIND OUT MORE

Details on **Ministry Summer Service** can be found at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/mss.htm, or call 800-323-8039. For "**Exploring Your Call**," visit www.brethren.org/bethany/eyc.htm or call 800-287-8822, or see page 25 of this issue. For information on EFSM, TRIM, and other **Brethren Academy** programs, go to www.bethanyseminary.edu/academy.htm or call 800-287-8822.

INSIGHTS IN CHARLESTON

Several groups are planning to offer insight sessions related to pastoral ministry this summer at Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va.

The General Board Office of Ministry will present a pair of sessions on "Pastoral Leadership: Moving Congregations from Maintenance to Mission," led by Dr. Alan Roxburgh. The Council of District Executives will sponsor sessions on "Placement Issues for Pastors," "Placement Issues for Congregations," and "Calling Out Ministers from Within Our Midst." And the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership will give an insight session on the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence program.

By Carol L. Yeazell

development

that group has remained high.

Still others have been sent to training sessions in new church planting. Even though some were not personally in new church plants, they all acknowledged the personal growth they experienced. One individual decided he was not cut out to be a church planter, acknowledging the need to know where one's spiritual gifts and natural abilities lie. The others brought back a new resolve to be faithful to the call of God in their lives and to implement the things that applied in their local settings.

All of this has been made possible because one former pastor had a vision and heart for the continuance of the church. Middlekauff followed advice from a Christian banker friend to invest a portion of his wages on a monthly basis, which produced a bountiful harvest by the



time his earthly labors were finished.

He didn't ignore his family, but neither did he limit what God had graciously given to him. In addition to family, he chose organizations and institutions that would reap multiple benefits by being recipients of his gift. By doing so, he left an ongoing legacy that could serve as a model for others.

In a small district, it is often difficult to have adequate personnel and financial resources. Now, new life has been received by Atlantic Southeast District. That energy continues to be generated as each group of leaders is

Members of the Miami Eglise de Freres Haitiens (Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren) have been able to receive ministry training, thanks to a generous bequest. They stand here in class with district executive Martha Beach, second from right, and pastor Ludovic St. Fleur, third from right.

being prepared and then placed into service, fueling momentum for the district to dream bigger dreams. ❧

Carol Yeazell is a staff member of the General Board's Area 3 (Southeast) Congregational Life Team and a member of the Atlantic Southeast District Bequest Task Force Committee. She lives in Arden, N.C.

A passion for people: *Don Rowe and Hazel Peters*

The early months of 2004 brought news of the passing of two church leaders whose quiet wisdom and passion for people spoke volumes about being the church.

Hazel Peters, a key figure in Brethren Service and a long-time employee and volunteer of the denomination, died Jan.

Their combined decades of service touched innumerable lives, and they left an indelible imprint on the Church of the Brethren.

14 in Roanoke, Va., at age 84. A memorial service for Peters was held Feb. 1 at the Central congregation in downtown Roanoke, where she was a member.

Don Rowe, the architect of the current district organizational structure and a servant at virtually every level of the church during his career, died Feb. 2 in Westminster, Md., at age 83. His life was remembered at a Feb. 14 service at the Westminster congregation.

Their combined decades of service touched innumerable lives, and they left an indelible imprint on the Church of the Brethren.

At the heart of service

Hazel Peters only came up to the shoulder of many people, but her stature and impact in the denomination and beyond far exceeded her small physical size.

Peters began her church career in 1949, when she was among the first to enter Brethren Volunteer Service. She went to Europe, working first with Brethren Service Commission tasks in Germany and with refugees in Austria, and later as M.R. Zigler's secretary in Geneva, Switzerland.



In 1953 she became administrative assistant for the Brethren Service Commission's main office in Elgin, Ill., and "was at the heart of all Brethren Service activities" for the next 16 years, according to a staff citation, providing a vital link between the denomination's international ministries and the US church.

"She had a lifetime of devotion to the Church of the Brethren, and specifically, Brethren Service,"

recalls Ken Kreider, professor of history emeritus and author of *A Cup of Cold Water: The Story of Brethren Service*. "While others got the credit, the real work was done by Hazel behind the scenes."

Peters followed her Brethren Service tenure by serving as administrative assistant to general secretary Loren Bowman, and later as coordinator for the Personnel Office. The citation read at her retirement from the General Board in 1981 said,

"Hazel has style! . . . and that style always centers on people."

Peters "retired" by becoming an active volunteer with On Earth Peace in New Windsor, Md., for much of the next 14-plus years. A Hazel Peters Youth Leadership Fund was estab-

lished at On Earth Peace in 1996 to support conflict resolution training for camp staff, youth peace retreats, and other opportunities for leadership development.

"So humble, so much a servant for the General Board and for On Earth Peace," former On Earth Peace director Tom Hurst said. "She was an incredible woman serving the church from 1948 on. . . . If the Brethren had saints, Hazel would either top my list or come very, very close to the top."

Kreider notes that Peters spent a significant amount of time in retirement compiling a list of people who had participated in the various aspects of Brethren Service, along with their current addresses. Kreider called it "an invaluable service to the church and future researchers."

After her time in New Windsor, Peter finally returned full-time to her home in Roanoke, where she had started out her career working for Shenandoah Life Insurance. She maintained an active retirement, continuing to help On Earth Peace and also assisting in the Virginia District office.

In a letter to the district following Peters' death, Virginia executive minister David Shumate said that the district office staff would "miss Hazel's quiet presence, her encyclopedic knowledge of persons and issues related to the Church of the Brethren, her general helpfulness, and her people skills. She was a blessing to us all."

A quiet voice of authority

At Don Rowe's memorial service in Westminster, people who had known him recalled a man who didn't necessarily talk a lot, but "Whenever he spoke, everyone listened."

Rowe, known for both his warmth and his keen insight, served in a wide variety of denominational capacities. He was most recently director of District Ministries for the General Board, from 1987 to 1992, but previously had been director of Interpretation, manager of Annual Conference, director of field ministries, and director of personnel for the World Ministries Commission. He was moderator of Annual Conference in 1975.

"Don was ever an affirming colleague," said Howard

Released

A poem for Easter

by Nancy M. Jones

*Wintry darkness
settles across my
mental landscape*

*Imprisoned in a
tomb-like world I cry
Help me God!*

*Glistening snow,
a winged cardinal;
on the radio
a Brandenburg concerto
jet trails across the sky*

*Attention to gifts of the day,
brings release
colors vivid
music comforts
nature rings
God is present!*

*Mary's sorrow
a tomb cold reality
on her
harsh truth settles
Help me God!*

*Sunrise
her morning gift
a stone moved*

*A figure in glistening white,
offers comforting words
release her imprisoned heart
nearby
lies
a thorned ring with drops red
discarded*

Hallelujah!

Hallelujah!

Nancy Jones is pastor of congregational life at Codorus Church of the Brethren, Loganville, Pa.

Chad Ambrosius



Royer, a long-time co-worker of Rowe at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., "one who brought energy and openness to the envisioning process."

Rowe, a graduate of Manchester College and Bethany Theological Seminary, was also executive secretary of the denomination's Western Region in the 1950s and Mid-Atlantic District executive from 1971 to 1986. He began his ministry career as a local pastor, serving congregations in Illinois and California.

Retired Westminster pastor Paul Groff, who came to the congregation while Rowe was district executive, said Rowe had a "genius" for being able to match churches and pastors. "He knew pastors out there on the national scene," Groff said. "He knew people."



Groff characterized Rowe as "a humble man who spoke with loving authority." "He was a mentor to so many of the pastors," Groff recalled. "That certainly was true for me."

It was during Rowe's work with field ministries (later

district ministries) in the 1960s that the current district map took shape. After an Annual Conference decision in 1960, Rowe worked with a re-organization committee to oversee the move from 48 districts to the current 23. "That was a major kind of administrative change," Rowe recalled in an interview with MESSENGER last year.

"If you carefully look around our district and our denomination, you will find the footprints of Don Rowe," current Mid-Atlantic District executive Don Booz said in a letter to the district.

Booz used the Hebrew word *kavoth* to describe Rowe's ministry: "Kavoth means more than charisma or someone's personality. For a person to have kavoth means that there is a presence about them. You can tell when they enter a room. People with kavoth are often recognized for their leadership ability to motivate and inspire others.

"As someone said, 'Whenever you were around Don Rowe, you got the feeling that anything could be accomplished.' "

Walt Wiltschek, Kathleen Campanella, and Barb Saylor contributed to this report.



MMPC focuses on Haiti; major missions conference is planned

The Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministries Planning Council (MMPC) received no specific proposals for new mission as it met Feb. 7 in Daytona Beach, Fla., but instead brought its church-wide perspective to a discussion of emerging mission issues and dynamics. Recent developments of congregational and district outreach to Haiti, a review of mission assignments in denominational polity, and plans for a denominational missions conference were discussed.

A follow-up meeting on Haiti mission was scheduled for Apr. 19 with a few invited participants in an effort to coordinate Haiti involvements across the denomination and to "discern the way forward." In order to gain a more complete picture of existing Church of

the Brethren involvements with Haiti, MMPC asked individuals, congregations, and districts that have been involved in a Haiti outreach to send information on their mission efforts to Mary Munson, program assistant in the

General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office, at 800-323-8039 or mission_gb@brethren.org.

MMPC, which includes Annual Conference moderators, district staff, and General Board staff, reviews pro-

General Board finishes 2003 in black, but challenges remain

The Church of the Brethren General Board's financial situation returned to some stability in 2003 after unusually large losses the previous year, and after three years of investment losses.

Programs supported by the General Ministries Fund, the General Board's main operating fund, still went through major struggles in the past year. Special fund-raising efforts were added, budgets were underspent by \$163,420, and staff reductions and realignments provided significant additional savings for 2003 and 2004. These steps, along with a major upturn in the stock market and careful planning, propelled net income to \$77,850 in 2003, according to General Board

chief financial officer and treasurer Judy Keyser.

This unexpected improvement, driven by the investment gains, stabilized the board's finances and gave it an opportunity to rebuild and strengthen its foundation. The added income allowed the board to cover its revised General Ministries budget, so that \$81,000 approved for direction from other priorities did not need to be used. This was particularly welcome news since 2003 marked the first time ongoing ministries were "patched" with one-time monies.

A slow decline in giving remains a concern, however, as the General Ministries Fund is undergirded largely by gifts from congregations and individuals. Support of \$3,218,110 was received from congregations in 2003, 1.2 percent lower than in 2002, and \$648,610

was received from individuals, 9.2 percent lower than 2002. Special partnerships provided an additional \$395,210 for increased ministries.

Of the four self-funding ministries of the General Board, only one ended the year with net income. MESSENGER finished 2003 with \$10,940 in income over expense. Service Ministries, based in New Windsor, Md., was also originally thought to have finished slightly in the black, but a later adjustment dropped its final 2003 figure to an \$1,110 deficit.

The two other self-funding ministries sustained larger losses despite underspending expenses and seeking extra income. The New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center and Brethren Press showed deficits of \$82,940 and \$46,360, respectively.

Three special-purpose

funds support ministries through donor gifts. Donations to the Emergency Disaster Fund made possible \$1,074,590 for Emergency Response. Gifts to the Global Food Crisis Fund and the Emerging Global Missions Fund provided \$463,310 and \$57,440, respectively.

While General Board finances have been "stretched and patched" for 2003 and 2004, Keyser said the agency remains a solid financial entity with no external debt. The General Ministries Fund budget for 2004 covers a gap of \$276,000 with one-time funds in order to stabilize staffing, build new momentum, and develop long-term solutions to the financial situation. Living within the means of the board's income by 2005 remains a priority, Keyser said.



Members of the 2003-2004 Mission and Ministries Planning Council are, front row: Donna Shumate, General Board chair; Donald Booz, Mid-Atlantic District executive; Linda McCauliff, Western Pennsylvania District associate executive. Middle row: Stan Noffsinger, chair, general secretary of the General Board; Chris Bowman, 2004 Annual Conference moderator; Mervin Keeney, General Board Global Mission Partnerships executive director. Back row: Jon Kobel, secretary; Jim Hardenbrook, Annual Conference moderator-elect. Not pictured: Doug Diamond.

posals for new Brethren mission, advises the board about denominational involvement in new mission areas, and facilitates conversation about mission with and among Church of the Brethren membership. General secretary Stan Noffsinger chairs MMPC.

A General Board-coordinated steering committee later announced details for the missions conference. Titled "Mission Alive 2005!," it is being planned for April 1-3, 2005, in Goshen, Ind. The meeting is designed to be "a national Church of the Brethren missions conference to energize and equip ourselves to faithfully share Christ's love with the world," according to MMPC, which initiated the event along with the General Board.

Carolyn Schrock, Mountain Grove, Mo.; Larry Dentler, East Berlin, Pa.; Carol Spicher Waggy, Goshen, Ind.; James F. Myer, Lititz, Pa.; and Merv Keeney, General Board executive director of Global Mission Partnerships, are serving on the steering committee.

Ministers' Association meeting returns to pre-Conference slot

The 2004 Ministers' Association meeting is once again a pre-Annual Conference event, following some years of meeting after the Conference. "Re-Imagining Worship for a New World" will take place Friday and Saturday, July 2-3, in Charleston, W.Va. The speaker for the three sessions of



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 258 held its orientation Jan. 18 to Feb. 6 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., near Orlando. The orientation included a long-weekend visit to the Eglise des Freres Haitiens congregation in Miami and an open potluck for people in the area connected to BVS or Civilian Public Service. Volunteers, their hometowns, and their project assignments (for a one- or two-year term) are as follows:

Back row: Jim Malin, Bridgeport, Conn., to Samaritan House, Atlanta; Anne Volk, Regensburg, Germany, to Casa de Esperanza de los Niños, Houston; Christian Junker, Nauheim, Germany, to Trees for Life, Wichita, Kan.; Kylee North, Tacoma, Wash., to Quaker Cottage, Belfast, Northern Ireland; Jonas Schonfelder, Berlin, Germany, to Café 458, Atlanta; Molly Knobbe, Cimarron, Kan., to Camp Bethel, Fincastle, Va.

Middle row: Michelle Storey, Minneapolis, to ASONOG, Copan, Honduras; Karen Roberts, BVS staff; Sarah Lockhart, Vacaville, Calif., to The Junction, Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland; Olga Berscheminski, Schifferstadt, Germany, to Step 2, Reno, Nev.; Christoph Hillejan, Ochtrup, Germany, to MedShare International, Lithonia, Ga.

Front row: Stephanie Bostwick, BVS staff; Georges Zemanek, Houston, to Brother David Darst Center, Chicago; Michelle Williams, Bloomfield, Mich., to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C.; Madaline Keros, Concord, N.H., to L'Arche Community, Ireland; Cherie George, Gainesville, Fla., to L'Arche Community, Ireland; Sharon Atwood, BVS staff; Samuel Bowman, BVS staff.

For more details on BVS, visit www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org.

the meeting—Friday afternoon, Friday evening, and Saturday morning—will be Sally Morgenthaler, author of the book *Worship Evangelism: Inviting Unbelievers into the Presence of God*. She also writes "Worship and Popular Culture" columns for *Worship Leader* and *Rev* magazines, as well as the wor-

ship section of *PreachingPlus.com*, and has been a presenter at numerous worship conferences. Those who pre-register will be eligible to receive .8 continuing education units. For more information contact Sharon Cobb Hutchison, 443-260-0919, e-mail ms-hutch@juno.com.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

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

Apr. 12-24 Every Church a Peace Church/General Board delegation to the Middle East

Apr. 16-17 Level I Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Augusta, W.Va.

Apr. 16-18 BMC Connecting Families Weekend, Ligonier, Pa.

Apr. 17-18 Brethren Benefit Trust board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Apr. 17-18 Regional Youth Conference, Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind.

Apr. 24-25 Level I Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Apr. 26-May 7 Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 259 orientation, New Windsor, Md.

Apr. 28-30 North American Conference on Christian Philanthropy, St. Louis, Mo.

Apr. 28-May 1 Cross-Cultural Ministries Consultation, Castañer, P.R.

Apr. 30-May 1 Level I Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Buffalo, N.Y.

May 2-9 Family Life Week

May 6 National Day of Prayer

Personnel moves

Robert Krouse of Lebanon, Pa., has accepted the call to the Global Mission Partnerships position of mission coordinator for Nigeria. Krouse, who has a passion for new church planting, is founding pastor of Cornerstone Christian Church in Lebanon, where he is currently serving. Krouse previously served congregations in Maryland and Virginia.

Krouse is a graduate of Temple University, where he majored in music, and Bethany Theological Seminary. He and his wife, Carol, bring prior experience of serving in Nigeria from 1985 to 1987 as they worked to open a new mission point for Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). The Krouses plan to move to Nigeria in July.

• **Becky Ullom** has been called as director of Identity and Relations for the General Board. She will begin in July, after completing her current responsibilities as coordinator of National Young Adult Conference. She has also served the denomination as coordinator of National Youth Conference in 2001-2002.

A native of Wiley, Colo., Ullom has a bachelor of arts degree in English and Spanish from McPherson (Kan.) College, where she edited the school newspaper and magazine. She also created and edited a bilingual magazine. Prior to her current position she taught high school English in McPherson. She also has teaching certifications for Spanish and English as a second language, and has studied in Mexico.

• **Duane Grady** moved from a part-time to a full-time position with the General Board, effective Feb. 1, assuming additional responsibilities as coordinator of Congregational Life Team (CLT) Areas 2 and 4. The large geographical region includes all of the Midwest and the Plains, stretching from Ohio to Colorado and Montana to Texas.

Grady will now be one of four CLT coordinators, working with five other CLT field staff across the country. He has been a part-time CLT member since January 1998, while serving as co-pastor of Northview Church of the Brethren in Indianapolis and Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. He will continue to be a volunteer member of the pastoral staff at the Anderson church. He can be contacted at his office in Anderson, 765-649-4384, or at dgrady_gb@brethren.org.

• **Perry Hudkins** has announced her resigna-

tion as director of information services for the Church of the Brethren General Board, effective July 16. She began work for the General Board in August 1988 as director of computer operations. Hudkins lives in Westminster, Md., and has worked out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor.

During her tenure, Hudkins ushered the organization into the era of the personal computer, implemented all-new financial accounting software, made a shift from two main operating computers to one, and networked the General Board with the districts.

• The Pinecrest Community Board of Directors announced that **Carol A. Davis** of Celina, Ohio, has been chosen to become the next chief executive officer of the Pinecrest Community retirement home in Mt. Morris, Ill. Davis was scheduled to join Pinecrest on April 1 and take over CEO responsibilities after a time of orientation. She succeeds Vernon Showalter, who is retiring after serving as CEO since April 1988.

Davis had been vice present of Marketing, Independent Living, and Development at Brethren Retirement Community, Greenville, Ohio, where she previously served as director of Major and Planned Giving. She also has served as an adjunct professor of sociology at Wright State University in Dayton.

Chris Herlinger/CWS





1. Poquoson, Va. The Church of the Brethren Emergency Response program began a disaster relief project in the community in early February. Poquoson was one of the coastal communities struck by Hurricane Isabel in September. The hurricane caused extensive damage in Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, Delaware, and Washington, D.C. A \$10,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant will help to fund the project.

2. North Korea. A major Global Food Crisis Fund grant, for \$60,000, will support a farm rehabilitation project in two western provinces of the Asian nation. Ryongyun Agro-Marin Industrial Development Center strives to bolster the economic, health, and educational welfare of the region's 25,000 inhabitants. The funds will be used to purchase barley and rice seeds, along with other planting materials.

The Global Food Crisis Fund has had a busy start to 2004, making seven grants in January and February alone. Projects supported in the past year have literally spanned the globe, including aid for a UNICEF clean-water project in Iraq.

3. Eritrea. Another large Global Food Crisis Fund grant, for \$50,000, will support a multi-million dollar, multi-faceted humanitarian appeal for the east African nation. The funds will part of a Christian community response headed by the Lutheran World Federation and sent through Church World Service. The grant will be used to provide 100 breeding cows for 100 households, predominantly headed by women.

4. Afghanistan. A \$10,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant is supplying continued support for Church World Service's recovery and rehabilitation work in the central Asian nation. CWS has a long-standing presence in the region. The funds will help rebuild homes, refurbish and re-supply schools, and provide means of income for the homeless.

5. Santa Ana, Calif. A \$20,000 grant from the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund will help retrofit the Western Service Workers Association's 3,000-square-foot structure, providing space for organizer training, clothing, and supplemental food distribution.

6. Wenatchee, Wash. A Global Food Crisis Fund grant of \$11,045 will support Mustard Seed Neighborhood Center's direct feeding program and nutrition education for low-income children ages 4 weeks to 12 years. The funds for Mustard Seed will be distributed in two parts: \$7,045 in 2004 for the purchase of kitchen equipment and

support of a half-time nutrition planner, and \$4,000 in 2005 for the nutrition planner.

7. Bosnia. The General Board Emergency Disaster Fund is sending \$8,000 toward a Church World Service appeal. Years after the war there, many people are still displaced from their homes and living in poverty. The funds will help build shelters for 55 families and assist with developing sustainable incomes.

8. American Samoa. A \$5,000 Emergency Disaster Fund grant will help long-term recovery in the Pacific island, which was hit by Cyclone Heta in early January. The slow-moving storm destroyed 600 homes, with 1,000 others suffering major damage. Food crops were leveled and the island's infrastructure was damaged, including electricity and water resources, hospitals, and schools.

9. India. A grant of \$24,000 from the Global Food Crisis Fund will support the Rural Service Center in Ankleshwar. The center helps to provide sustainable agriculture to rural communities through soil conservation development, tree plantations, land leveling, and biogas production. It grew out of a ministry by Church of the Brethren mission workers and continues to serve communities that include both members of the Church of North India and the India Brethren.

10. Guatemala. Several grants from the Global Food Crisis Fund will aid work projects in the Central American nation. An allocation totaling \$11,000 will go to the Ixtahuacan region for reforestation and fruit tree propagation, to build water systems for 10 families, and to build 20 fuel-efficient wood cookstoves. Another \$3,041.95 will support several projects in the Union Victoria area, primarily to help develop a potable water system for the community and to fund school scholarships, a dental clinic, medical kits and training, and agriculture teaching.

Brethren Business Network folds, new initiative may begin

The Brethren Business Network, begun with the dream of connecting Brethren business owners and helping Brethren identify services and opportunities available within the denomination, has come to an end. The network "never gained enough momentum to become a self-sustaining organization," director Wendi Hutchinson said in a Jan. 27 letter.

Earl Hess, a Lancaster, Pa., businessman, had the original idea for the network in the mid-1990s and assisted in its development until his death in 2001. Hutchinson, who is the church relations director for Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind., became director of the network when the college provided the energy and resources to get it off the ground over the past few years.

The network had created an online directory of Brethren businesses, which Hutchinson said is being pulled from the Web "until such time as new focus and resources can be given" to it.

Some interest in launching a new business-related initiative already is occurring. Seattle pastor John Braun sent a letter to "interested Brethren" in January, testing the waters. Braun, who also serves with a non-profit corporation called Good News Associates, has offered to do initial recruiting and fundraising to start a new effort. Braun set Nov. 6-7 as target dates for organi-

zational meetings, in conjunction with the Mennonite Economic Development Associates annual convention in Pittsburgh, Pa.

District executives make plans for 2004 Annual Conference

The Council of District Executives met with denominational agency representatives and planned for upcoming events as it held its winter meeting Feb. 1-4 in Daytona Beach, Fla.

Task teams were formed to develop three insight sessions to be led by the council at Annual Conference: "Placement Issues for Pastors," "Placement Issues for Congregations," and "Calling Out Ministers from Within Our Midst." The council heard reports from its committees and representatives, including a report on an ecclesiology consultation being planned in collaboration with denominational agencies.

The council also had dialogue with Kathy Reid, executive director, and Ralph McFadden, shared services coordinator, from the Association of Brethren Caregivers; Jeff Garber, director of insurance plans, from Brethren Benefit Trust; and Steve Reid, academic dean, from Bethany Theological Seminary. Nancy Knepper, General Board director of District Ministries, serves as liaison to the council.

The group's summer meeting will be July 1-3 in Charleston, W.Va., prior to Annual Conference.

Standing Committee announces 2004 ballot

Annual Conference delegates will choose between Western Pennsylvania District executive minister Ronald D. Beachley and Hillcrest Homes (La Verne, Calif.) chaplain Myrna Long Wheeler for Conference moderator-elect when they vote this summer in Charleston, W.Va. Standing Committee recently released the full ballot of candidates for this year's open positions.

Other candidates and positions on the ballot are as follows:

- **Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee:** Joe A. Detrick, Herman Kauffman
- **Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee:** June Ellen (Forsyth) Switzer, Joanna Wave Willoughby
- **Brethren Benefit Trust board:** John A. Braun, J. Kenneth Kreider
- **Association of Brethren Caregivers board:** Diane Harden, Allegra Hess
- **Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees, representing the colleges:** David B. Eller, Jonathan Frye
- **Committee on Interchurch Relations:** James O. Eikenberry or Robert C. Johansen
- **General Board, at-large:** Michael Benner, J. Colleen Michael
- **On Earth Peace Assembly board:** David Hendricks, Robbie Miller
- **Annual Conference Council, representing the district executives:** Joan Lawrence Daggett, Martha Roudebush

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ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Nineteen Bridgewater students volunteered as construction workers at Habitat for Humanity's Collegiate Challenge Spring Break 2004. To raise money for the trip and awareness about homelessness, students spent 12 hours in cardboard boxes on the campus mall in early February. The students also conducted a coin drive.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Civil War poems by Elizabethtown professor Carmine Sarracino have been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. This is the second consecutive year that Sarracino's poetry has been chosen; his collection "The Idea of the Ordinary" was nominated last year.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

The Independent 529 Plan, a prepaid tuition plan created by Juniata president Thomas R. Kepple Jr. in the early 1990s, was selected by *Business Week* magazine as one of the 25 Top Products of 2003. The plan enables parents and family members to prepay tuition at any one of more than 230 participating private institutions across the US, including Juniata, locking in rates.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

Plans are under way for a new campus center at the school. The board of trustees approved plans for a new, three-story building this winter, according to a report in *The Campus Times*. The project would cost an estimated \$42 million; the board approved a five-year fund-raising campaign to fund it.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Manchester's Indiana Reading Corps, in its seventh year at the college, matches area elementary school pupils one-on-one with Manchester College student tutors. This year, more than 110 Manchester students are tutoring more than 120 children in four elementary schools in three counties.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

McPherson men's basketball head coach Roger Trimmell posted his 300th career collegiate win on Jan. 19 as the Bulldogs defeated cross-town rival Central Christian College of Kansas, 68-65. Currently in his 22nd season as head coach at McPherson, Trimmell entered the season with a win-loss record of 287-282.

Bethany announces pair of 'Exploring Your Call' events

Two Exploring Your Call (EYC) events are scheduled at the Richmond, Ind., campus of Bethany Theological Seminary June 24-28 and July 22-26, 2004. The events offer high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors opportunities to consider issues of faith and vocation.

Activities include attending classes taught by seminary professors, shadowing pastors, planning congregational worship services, learning about chaplaincy, visiting residents in a retirement facility, creating and leading worship experiences, and sharing in group-building recreational activities.

EYC is funded by Lilly Endowment Inc. as part of a \$2 million grant received by Manchester College on behalf of eight Church of the Brethren-related institutions. The grant is part of the endowment's Theological Vocational Exploration Programs Initiative and was developed to encourage young people to consider ministry as a career, and to consider their faith commitments in whatever career they choose.

Youth interested in EYC can visit www.bethanyseminary.edu/eyc.htm and complete an online registration form. Because of grant support, participants' only cost is travel expense to and from Richmond. Registration is limited to 20 for each event. Further information is available by e-mail (EYC@bethanyseminary.edu), or call 800-287-8822 and ask for the EYC office.



While many summer youth workcamps filled quickly, spaces remained open in some of them into March—particularly for locations in Massachusetts, West Virginia, and Washington, D.C., as well as the young adult trip to France and Switzerland. Register at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/workcamps.

NYAC registrations top 150; room remains for participants

Registration for the denomination's first large-scale National Young Adult Conference (NYAC), scheduled for June 14-18 in Winter Park, Colo., stood at 160 in February. The site can accommodate 500.

About 70 percent of those who have registered to date have never before attended a young adult conference, according to Becky Ullom, NYAC coordinator. Registration remains open through April 15 at www.nyac2004.org.

NYAC, Bethany team up to offer CEU credit option

In an effort to help congregations recognize the professional development potential this summer's National Young Adult Conference (NYAC) holds for young adult pastors, the denomination's Young Adult Steering Committee is working in conjunction with the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership to offer one continuing education unit (CEU) for interested NYAC participants.

To earn the CEU, participants will need to take part in the following activities: morning and evening worship services (a total of 8), "padare" workshops (a total of 3), "community group" small-group meetings (a total of 4), and two discussions specifically related to sustaining vitality in ministry moderated by Bethany Theological Seminary/Brethren Academy faculty.

The final discussion will take place immediately after closing worship on June 18, requiring participants will need to remain until 2 p.m. that Friday to earn the CEU.

Online registration for NYAC, and for the CEU in Sustaining Vitality in Ministry, opened Jan. 1 at www.nyac2004.org. For more details about the CEU component, contact Brethren Academy director Jonathan Shively at shivejo@bethanyseminary.edu or 765-983-1824.

“The Passion of the Christ”: A powerful portrayal

Actor Mel Gibson has directed and co-written a new movie on the death and resurrection of Jesus that found its way onto more than 4,000 screens in the United States, beginning Ash Wednesday.



RONALD W. WATERS
Pastor

I attended a by-invitation-only screening of *The Passion of the Christ* on Jan. 20 in Chicago (before the final cut). Gibson himself was at the screening. The movie is without question the most gripping portrayal of Jesus’ death that I have ever seen.

Movies about Jesus are either major motion-picture productions that take extreme liberty with the biblical narrative, or they are films produced by religious groups that are underfunded and that slip into moralizing. “I didn’t try to make a religious film,” Gibson said, “but something that’s real, something not demonstrably overly religious.” Gibson also said, “I don’t think it’s ever been told as it should be.”

Many Christians who see this movie will be disturbed by it. The violent way in which Jesus was treated is graphically presented. The movie has received an R rating (those under 17 must be accompanied by an adult,

The movie is without question the most gripping portrayal of Jesus’ death that I have ever seen.

although some theaters are making provisions for youth to see the movie as a group with a signed release from their parents; check locally). The beatings caused me to flinch. Tears came to my eyes as his blood flowed freely. My understanding and appreciation of Jesus’ extreme sacrifice was never as great before seeing this movie.

When asked if the violence in the movie goes over the edge, Gibson responded, “It is intended to push over the edge. The enormity of the blood sacrifice is overwhelming—we needed every drop of it.”

The movie has received a lot of negative publicity, especially from those who believe it will reawaken hatred toward the Jews. It is possible to come away from the movie with a negative attitude toward the Jewish leaders,

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

“You may have noticed that the movie is a little like the church’s confession in the Apostle’s Creed—it passes over the life and teachings of Jesus.”

—from Every Church a Peace Church flier on the movie

“Many traditional Christians will see this film and feel Gibson has sprinkled them with the saving blood just as the Israelite priests sprinkled the atoning blood on the altar.”

—Christianity Today editor David Neff

“Jesus is portrayed as an action hero in this film... Where are the Christian voices opposing this film as a war movie made about the life of Jesus of Nazareth, the Prince of Peace?”

—Chicago Theological Seminary president Susan B. Thistlethwaite, writing in the *Chicago Tribune*

but there is enough blame to go around. Gibson makes a cameo appearance in the movie, though you won’t see his face. It is his hand that holds the spikes driven into Jesus’ hands as he is nailed to the cross.

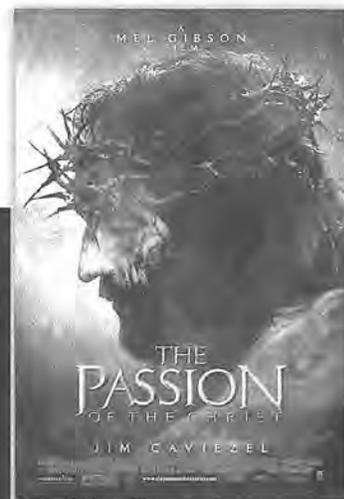
Gibson said he tried to remain accurate to the scriptures, “yet I used my imagination.” Except for a couple of scenes in which his imagination may have gone beyond reality, the movie is faithful to God’s Word and to the

customs and practices of the era.

The movie is filmed entirely in Latin, Hebrew, and Aramaic—the languages of the time. English subtitles are provided throughout the movie.

I urge you to see it. And invite friends or relatives, especially those who may not be followers of Jesus, to see it with you. Your life and theirs will never be the same. **W**

Ron Waters is pastor of Hammond Avenue Brethren Church, Waterloo, Iowa (an affiliated Brethren Church of the Brethren congregation). He serves as the webmaster for New Life Ministries.



The Passion of the Christ Director: Mel Gibson
Rating: R (for graphic violence)

A reflection guide for *The Passion of the Christ* is offered by the National Council of Churches USA Interfaith Relations Commission to help Christians think through the charges of anti-Semitism raised by this controversial film. It is available at www.nccusa.org.

As the movie is based on the Catholic “Stations of the Cross,” Brethren may also wish to consider using Paul Grout’s “Stations of the Resurrection” video as a corollary piece. Contact Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.

No matter how rigorously they scrutinized others with their list of sins, Jesus found them lacking in the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. They were violating deeper Biblical principles and values.

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.

Are we acting like friends of Job?

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ, we do have various differences among us. I hope we can affirm one another as conscientious Christians who take the Scriptures seriously and recognize and respect that we are conscientious objectors at some points with one another.

We want to respect what represents

the best in one another and what each holds very dear, not slipping/falling into worldly attacking one another's weakest links. Maybe we have something to learn from the friends of Job.

After all kinds of tragic things tumbled in on Job, his friends at least did not

shun him. But they did not show much grace and compassion. They majored on probing and accusing and haranguing Job about some sin they were dogmatically sure Job was guilty of. How like the super religious Pharisees Jesus confronted in Matthew 23! No matter how rigor-



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ously they scrutinized others with their list of sins, Jesus found them lacking in the weightier matters of the law: justice, mercy, and faith. They were violating deeper Biblical principles and values when they judged and treated conscientious believers as though they were unbelievers, or worse.

I believe it is poignant that in the end we see that God was not pleased with the friends of Job. They needed to go and make sacrifices and have Job pray for them. So often our relating with lesbians and gays has been similar to how the friends of Job related with him. Is God telling us to do some repenting and to go humbly to our lesbian and gay sisters and brothers to have them pray for us? Are there conscientious Christians, with whom we have conscientious objector disagreements, that we should have pray for us?

Roger Eberly
 Milford, Ind.

Turn "normal" world upside-down

The article, "What's Really Normal?" in the January MESSENGER by David Radcliff was truly words from the mouth of our present-day prophet. Do the normal actions today reflect the teachings and life of Jesus in our nation?

In Acts 17:6, the early Christians were accused of "turning the world upside-down" by the religious leaders of that day. Today, families need two incomes to meet the cost of high living, nations go to war so we can have gas to drive everywhere, parents can't stay married, our school children are becoming enemies of one another, there is more concern about the "unborn" than about the unfortunate child that is already born.

At 88 years of age, I am very sad that our nation is so sinful. Are we willing to help "turn the world upside-down?"

As Christians let us emphasize the teachings and life of Jesus, and not so much of his death, so that our normal life may be lived according to God's will.

D.M. Naragon
 North Liberty, Ind.

Worship is not about us

Upon reading the letter in December's MESSENGER calling the denominational leadership to restructure the "average"

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Brethren worship service, I felt compelled to respond with an alternative view of the issue of worship. It is the opinion of the author of that letter, Nello Stover, that the traditions practiced in many churches are hurting our outreach missions and driving away younger members.

It is only natural that we should have preferences toward particular styles of worship for the advancement of our relationship with God; after all, we like variety and choice. I do take issue, however, with Stover's assertion: "The hard truth is that most people under 45 are not remotely inspired by unenthusiastic singing of 200-year-old hymns, boring responsive readings, and a monotone message from the pulpit." I'm 21 years old, and I know no such truth.

If members under the age of 45 are "uninspired" by the depth and wisdom of the hymns penned by our spiritual ancestors in previous centuries or the heartfelt messages from the pulpit being delivered by pastors elected by their congregations, perhaps the problem does not lie in the components and style of the worship service.

As a recent college graduate who

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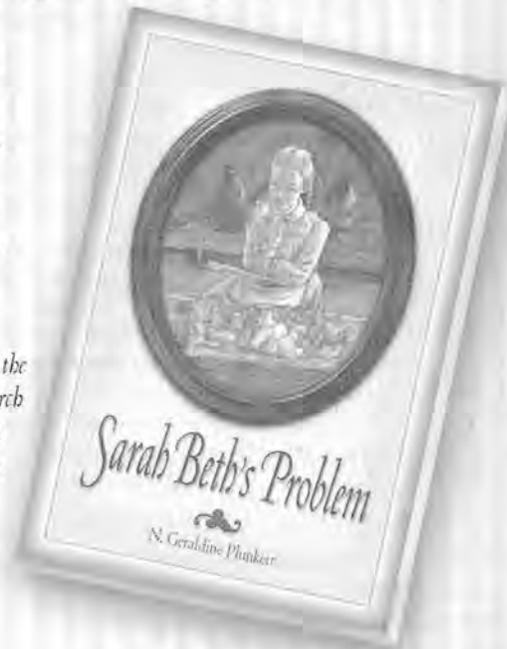
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Nathan's Secret

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spent the last few years living away from my home community, and thus experiencing a wide array of church services, I have heard many of the arguments for modernizing worship. The hypothesis I formed as a result of my varied experiences is sad, yet simple. Our society has infiltrated our churches, and the attention spans of their members. We have reached a point at which some members and visitors alike expect to be entertained in every aspect of their lives, including the church services that are to be consecrated to the worship of God.

I do not believe that God prefers traditional or contemporary worship styles. I believe he cares if we are worshipping him out of sincere love and reverence for him. I attend a church with a strong praise music program that has been successfully integrated into our one service a week. It provides one of many enriching spiritual outlets designed to help our church members and visitors grow, but it is no more or less important than the hymns of old and messages of faith that also play a

role. To demand complete modernization or complete adherence with tradition is selfish, and insinuates that our particular preferences are the only right ways to worship.

Hymns and messages teach us "from whence we came" and challenge us to deeper spirituality. If people find themselves uninspired, I recommend delving into them, searching their texts for the much-inspiring words of comfort, faith, joy, and adoration written very often by those far wiser than ourselves.

Praise music allows some newer and younger Christians to express their faith in an easier-to-understand manner. Each style has its merits, but let us not forget that worship is not about us. It is not about seeking a spiritual high, being entertained, or clinging to the church services of our childhoods. It is about the Lord we serve. Yes, a balance between the old and new must be sought, but our denominational leadership is faced with far more pressing issues in our denomination and world.

Olivia Good
Ephrata, Pa.

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New Members

Arcadia, Ind.: Bill Haworth, Fay Haworth
Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Steve Crain, Craig Smith, Margaret Yoder
Beech Run, Mapleton Depot, Pa.: Bryan Hawbecker
Blue River, Churubusco, Ind.: Paula Green, Jack Pritchard, Kasey Gibson
Center, Louisville, Ohio: Ben Shankel, Kyle Sharp, Melanee Hamilton, Alyssa Hamilton, Alyssa Pearson
Elizabethtown, Pa.: April Hollinger, Letitia Javens, Teckla Ginder, Brittany Hitz, Lisa Demora
English River, South English, Iowa: Justin Scott Baumert, Dustin Sanders
Fairview, Cordova, Md.: Bob Miller, Jeannette Miller, Kurt Collins
Faith Community of the Brethren Home, New Oxford, Pa.: Rebecca Armstrong, Mary Hollerbush, Daniel Hollerbush, Betty Harlacher, Theresa Williams
Freeburg, Paris, Ohio: John Huddleston
Good Shepherd, Blacksburg, Va.: Patricia Klaers, Brinkley Benson, Julie Benson, Emily Shonk Edwards, Matt McKimmy, Becky McKimmy
Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.: Amanda Kay Grossnickle, Juliann Marie Grossnickle, Bryan Scott Gaver, Jonathan Michael Ritchey Martin, Kathleen Michele Moser, Anna Adele Thomasson
Hammond Avenue, Waterloo, Iowa: Christina Grove, Dan Rogers
Harmony, Myersville, Md.: Robin Baulch Loy, Dana Conner Summers, Lori Geisler Sigler, Carol Martin Reed, Sarah Reed, Naomi Minnick, Roger Wills, Mary Fisher Wills
Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Lisa Stauffer
Hollins Road, Roanoke, Va.: Charles Witt, Bonnie Witt
Huntington, Ind.: Juanita Clark, Tim Clark
La Verne, Calif.: Stephanie Juillerat, Laurie Schreiner, Earl Gordon, Helen Gordon, Jon Schrock, Shawn Kirchner, Enten Pfaltzgraef Eller, Kathryn Pfaltzgraef Eller, Teri Tompkins, Larry Green, Albert Harris, Mary Clark, Michelle Stark, Lori Dick
Little Pine, Goshen, Ind.: Kenneth Beattie, Evon Beattie, Merle Shetler, Katherine Shetler, Dorothy Watson
Logansport, Ind.: Josh Carter, Tammy Gardner, Jamie Keefer, Jan Nolte, Marilyn Shanabarger, Amanda Wilson, Terry Wilson, Angela Wilson, Gary Bounds, Janelle Burket, Steve Raber, Stephanie Erny, Aaron Green, Daniela Green, Veronika Hinojosa, Jay Byers, Martine Byers, Kayla Gaumer, Brianna Benson, Dale Baker,

Mariah Shanabarger, Tammy Boehme, Nick Coleman
Lone Star, Lawrence, Kan.: Ruth Offut
Long Green Valley, Glen Arm, Md.: Edward Lewis, Eric Lewis, Erin Lewis, Ethan Steiner, Tricia Steiner
Manor, Boonsboro, Md.: Dennis Fulk, Belinda Fulk, Bill Zepp
Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.: Lindsey Jerin, Elizabeth Trevorrow, Eric Moran
Moorefield, W.Va.: Deborah Kay Davis, Wayne B. Hefner, Eleanor Hinkle Brantley
Mount Pleasant, Harrisonburg, Va.: Amanda Crorken, Andrew Crorken, Doug Crorken, Terri Crorken, Kevin Jones, Aaron Moore, Julie Lineberg
Mountain Grove, Fults Run, Va.: Robin G. Cramer, Justin K. Shiflet, Brandon L. Shiflet
New Covenant, Gotha, Fla.: Alfonso Cruz
New Paris, Ind.: John Burger, Esther Burger, Amanda Nead, Marvin Chupp, James Holdeman, Jane Holdeman, Linda Kauffman, Sarah Elizabeth Olson, Danielle Reimer
Northern Colorado, Windsor, Colo.: Caitlin Frantz, Danielle Pflieger, Dean Fitz, Deanna Fitz
Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa.: Larry Franklin, Donna Franklin, Eric Thorne, Nikki Thorne, Roy Burkpile, Mary Beam, Janet Cook, Dave Wagner, II, Elizabeth Wagner, Angel Burkpile, Jenna May Bittinger
Scalp Level, Windber, Pa.: Nathan Hoffman, Patrick Hoffman, Breanne Lehman, Kelli Manges, Casey Smith
Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Dana Hall, Anna Tomlonson, Rachel Caluza
Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Peggy Byrd, Joe Byrd
Union Center, Nappanee, Ind.: Nancy Miller, Becky Miller, Diane Miller, Arden Ball, Charmaine, Ball, Jeff Stevens, Jim Whitehead, Sally Whitehead, Becky Cole, Suzan Higgins, Brenna Kunze, Curt Rowland, Karen Rowland, Amos Frye, Jessica Frye, Alicia Hahn, Adam Hostetter, Chad Hostetter, Grace Neff, Amos Sheets, Virginia Sheets, Shirley Holdeman
Venice, Fla.: Jeanne Cripe
Wenatchee, Wash.: Paul Hadley, Jim Keselburg, Glenda Keselburg, Janis Kile, Vicki Malloy, Tim Sharp
White Oak, Manheim, Pa.: Derrick Negley, Nathan High, Brent Longenecker, Denise Longenecker
Woodbury, Pa.: Sara Eckenroad

Anniversaries

Akers, Alvin and Ann, Anza, Calif., 50
Boyce, Robert and Miriam, York, Pa., 50
Crabill, Perry, Jr. and Harriet, Winchester, Va., 60
Croy, Merl and Phyllis, Wakarusa, Ind., 60
Egbert, Marvin and Ruth, McCune, Kan., 50
Flora, Clifford and Louise, Elkhart, Ind., 65
Frenger, Bob and Ada, Syracuse, Ind., 55
Gable, Don and Dorothy, North

Manchester, Ind., 60
Geiger, Gene and Evelyn, Churubusco, Ind., 50
Herr, Francis and Lois, Nappanee, Ind., 55
Hunn, Art and Phyllis, North Manchester, Ind., 50
Kirkdorfer, Phil and Shirley, New Paris, Ind., 50
Lape, Robert and Dolores, Boswell, Pa., 50
Marshall, Albert and Maxine, Sebring, Fla., 65
Metzger, Eldred and Louise, Claypool, Ind., 65
Ott, Ronald and Irene, Churubusco, Ind., 55
Pritchard, Jack and Roberta, Columbia City, Ind., 50
Rummell, Marion and Vera, Paris, Ohio 50
Titus, Richard and Mary, Logansport, Ind., 50
Triplett, Joe and Janet, Everett, Pa., 50
Wheeler, Wayne and Ellen, New Philadelphia, Ohio, 60
Wolfe, Archie and Esther Sue, Sebring, Fla., 50
Zerger, Myron F. and Ardis L., Dearborn, Mich., 50
Zimmerman, Stanley and Jessie, Goshen Ind., 60

Deaths

Ashby, Linda Kay Funkhouser, 55, Churchville, Va., Dec. 16
Back, Galen Beyedler, 71, Churchville, Va., Dec. 15
Bailey, Orville, 85, Logansport, Ind., Dec. 4
Bastian, Trella, 95, Akron, Ind., July 22
Bernhardt, Delbert, 66, Milliken, Colo., Jan. 29
Billier, Robert Lee, 74, Timberville, Va., Dec. 26
Block, Ervin F., 87, Euclid, Ohio, Jan. 27
Bodkin, Marlin Ray, 75, Brandywine, W.Va., Dec. 26
Bolt, Eric, 59, Nappanee, Ind., April 13, 2005
Book, Howard, 91, La Verne, Calif., June 16
Boyd, Charles Richard, 68, Front Royal, Va., Dec. 17
Brandt, Martha, 92, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 6
Bricker, William, 69, Logansport, Ind., Feb. 9, 2005
Burkle, Ivan, 54, Rossville, Ind., Sept. 12
Butcher, Cora, 88, Harman, W.Va., Dec. 27
Calhoun, Everett Wine, 81, Timberville, Va., Dec. 2
Catron, Don H., 73, Lafayette, Ind., April 23, 2005
Chomowycz, Katharine, 70, La Verne, Calif., March 13, 2005
Clark, George V., 74, Woodstock, Va., Nov. 19
Clem, Mary Frances, 87, Mount Jackson, Va., Nov. 30
Clift, Ray J., 77, Frederick, Md., March 19, 2005
Coldren, Walter E., 83, McClure, Pa., Jan. 11
Cosner, Clyde O., 86, Keyser, W.Va., Nov. 27
Davis, S. Mildred, 90, Hopewell, Pa., Jan. 25
Deal, Robert, 87, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 25
Dehaven, Doris, 90, La Verne, Calif., Sept. 23
Detwiler, Grace P., 86, Everett, Pa., Jan. 9
Diehl, Mose H., 94, La Verne, Calif., Nov. 22

Diffenderfer, Harold, 73, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 18
Donaldson, Dorsey, 70, Oakwood, Ohio, Nov. 20
Dove, Audrey Miller, 81, Criders, Va., Dec. 29
Dove, Lillie Catherine, 89, Broadway, Va., Nov. 17
Doyle, Emory C., 80, Myersville, Md., Nov. 8
Flory, Doris Finks, 80, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 11
Foley, Anna Elizabeth Byrd, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 16
Fulk, George Edward, 76, Roanoke, Va., Dec. 1
Garst, Raymond H., 82, Troy, Ohio, Jan. 18
Glick, Victor Evers, 86, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 19
Glass, Ralph, 82, Roaring Spring, Pa., Jan. 16
Goldberg, Peter W., 46, Johnstown, Pa., Nov. 15
Green, Charlotte, 82, McCune, Kan., Jan. 20
Grim, John L., Jr., 72, Hanover, Pa., Jan. 23
Groat, Bertha Smith, 84, Brattleboro, Vt., Feb. 11
Grumbling, Gladys V., 90, Syracuse, N.Y., Oct. 6
Keener, Evelyn, 88, Ashland, Ohio, Jan. 3
Kendall, Harold E., 64, Kingsville, Md., Sept. 1
Kroft, Joseph, 95, Akron, Ind., Nov. 18
Lambert, Sharon Christine, 48, Martinsburg, W.Va., Dec. 31
Langham, Ruth E., 87, Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 20
Lantz, Ruth W., 88, Timberville, Va., Jan. 24
Leatherman, Mary Elizabeth, 99, Middletown, Md., May 18
Lehigh, David Weaver, 95, Hanover, Pa., Jan. 4
Lester, Ruth Shoemaker, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 27
Lewis, Azelma, 62, Oakland, Md., Jan. 14
Linkous, Oliver, 93, Seminole, Fla., Nov. 23
Livingston, Mary Lou, 72, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 21
Long, Grace E., 95, South Bend, Ind., Dec. 21
Sampson, Callie Marie, 75, Strasburg, Va., Dec. 27
Shank, Naomi Gowd, 98, Dayton, Va., Nov. 18
Shoemaker, Helen, 80, New Enterprise, Pa., Jan. 18
Shong, Mildred, 90, Definace, Ohio, Jan. 29
Shultz, Allan R., 77, Blacksburg, Va., Sept. 8
Simmons, Robert Lee, 95, Moyers, W.Va., Dec. 9
Sites, John M., 85, Petersburg, W.Va., Nov. 23
Stottlemeyer, George M., 78, Myersville, Md., March 8, 2005
Stroup, Phyllis, 72, Logansport, Ind., Oct. 17
Stultz, Burlin L., 70, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 18
Stutzman, Karl Frederick, 85, Harrisonburg, Pa., Nov. 15
Swick, Paul W., 73, Johnstown, Pa., Oct. 26
Thorn, James Arnold, 63, Petersburg, W.Va., Dec. 10
Trimble, Charlotte Ruth Thomas, 84, Staunton, Va., Dec. 14
Tyler, James W., 81, Belcamp, Md., Jan. 20
Ulery, Hubert, 85, Logansport, Ind., Aug. 20
Ullom, Donald L., 70, Wiley, Colo., Jan. 9

Vivian, Helen, 105, Virden, Ill., Jan. 19
Warner, Edna Rickman, 91, Eden, N.C., Dec. 11
Way, Dean, 84, La Verne, Calif., Nov. 25
Wheelbarger, Bessie R., 88, Marion, Ind., Nov. 1
Whetzel, Dennis Jay, 46, Singers Glen, Va., Nov. 25
Whetzel, Vernon Justice, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 29
Wilkinson, Virgil, 82, La Verne, Calif., Aug. 25
Wilt, Derril K., 78, Breezewood, Pa., Jan. 9
Wine, Mabel Fern Moyers, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 27
Winfield, Vivian C., 82, Frederick, Md., Dec. 30
Winters, Glen Ranck, 89, Hancock, Md., Dec. 4
Wright, Leon Stanley, 84, Weyers Cave, Va., Nov. 7

Licensings

Adams, Stacey Lynn, S. Pa. Dist. (Chambersburg, Pa.), Jan. 11
Bennett, Mark T., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Mountain View, Bunker Hill, W.Va.), Nov. 1
Fox, Randy, N. Ohio Dist. (Mount Pleasant, North Canton, Ohio), Feb. 8
Fuchs, Margaret, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Lancaster, Pa.), Feb. 1
Mills, Judy Darlene, Virgina Dist. (Troutville, Va.), June 1
Stacey, Ronald Charles, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Carson Valley, Duncansville, Pa.), Jan. 18
Stump, Cory P., S. Pa. Dist. (Bermudian, East Berlin, Pa.), Oct. 5
Young, Glenn A., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Hagerstown, Md.), Aug. 1

Ordinations

Craddock, Mark Randall, Virgina Dist. (Fraternity, Winston-Salem, N.C.), Sept. 14
Dodd, Paul A., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Bethany, Greenwood, Del.), Aug. 17
Lewis, Linda, S. Ohio Dist. (Prince of Peace, Dayton, Ohio), Sept. 14
Naff, Noel S., Virgina Dist. (Germantown Brick, Rocky Mount, Va.), Dec. 28

Placements

Adkins, Barry Milton, pastor, Sandy Creek Congregation (Clifton Mills, Hazelton, and Shady Grove, Bruceton Mills, W.Va.), Feb. 1
Fitzgerald, Nancy Betz, from director of Christian education, Nokesville, Va., to minister of congregational life, Manassas, Va., Feb. 1
Manthos, Michael C., from pastor, Parkview, Lewistown, Pa., to pastor, Upper Claar, Claysburg, Pa., Feb. 1
Miller, Beth, pastor, English River, South English, Iowa, Feb. 1
Naff, Noel S., from pastor, Prices Creek, West Manchester, Ohio, to pastor, Mill Creek, Tryon, N.C., Feb. 1
Rose, Harold, pastor, Cumberland, Clintwood, Va., Jan. 18
Sollenberger-Morphew, Beth, from coordinator, Area 2 Congregational Life Team, to pastor, Elkhart Valley, Elkhart, Ind., Feb. 1

Where no one has gone before

Like much of the nation, I've been captivated these past few months by two golf-cart-sized contraptions rolling across the surface of Mars.



WALT WILTSCHek
MESSENGER Editor

For as long as I can remember, I've been fascinated by outer space. I love looking up at the stars, especially at camps or other more remote places where the entire sky is readily visible. I enjoy the space odysseys of *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. It remains one of my foremost dreams to go to the moon someday (and a few people would probably like to send me there).

Thus the adventures of NASA's two Mars rovers, *Spirit* and *Opportunity*, have caused me to dream again. Their unparalleled views of the Red Planet as they roam the dusty ground are as breathtaking, in their own way, as any shot of the Grand Canyon or a Caribbean beach.

I confess that I even felt some excitement when President Bush made his proposal earlier this year to send new missions to the moon and Mars, though the proposal seems to have received little support so far. Several religious leaders, including National Council of Churches general secretary Bob Edgar and The Interfaith Alliance president C. Welton Gaddy, note in a letter to the administration a need to first pay attention to "the unfulfilled promises we've already made here on Earth."

The letter points out the problems of poverty, inadequate schools, substandard housing, unemployment, and many others facing the people of this planet. The high price tag of the ramped-up space program, they say, would divert too many dollars from these pressing needs.

It's hard to deny the wisdom of that perspective. As Robert Rhodes wrote in *Mennonite Weekly Review*, "There will be a time for forging ahead in space again. But to make this a major focus of our country at this point appears ill-advised."

But holding off on a major space expedition doesn't mean we need to shut down our imaginations. While

we get our own house in order, I hope we don't lose sight of the underlying quest to learn, and to venture into the unknown. It's part of who we are. To borrow a phrase from the *USS Enterprise*, we feel the call "to boldly go where no one has gone before."

Churches and their related institutions, though, often tend to resist this call. Too many congregations and ministries have difficulty moving forward at all, let alone boldly. We can't leave behind our tradition and heritage, but neither can we let it prevent us from growing and adapting enough to meet the needs of a new generation and a new era.

Some things that worked 50 years ago still work well today. Some don't. Some are essential to who we are as Brethren. Some are just window dressing. Discerning the difference between them may be key to our future. The gospel of Jesus Christ is eternal; how we share it can change.

The elders of the Hopi tribe of Arizona compared the future to a "river flowing now very fast." "It is so great and swift, that there are those who will be afraid, who will try to hold on to the shore," their writing says. "They are being torn apart and will suffer greatly."

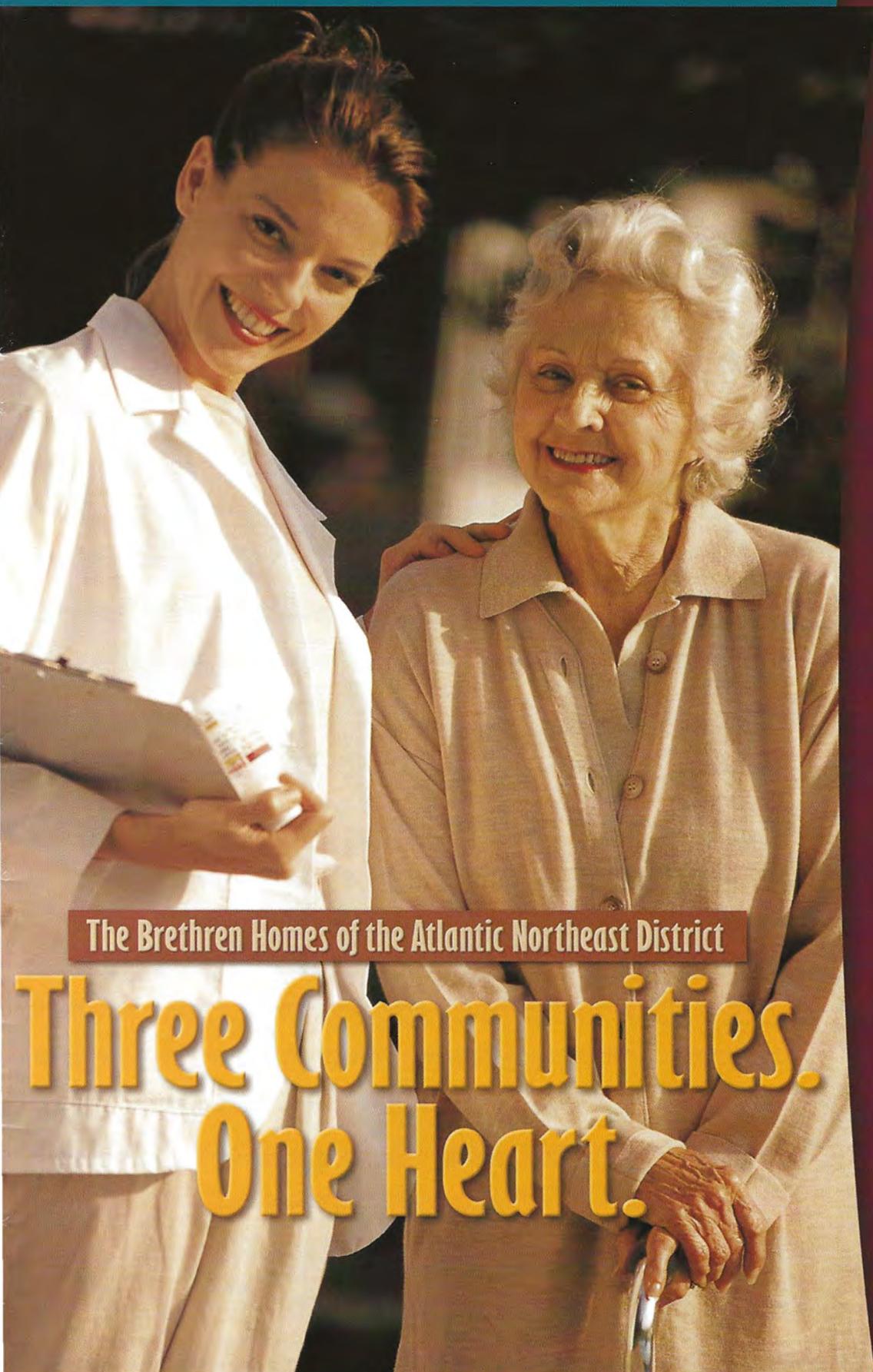
Instead, the elders advise letting go of the shore and pushing off into the midst of the river. "Know that the river has its destination," they say. Without such risk and forging into the unknown, "Our spiritual growth and journey come to a halt."

Some things that worked 50 years ago still work well today. Some don't. The gospel of Jesus Christ is eternal; how we share it can change.

Country singer Garth Brooks had a song with a similar message: "So, don't you sit upon the shoreline and say you're satisfied. Choose to chance the rapids and dare to dance the tide. . . . I'll never reach my destination if I never try. So, I will sail my vessel till the river runs dry."

These are times for the church to be bold, to be open to God's leading. At times, the terrain may feel as alien as that Martian landscape. But failing to chance the flow of God's Spirit could mean that people will bypass the Brethren in their search for intelligent spiritual life.—Ed. **M**

COMING NEXT MONTH: The changing face of ecumenism, a glimpse into "A Place Apart," a profile of former Nigeria missionary Mary Dadisman, a review of "Lord of the Rings," and much more.



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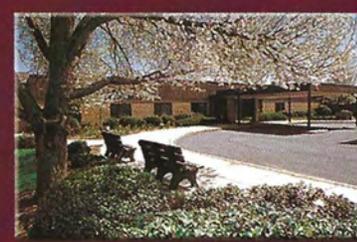
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Annual Conference

July 3-7, 2004 in Charleston, West Virginia

Annual Conference Preachers

Saturday evening Moderator, Christopher Bowman
Pastor, Memorial Church of the Brethren

Sunday morning Dena Pence Frantz, Associate Professor of Theological Studies,
Bethany Theological Seminary

Monday evening James Washington, Pastor, Faith Center Fellowship

Tuesday evening . . . Tim Button-Harrison, Team Pastor, Ivester Church of the Brethren

Wednesday morning Andrew Murray, Director,
Baker Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies

Brethren Agencies Live Report: Sunday afternoon



“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength (and) love your neighbor as yourself” —Mark 12:30-31

To pre-register online or get more information about Annual Conference, visit www.brethren.org/ac

218th Annual Conference