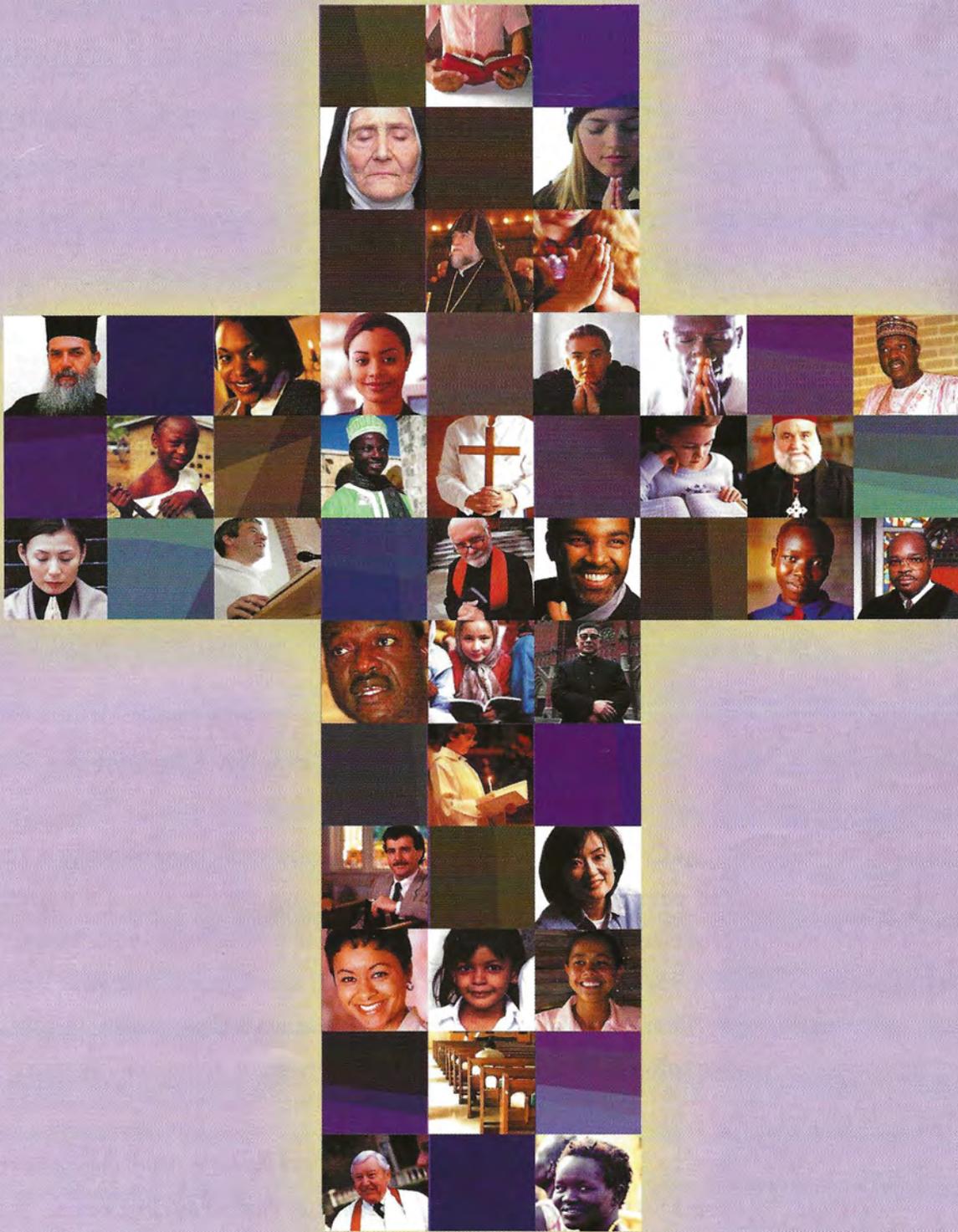


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MESSENGER

Editor: **Walt Wiltschek** Associate Editor/News: **Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford** Publisher: **Wendy McFadden** Subscriptions: **Diane Stroyeck** Design: **The Concept Mill**

ONTHECOVER

The ecumenical movement is a vibrant tapestry of people and traditions, all living out their respective understandings of what it means to follow Jesus Christ. Much has been gained through the common witness of the churches, and many new understandings have come by sitting at the same table. The face of ecumenism continues to change, though, as the movement redefines its vision and mission for the future.

Catherine Alt/WCC



8 Taking a new look at ecumenism

Jeff Carter, the Church of the Brethren representative to the World Council of Churches, speaks of encountering Pentecost in the rich space where different Christian traditions cross paths. He says the ecumenical movement today is one that speaks to a spirit of wholeness amid diversity, and one that values the Brethren voice. A series of sidebars give glimpses of major ecumenical organizations.

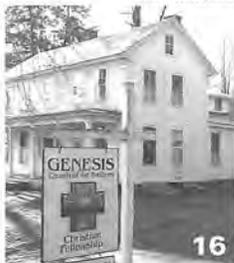
Courtesy of BHLA



14 Delivering new life, then and now

Mary Dadisman spent four decades on the Church of the Brethren mission field in Nigeria, where she taught, provided health services, and delivered hundreds of babies. Her living legacy in Africa is accompanied by a vibrant faith and continued ministry today.

Walt Wiltschek



16 Seeking 'A Place Apart'

Prophetic preacher Paul Grout notes an increasing realization among Brethren that "there is something more to life than what is being experienced" in our current "culture of emptiness." Grout and others are part of a growing movement to counter that trend, through a project being called "A Place Apart."

20 What makes a 'strong' congregation?

If you believe megachurches are the best at carrying out ministry, think again. The results of the US Congregational Life Survey point to smaller congregations as "unsung heroes," and the ones showing the most strengths key to vitality and health.

DEPARTMENTS

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Perhaps the closest the low-church Brethren come to a high holy day is Maundy Thursday. While the Protestant world generally focuses its pre-resurrection attention on Good Friday, Brethren are apt to forgo a Good Friday service in order to concentrate on love feast—the three-fold communion service of feetwashing, a simple meal, and the eucharist, preceded by a time of examination.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

This year I experienced more Lenten preparation than usual. First was *Christ in the Concrete City*. In this chancel drama that depicts the crucifixion with a small cast and a minimalist set, no one portrays Jesus. Pilate addresses the space where Jesus would be standing and nails are pounded into a wooden cross, but the character of Jesus must be filled in by the audience.

The opposite is true in *The Passion of the Christ*, the blockbuster movie that leaves nothing to the imagination. (A family that settled into the row in front of me, laden with nachos, popcorn, and drinks, left the theater after the scene where Jesus is brutally scourged. Apparently they had not realized beforehand that this film is not family entertainment.)

I saw *The Passion* on Passion/Palm Sunday. Over the course of Holy Week I joined my church family at love feast on Thursday and also at a Good Friday Tenebrae service—a service of darkness, in which the choir and a single plaintive cello led worshipers through the seven last words of Christ.

Thus through drama, film, reenactment, and music, the final week of Jesus' earthly life was made vivid. An account that can become rote because of its familiarity was more powerful because of the variety of media, the layering of experiences.

One can dissect the technical skill demonstrated in each medium, the artistic choices made by the creators, the theology underlying each interpretation. Such study can be a useful and fascinating exercise. But one can also simply enter the experience and allow it to be a channel through which God speaks to the soul. The experience becomes a collaboration between artist and audience, because what the audience receives is not just what the artist created; it is filtered through each individual's background and beliefs.

Easter Sunday is over, but the season of Easter is not. Before, our focus was on the sacrifice of Jesus and our response to that. In this season of the church year, our focus is on the living Christ: We have been saved, but for what? As we move toward Pentecost in a world that is too acquainted with grief, we anticipate the coming of the Holy Spirit, who empowers us to be the church alive, witnesses of the resurrection.

Wendy McFadden

How to reach us

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

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

Advertising:

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

Editorial:

messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 263
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Atlantic Northeast: General secretary Stan Noffsinger, Annual Conference moderator-elect Jim Hardenbrook, and district executive Craig Smith were scheduled to give leadership to an April 27 gathering at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. The event, for congregational leaders in the district, was designed to focus on vision, identity, and leadership.

Atlantic Southeast: More than 160 people registered for this year's annual Venture Fun(d) Day, which raised more than \$2,000 for the district's Church Development Council. The day included a pastors' run/crawl, a horseshoe pitching contest, a crafts sale, and plenty of food.

Idaho: The District Ministry Commission is working to form a new leadership training academy in the district. The commission is in conversation with Bethany Theological Seminary on ways to provide ongoing training for licensed and ordained ministers, and training for those interested in ministry.

Illinois/Wisconsin: District executive minister Jim Yaussy-Albright served as keynote speaker for the spring district youth retreat, held March 5-7 at the Champaign (Ill.) congregation. Yaussy-Albright focused on the changes happening in the district and ways youth can be involved in it.

Michigan: The Michigan Church Development Planning Team is sponsoring a church development conference titled "The Sermon on the Mount: A Fresh Look" June 14-15 in Houghton Lake.

Mid-Atlantic: The annual Mid-Atlantic District Disaster Response Auction is taking place May 1 at the Ag Center in Westminster, Md. The event also includes tables for books, baked goods and other desserts, a white elephant sale, and other offerings.

Middle Pennsylvania: The district's Resource Network Catalog, which provides materials and information for congregations in the district, is now available online.

Missouri/Arkansas: A district "preach-off" took place April 17 at the spring rally held at Cabool (Mo.) Church of the Brethren. Preachers from the district were each invited to share a 3-minute message as part of the opening worship.

Northern Indiana: Preliminary year-end reports showed the district with an income over expense of more than \$2,500. The district planned to carry the surplus into the current budget year to help relieve an unbalanced budget passed by district conference last fall.

Northern Ohio: The district's Peace Task Team planned to present an event titled "Snapshots of a Living Peace Church" May 1 at Camp Inspiration Hills, aiming to build practical ideas for present-day peacemaking. Barb Saylor of On Earth Peace and district personnel will provide leadership.

Northern Plains: The Ivester congregation, Grundy Center, Iowa, on March 6 held a benefit auction of baked goods, handcrafts, and other items to benefit its building fund and the Church World Service "All Our Children" campaign.

Oregon/Washington: Brethren, Mennonites, and others in the area of Mt. Vernon, Wash., north of Seattle, held a first meeting in January and have decided to form a group and meet on a regular basis. They are currently meeting two Thursdays a month for worship, supper, and study.

Pacific Southwest: A series of prayer vigils called "Hands Lifted in Prayer" are being held this spring, to "address God's future" in the district and beyond. Vigils were scheduled to be held in Fresno and Pasadena, Calif., and Phoenix, Ariz.

Shenandoah: The district board executive committee has approved a sabbatical for Jim Miller, in his 12th year as district executive. Miller plans to spend time studying and visiting with family in Germany, and to spend a week volunteering at a disaster response project.

South/Central Indiana: The district's Church Extension Fund has provided a loan of \$100,000 to the Richmond (Ind.) congregation for the purchase and renovation of a new facility and \$10,000 to the Marion (Ind.) congregation toward renovation and replacement of sound equipment.

Southeastern: Camp Placid, Blountville, Tenn., held a SonRise Service for the district on Easter Sunday morning. The camp will also host a "Garden of Grace" women's camp led by Shirley Spire June 4-6.

Southern Ohio: "The Final Journey of John Kline: A Drama with Music" was scheduled to be presented at four district congregations April 23-25. The New Millennium Players of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren were performing on the tour.

Southern Pennsylvania: Camp Eder, Fairfield, Pa., has renamed its wagon and cabin units after "pillars" of the Church of the Brethren. Formerly known just as Units 1 to 6, they now bear the names of John Kline, Sarah Major, Alexander Mack, Dan West, Anna Mow, and M.R. Zigler.

Southern Plains: District administrative secretary Joan Lowry was among those meeting with Plains-area Congregational Life Team staff Duane Grady and Jim Kinsey in Kansas in March. Grady will also be part of the Southern Plains District conference in July.

Virgina: The district youth cabinet planned and led a Tenebrae service for the district on April 9. It was held at Trinity Church of the Brethren in Botetourt County, Va.

Western Pennsylvania: The active district youth choir began a new season with practices in February. A spring tour to five congregations was slated for April 23-25.

Western Plains: The district in February sold the property of the Rocky Ford congregation in Colorado, which had been closed by vote of the 2003 district conference. Proceeds will be distributed equally to youth ministries and leadership development.

West Marva: The district's 10th annual spring auction was scheduled for May 1 at the Barbour County Fairgrounds in West Virginia.

Martha Beach



The Haitian Brethren in Florida have a set of new wheels, thanks to some generous gifts. On Jan. 8, Glenn and Helen Kinsel, right, handed over the keys to a 1998 Ford van to members of the Miami and Orlando Haitian congregations. Money for the van was donated by people throughout the district and denomination.

Nampa project lifts up value of healthy marriage

The week of Valentine's Day marked the national Celebration of Marriage Week, a celebration that encourages the idea of marriage for life and for love.

At Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren, everything from a renewal of vows for couples married 60 years or more to a display of old wedding portraits became a part of the emphasis. One of those couples, B. Edgar and Kathryn Johnson, were given the honor of being named "Marriage Ambassadors" by Nampa Mayor Tom Dale. The couple has been married for 60 years and was chosen for what they believe and what they represent.

"We consider marriage a lifetime covenant," Edgar said. The couple was recognized in a ceremony at the mayor's office.

Nampa pastor Jim Hardenbrook said the couples, who came to the front of the sanctuary as they were introduced, represented more than 800 years of marriage. The congregation responded with a spontaneous standing ovation.

The focus on marriage in Nampa has led to another development, Healthy Families Nampa, featured in an Associated Press article in March. The five-year pilot program wants to focus on keeping couples together through pre-marital or marital counseling. Ministers are working



Members of Oakton (Va.) Church of the Brethren put their concern for the homeless into action by organizing a "Mini Walk for the Homeless." The walk, part of a larger event sponsored by the Fannie Mae Foundation, benefits the Brethren Nutrition Program of Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren. Oakton's 64 registered participants raised more than \$1,400, which is matched by Fannie Mae. Action/Reflection Committee members Nancy Cameron, Jane Meadows, Kaili Ludwick, Paula Mendenhall, Molly Bridenbaugh, and Al Zebroski organized the event, topping their goal of 50 walkers. The group wore special T-shirts and also carried a banner to raise awareness of the Church of the Brethren in the community.

together to encourage couples to work out their differences and not turn to divorce.

The program, which also includes a responsible fatherhood project, was made possible by a federal waiver from the Administration for Children and Families. For five years the federal government is offering two dollars for every one the organization raises, with a maximum of \$544,000. All the money is to be put toward the continuing effort of promoting the virtues of healthy marriage.

Nampa's branch, which Hardenbrook helped to organ-

ize, is one of only three created in the US. "They picked us because of Nampa's history of partnership and cooperation with the community," said Terry Smith, executive director of Healthy Families Nampa.

So what do couples who have had successful marriages think of all these new efforts in Idaho? Dorothy Kincaid, wife to Warren for 60 years, said she feels very good about the new focus on marriage. "It's the most wonderful thing that could happen," she said. —Lindsay

Redifer, *Idaho Press-Tribune*

Youth spend New Year "South of the Border"

It began in December 2002. Tim Denlinger, a long-time member of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren (Kettering, Ohio) and a self-employed consultant, was invited by a business client in San Antonio to attend a Wednesday evening event at La Vernia Methodist Church. There, Denlinger discovered a local mission program that addresses substandard housing in nearby Mexico.

As they are able to accumulate funds, members of La Vernia travel to Mexico about twice a year and build simple houses for families living in cardboard shacks with dirt floors. The families are screened and selected by the Methodist Church in Mexico. The houses are simple, 12-foot by 16-foot structures built on a cement slab, with all materials purchased locally.

Dianne Humble/Idaho Press Tribune



Dianne Humble/Idaho Press Tribune



Left: Alice (Crill) Stickeny pins a corsage on the lapel of her husband, Gordon, during a celebration of Nampa Church of the Brethren couples married 60-plus years. Right: Paul and Dorothy (Goodman) Gross share a kiss during the celebration.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

Ambler budget surplus given to General Board

Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District found itself in the position to make an extra contribution to the Church of the Brethren General Board in 2003, just one year after a budget shortfall was avoided only by a \$5,000 Christmas Eve Miracle Offering.

With a renewed faithfulness in giving at the congregation, the offerings for 2003 amounted to more than \$115,000, exceeding the church's expenses by more than \$5,000. The executive committee, having learned in October that giving was on track to meet the budget, brought a recommendation to the church body to continue the Miracle Offering as an outreach ministry. After giving approval at a council meeting in December, Ambler sent the entire surplus amount of \$5,163.35 to the General Board.

The decision was an act of faith for a congregation that has made occasional withdrawals from reserve funds in recent years, but ministries coordinator Betty Lou Nyce commended the church for resisting the urge to put the money into a "rainy day fund."

"Perhaps in the future we will choose to designate a surplus for our own needs," she wrote in a church newsletter article, "but I feel really good—and I trust you will, as well—about using our first surplus in years for others." —**Angie Mountain**

John McKinney

Youth from the Prince of Peace congregation traveled to Mexico this winter to address sub-standard housing. Members of the group were, left to right, Jamie Denlinger, Kevin Denlinger, Tara Tyner, Eric Stephenson, Tim Denlinger, Susan McKinney, Julie Denlinger, and Ian McKinney.

• The Church of the Brethren is mentioned often in a new book, *Faces from the Flood: Hurricane Floyd Remembered*, by Richard H. Moore and Jay Barnes. "It has gotten a rave review by Dr. Steve Lyons, a familiar face from the Weather Channel," reported Jane Yount of the **General Board's Emergency Response** office. Hurricane Floyd recovery was the longest running project for Emergency Response, at 2 years and 8 months.

• **Good Shepherd Home**, a Brethren retirement community in Northern Ohio District, is celebrating 100 years of ministry this year. The celebration kicked off with a benevolent dinner and auction March 25. Another celebration will be held June 25, recognizing the facility's original dedication date.

• **Beech Run Church of the Brethren**, Mapleton Depot, Pa., is commemorating its 125th anniversary in 2004. The small congregation still meets in the original meetinghouse, built in 1879. An anniversary committee has commissioned miniature replicas of the church building and an adjacent schoolhouse, available for \$15 each. Call 814-542-5440.

• **Harry and Gerry Graybill**, longtime volunteers at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., were honored with the Community Service Award at the Founders Club Dinner of the Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa. The Graybills were recognized for their many hours of dedicated service to a variety of worthwhile organizations.

• Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren member **Tom Groff** was recently inducted into the Palmyra Area High School Sports Hall of Fame. Groff, a 1978 alumnus, was on the school's track, cross country, and basketball teams.

• Former Church of the Brethren Nigeria missionaries **Roy and Violet Pfaltzgraff** of Lititz, Pa., were featured in a March 3 column in *The York (Pa.) Dispatch*. The couple, who once served at a leper colony in Nigeria, now reside at Brethren Village.

REMEMBERED: Nvwa Balami

Nvwa Balami, a key leader in Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), died Mar. 12 at Maiduguri, Nigeria. He was known to many in the US church, having studied at Bethany Theological Seminary and spoken at the 1983 Annual Conference in Baltimore, Md.



Balami taught at Waka Secondary School, served on EYN's executive committee and as principal for Kulp Bible College, and pastored the new urban congregation at Lagos, as well as a number of other congregations. His latest assignment had been teaching at the Madu Bible School at Marama.

"We join the Nigeria church in mourning this loss," said Merv Keeney, executive director of the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships, "and give thanks to God for Nvwa's faithful presence among us."

Upon returning to Ohio, Tim shared his experience during a morning worship service. Prince of Peace members responded with enough funds to build two houses, and Tim's son, Kevin, an architecture student at University of Cincinnati, chose to spend his Christmas vacation traveling to Mexico to help pound nails.

This past winter, the Prince of Peace youth group said, "We want to go this year." Efforts were set in motion to raise funds, including a silent auction of homemade pies. An anonymous person gave \$1,500 toward the project. When the dust had settled and the funds were tallied, the cup overflowed. There was more than enough to build two houses.

Six youth (Jamie, Julie, and Kevin Denlinger, Ian McKinney, Eric Stephenson, and Tara Tyner) and three advisors (Tim Denlinger and John and Susan McKinney) traveled to San Antonio at their own expense over the New Year holiday. John's sister, Nancy, who lives in San Antonio, opened her home to the group and fed them while they were there. Nancy's daughter, Katie, joined the group. They commuted into Mexico during the day to cut lumber, pound nails, paint, and assemble the new shelters for very appreciative families.

Two more Mexican families will enjoy a better life, but the seven youth received the greater blessing. It was a New Year's they will not soon forget. —**Jim Denlinger**



What would Peter say today?

Our Brethren forebears looked to the early Christian church as their model. The picture we are given of the primitive church in Acts and the Epistles is one of a struggling community. One faction



DEBBIE EISENBISE

based in Jerusalem argued for following rigid dietary laws and circumcision. Another, led primarily by the apostle Paul, welcomed Gentiles into the church without these requirements.

Throughout the ages the issues have changed, yet the tension remains between those of the narrow gate and those of the open door. We are today as the

church was in the first century—a work in process.

Galatians 2 records Paul's impression of the conflict between him and Peter (Cephas). What might be Peter's response? What might be our own?

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Thank you for contacting me after receiving correspondence from our brother Paul. I am not surprised at his recounting of the events at Antioch. I am well aware of the disagreements between us, but have never been asked directly, as you have, to tell my side of the story.

Too many times we talk about each other and not to

Throughout the ages the issues have changed, yet the tension remains between those of the narrow gate and those of the open door. We are today as the church was in the first century—a work in process.

each other. Too many times we talk at each other rather than with each other. So I do not intend to quibble over the facts and make this a debate. We don't need to be choosing up sides in the church. But I will try to explain myself, to at least encourage an increase in compassion and understanding between us.

First, let me say that not a day goes by when I do not remember you (and others who are part of the Gentile mission) in prayer. We here in Jerusalem are grateful for your support—not just for the money you have collected and sent for the work of the saints in this place, but for your prayers and companionship, too. We know that you are sharing our oppression,

that the persecution we face for the sake of the Word is experienced by you, as well. We share each others' burdens as we also share in the joy of our faith. Christ Jesus stands with us all.

It is because this mutual affection binds us to each other in Christ that my heart breaks even as I write to you this day. For I know that there are divisions in our fellowship. People have felt excluded, even though through Christ we have been made one. And clearly, from his letter to you, Paul blames me.

There is little I can say in my defense. Indeed, I often feel as though I am not the rock Christ should have chosen for the foundation of the church. I am not always consistent. I tend to want to please others and often make decisions that have implications I simply cannot see at the time. So, it seems as though I waver, and yet I am really trying to find some middle ground. I am not that steadfast rock so many seem to need. I appear as shifting sand and deeply regret that.

It comes down to this: that you as Gentiles can belong to the church, but there are those of us who simply cannot eat with you. We value your participation, your stewardship, your solidarity, but our faith prevents us from associating with you at meals. And we must remember, brothers and sisters, that this is the tradition that Christ Jesus himself was raised into and never rejected.

But when I consider the vision I was given by God (Acts 10)—in which God permitted me to eat all kinds of food, even that which is unclean—I realize that this compromise is not of God. We cannot be one in the body of Christ and not be able to fully join in fellowship with each other.

In trying to meet everyone's needs, I have met none. My brothers in Jerusalem do not trust me because of the hospitality I have offered you, and you do not trust me because I make demands of you based on traditions that are not your own. Paul would have them change, and I would have you change.

We are at an impasse and need another way. We have all accepted Christ, and he has accepted us. How can we not fully accept each other? Let us be in prayer and conversation about this matter.

Yours in the peace of Christ,
Peter

Debbie Eisenbise is pastor of Skyridge Church of the Brethren, Kalamazoo, Mich.

QUOTE WORTHY

“You can tell a lot about a congregation by what’s on the bulletin board.”

—general secretary Stan Noffsinger, in remarks to the Church of the Brethren General Board about his visits around the denomination

“The church is called to be with the oppressed, the poor, the aching, the hungry. And youth are all of those things—psychologically, socially, and cognitively. They’re searching. They’re hungry. They’re ‘the least of these’ in a lot of ways.”

—Mike Baughman, assistant pastor for youth ministries at a Methodist congregation in Somerville, N.J., quoted in *Context* by Martin Marty

“That was probably one of the best buys the Church of the Brethren ever made.”

—Brethren Service Center Buildings and Grounds director Ed Palsgrove, on the initial purchase of the New Windsor, Md., property for \$31,000 and change.

“You cannot keep putting so many irons in the fire. If you’re burning the candle at both ends, you’re not very bright.”

—Dr. Larry Thompson, pastor of First Baptist Church of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

“If we don’t have continuous, meaningful relationships we risk losing one of the greatest things in life—our emotional health and well-being.”

—Paul W. Brubaker, writing in the *BRF Witness* newsletter

“So, whatever our vocation, at the end of the day we live by grace—we live in our gracious first calling as beloved child of God.”

—Ann M. Svenningsen, new president of the Fund for Theological Education

“Disarmament by war and democracy by occupation are difficult prospects.”

—former United Nations Iraq weapons inspector Hans Blix, in remarks to the Associated Press in March 2004

“Christians forget that it was the devil who tempted Jesus with unbounded wealth and power. And it is the devil in every American that makes us feel good about being so powerful.”

—retired Riverside Church of New York senior minister William Sloane Coffin, quoted by Martin Marty in *Context*

“The goal of adult Christian education is not, or shouldn’t be, simply information transferal, but spiritual growth.”

—Onokama (Mich.) Church of the Brethren pastor Frances Townsend, writing in the spring 2004 issue of the General Board’s “The Seed Packet” newsletter

CULTURE REVIEW

• **Michael W. Smith** earned his third Grammy Award on Feb. 8 when his “Worship Again” album was named the best pop/contemporary gospel album at the annual ceremony. Audio Adrenaline won for Best Rock Gospel Album for “Worldwide,” and Randy Travis took the honors for Best Southern, Country, or Bluegrass Gospel Album with “Rise and Shine.” (RNS)

• A study by **Pew Research Center for the People and the Press** showed that people who attend church more than once a week vote Republican by 63 percent to 37 percent; people who seldom or never attend vote Democratic by 62 percent to 38 percent. (Cited by Jim Wallis in *New York Times* Dec. 28, 2003)

• According to researchers with the **National Study of Youth and Religion**, religious tradition appears to have some relationship to the movie viewing habits of US

teenagers. Only 17 percent of US teens ages 13 to 17 who say their religious faith is extremely important in shaping how they live their daily lives report that all or most of the movies and videos they watch are R-rated. In contrast, 48 percent of teens who say that religious faith is not important at all in shaping how they live their daily lives report that all or most of the movie and videos they watch are R-rated.

• **A Mennonite Church USA** Executive Board survey released Jan. 31 had members of the denomination rate 10 issues from “very urgent” to “not very urgent.” Topping the list were spiritual growth, named by 64 percent, and peacemaking, named by 57 percent. Only two issues, abortion and homosexuality, were named “not very urgent” by more than 15 percent of respondents. (From *The Mennonite*, Feb. 17, 2004)

Believers

Ideas and trends in faith and values

Religion and Life Satisfaction



Americans who are religiously active rate themselves as more satisfied with life than those without faith communities.

Of those surveyed in a recent poll, 70 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement: “I am completely satisfied with my life.” Of those who identified with a religious community, 77 percent reported feeling content. Sixty-two percent of nonreligious respondents said the same.

When asked how they felt about the statement “I am completely satisfied with my life”:

45 percent of those who attended a worship service in the past week strongly agreed.

33 percent who had not attended services strongly agreed.

47 percent of Catholics strongly agreed.

39 percent of Protestants strongly agreed.

46 percent of those who give more than \$2,000 annually to their faith communities strongly agreed.

35 percent of those who give less than 2,000 annually to their faith communities strongly agreed.

Source: The Gallup Organization

By Christina Denny and Monica Seabery © 2004 Religion News Service

Taking a new look at ECUMENISM

Brethren have an important voice in building wholeness amid diversity

■ ■ ■ World Council of Churches

The World Council of Churches (WCC) is the broadest international Christian organization, bringing together more than 340 churches, denominations, and church fellowships in more than 100 countries and territories throughout the world. While the bulk of the WCC's founding churches were European and North American, today the majority of member churches are in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, the Middle East, and the Pacific.

The WCC was formally established in 1948, although it existed "in process of formation" throughout World War II. The Church of the Brethren was one of the founding members of the WCC, and a number of Brethren, including M.R. Zigler, were very active in the WCC from the beginning.

Through the years, Brethren have served on the Central Committee, WCC's main governing body, and worked in commissions and on special task forces related to issues such as peace and overcoming violence, refugees, theology, and communication. Brethren have attended WCC assemblies and conferences on mission and evangelism. Most recently, a Church of the Brethren member served on the WCC staff in Geneva, Switzerland.

The Church of the Brethren officially relates to the WCC through the general secretary of the General Board and a representative elected by Annual Conference. Those involved with the WCC can attest to the high regard given to the Church of the Brethren over the years for its witness to peace and service and its ecumenical vision and commitment.

For its member churches, the WCC is a unique space in which Christians can reflect, speak, act, worship, and work together. WCC member churches work toward "visible unity" in worshiping and working together as people of one faith, promoting common witness and service by serving human need, seeking justice and peace, and upholding the integrity of creation. One example of the WCC's work is the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, developed each year by the WCC and the Roman Catholic Church to help draw churches at the local level into greater fellowship with each other.

Current WCC emphases include the Decade to Overcome Violence (2001-2010); inter-religious dialogue and relations with other faiths; HIV and AIDS; and promoting peaceful solutions to situations of violence and conflict, including Sudan and Palestine/Israel. WCC will hold a Conference on World Mission and Evangelism in Greece in 2005, and its next assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 2006. For more information, see www.wcc-coe.org. —**Sara Speicher** (former WCC staff)

Autumn was beginning its descent into winter as our train entered the station in Geneva, Switzerland. My wife, Kim, daughter Anna, and I had started our trip in Schwarzenau, Germany, five days prior, living in the land of the early Brethren. Now we looked forward to a week in Geneva, visiting the World Council of Churches and walking in the way of John Calvin and the great reformers.

Our visit began with Sunday worship at the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Geneva, which had at its center a worship space in the round. Chairs curled around a raised chancel area, and a balcony framing the upstairs focused the congregation's

attention on the simple altar table and cross, allowing a panoramic picture of the faces that filled the room.

As with most Lutheran services, the sermon ended with an open invitation to communion. One by one, we all went forward to receive a small piece of bread, which we dipped into the communion

Eduardo Quadros/WCC



Young people concerned about the future of the planet met at a World Social Forum sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Porto Alegre, Brazil, last year.



M

By Jeff Carter

Church leaders gathered at the World Council of Churches headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, in February for the installation of the new WCC general secretary, the Rev. Dr. Samuel Kobia (second from left).

cup. After all were fed, the pastor concluded the service with an invitation: "Let us share in the prayer our Lord Jesus taught the disciples, and I invite you to speak in the language that you first learned the prayer."

I began in English, "Our Father, who art in heaven . . ." Over my shoulder I heard German, and next to me a woman spoke with a strong Indian accent. Like water over a falls, a variety of languages began to wash over us. My tongue went silent. The languages blended into a cacophony of sound. I listened, and although I could only understand a few of the languages I clearly understood what everyone was saying.

My 2-year-old daughter, who was propped in my arms, stretched her ears to hear, her eyes wide open at the noise. As the prayer trickled to an end and the "Amen"s rang out, she looked right into my eyes and said, "Daddy, that was neat." I was speechless; my eyes filled with tears. If I'd had the presence of mind to speak, I would have said,

■ ■ ■ National Council of Churches

A longing for unity, peace, and justice has marked the life of the National Council of Churches of Christ USA (NCC) from the start. Founded in 1950, the Council continues the work of more than a dozen interdenominational ministries, some with roots that go back a century or more. Its 36 Orthodox, African American, and Protestant member churches—including the Church of the Brethren—count more than 45 million adherents.

For much of its history, the NCC's work for peace with justice addressed the challenges of the Cold War specter of nuclear holocaust. "It is not half so important that we send sputniks circling around the globe as that we should send more loaves of bread around the world," said 1957-60

President Edwin T. Dahlberg.

Contemporary challenges include Middle East conflicts, the "war on terrorism," and the widespread daily violence of poverty, hunger, and disease. Today the NCC is working for peaceful solutions to conflicts, global nuclear disarmament, fair wages for US farmworkers, due process for Guantanamo detainees, and better interfaith understanding. The Council actively is pressing for welfare policy that lifts families out of poverty and is pressing the US government to keep its financial

commitments to international development and HIV/AIDS crisis work.

The NCC also serves churches through a wide variety of educational, advocacy, research, communication, and environmental justice ministries; theological studies, and Bible translation—notably, the New Revised Standard Version.

Church of the Brethren delegates for the NCC general assembly this past November were general secretary Stan Noffsinger, Frances Townsend, David W. Miller, L. Gene Bucher, Merv Keeney, and Valentina Satvedi. Church of the Brethren member Martin Rock works for the NCC's Washington, D.C., office. —**Carol Fouke** (NCC staff)

Carol Fouke



Potter Ky Johnston works his wheel at the National Council of Churches General Assembly in Jackson, Miss., this past November.

■ ■ ■ Church World Service

In the aftermath of World War II, a number of denominations joined together to form an agency “to do together what none of us could hope to do as well alone.” That resulting organization—formed in 1946—was Church World Service (CWS). Its mission was simple: Feed the hungry, clothe the naked, heal the sick, comfort the aged, shelter the homeless. During the first two years of CWS’ inception, US churches came together to provide more than 11 million pounds of relief supplies to war-torn Europe, as well as meeting the staggering needs of the refugee crisis.

In 1947, CWS, Lutheran World Relief, and the National Catholic Welfare Program issued its first general appeal for farm commodities through their Christian Rural Overseas Program (CROP). The work of M.R. Zigler, then-executive director of the Brethren Service Committee, was an integral part of the program’s successful launch.

John Metzler Sr., director of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., was appointed the first national director of CROP, and the first national CROP office was opened at Bethany Seminary in Chicago. Ken McDowell, a Bethany student, was CROP’s first business manager. Today CROP, no longer an acronym, represents CWS community-based events to help stop hunger.

In the late 1960s, the CWS Clothing Program was a major element in global relief and development work. The Brethren Service Center processed and stored millions of pounds of clothing and blankets, and other supplies. Today, the center still serves as the primary processing and storage center for CWS Blankets and “Gift of the Heart” Kits.

During the 1960s, the focus of Church World Service’s work began to shift. Recognizing that people yearn to become self-sufficient, CWS began using donated funds to purchase and send tools, seeds, and building materials overseas for economic development programs.

Today, Church World Service is the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of 36 Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the US, working in partnership with indigenous organizations in more than 80 countries. Current Brethren working for CWS include Gary Arnold, David Hoke, and Madalyn Metzger (Elkhart, Ind.); Nancy Deal (Harrisburg, Pa.); Dennis Metzger (Chatham, Ill.); Ann Ridsen (Oak Brook, Ill.); and Mark Sloan (Nairobi, Kenya).

Within the US, CWS assists communities in responding to disasters, resettles refugees, promotes fair national and international policies, provides educational resources, and offers opportunities to join a people-to-people network of local and global caring through participation in CROP WALKS, the Tools of Hope and Blanket programs, and the “Gift of the Heart” Kit program.

This year, CWS is launching a four-year economic development Africa Initiative, through which it will seek to bring increased attention and resources to struggles faced by the most vulnerable families in sub-Saharan Africa. —**Madalyn Metzger**

“Yes, honey, this is Christ’s church.” I had encountered Pentecost.

From its founding, the church has known times of great unity and times of disappointing strife. The Old Testament chronicles God’s wish for the created order to live in harmony and be a visible community set in God’s presence. Yet soon after creation, humanity introduced strife to its ways and division to its relationships.

The pattern repeats itself in the founding of the church. Great unity is witnessed on Pentecost, but soon church leaders agreed to disagree and the min-

ACT

istry of Christ began to move in meaningful, yet different ways. Over the millennia, Christ’s church has schismed and found re-birth in a variety of places, each time giving witness to Christ’s presence in new and often different forms.

While in scripture and in the tradition of the church there is a repeated pattern of brokenness, hope is not lost, for there is also God’s continued call to reconciliation and God’s gift of unending grace. It is this gift of grace that has inspired the ecumenical movement, a response to God’s presence in creation; to Christ’s call to be one in faith, witness, and mission; and to the Spirit’s activity in the church.

Started in the late 19th and early 20th century, the modern ecumenical movement sought to bring unity to the church through prayer, acts of service, and mutually uplifting discussions focused upon the understanding of differences while stressing similarities. Soon after its beginning, the ecumenical

movement was faced with tangible challenges as Europe erupted in war, leading to a global conflict. The churches responded with generous acts of service and compassionate gifts of aid.

This movement, sharing the Brethren importance of scripture, found direction and purpose in the story of the church’s founding on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2), Paul’s admonition to be one body through



Members of an Angolan family walk home after receiving assistance from Church World Service.

the cross (Eph. 4), and Christ's prayer for his disciples to be one in Christ so that the world might believe (John 17). As people who embrace the incarnational Christ, the Church of the Brethren was, and remains, open to the idea of embracing Christ's call to be part of the visible unity of the church.

The word "ecumenical" is derived from the Greek, "*Oikoumene*," meaning "the whole inhabited earth." First used to describe the councils of the early Christian church, which claimed universal jurisdiction, it now means universal cooperation and unity among Christians. At the heart of the ecumenical movement is a personal and corporate understanding of God, a desire for greater closeness or communion with God, and a hunger for healing and reconciliation of division among Christian churches.

Often the word "unity" is used to describe the goal or wish of the ecumenical movement. This unity is best represented in Paul's writing to the Corinthians when he encourages the church, "now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it" (1 Cor. 12:27). At times the word unity has been misinterpreted as uniformity, as if the goal of the ecumenical movement is to merge the various Christian communions into a giant megachurch. This misunderstanding leads to understandable concerns, including a feared loss of individual identity, the devaluing of tradition and heritage, theological concerns raised in scripture, and the inherent fear that something might be lost rather than gained through ecumenical involvement.

Rather than uniformity, however, unity in the ecumenical movement speaks of wholeness amid diversity.

Kathleen Campanella



Serving on the Church of the Brethren Committee on Interchurch Relations in 2003-2004 are, front row, Michael Hostetter, Brandy Fix, Belita Mitchell (chair); back row, Bob Johansen, general secretary Stan Noffsinger, secretary Jon Kobel, and Steve Brady.

■ ■ ■ Christian Churches Together

This past January, 50 church leaders from a very broad range of Christian churches (including general secretary Stan Noffsinger from the Church of the Brethren) met together at Camp Allen near Houston to work toward the launch of a historic new inter-confessional entity, Christian Churches Together in the USA (CCT). CCT's purpose is "to enable churches and national Christian organizations to grow closer together in Christ in order to strengthen our Christian witness in the world."

Churches from all major Christian families—Evangelical/Pentecostal, Catholic, Orthodox, historic Racial/Ethnic, historic Protestant—are moving toward joining together to launch Christian Churches Together in the spring of 2005. Never before in US history has such a broad and widely representative group of churches come together in this way.

At Camp Allen, the church leaders and representatives of national Christian organizations prayed and talked together; identified and achieved consensus on all major issues related to the founding document; engaged in discussions on both the nature of prayer in their diverse Christian traditions and the explosion of Christianity in the global South; and deepened their fellowship in Christ through numerous personal conversations.

More than 25 Christian communions are currently officially engaged, in ways appropriate to each church's polity, in deciding to become founding participants of Christian Churches Together (in the Church of the Brethren this is occurring via the Committee on Interchurch Relations). It is expected that a substantial number of denominations from all five families will decide to become founding participants of Christian Churches Together in 2005.

■ ■ ■ Committee on Interchurch Relations

The Church of the Brethren's Committee on Interchurch Relations (CIR) was formed in 1968 by Annual Conference to promote and celebrate congregational, cross-cultural, and ecumenical partnerships and inter-faith conversations. It has a mission to pursue, promote, and celebrate respectful conversations, loving relationships, and shared ministries with other communities of faith to create an ever-widening circle of the gospel of peace.

CIR has a long history of promoting ecumenical understanding and participation on the local and denominational level. This is accomplished in part by choosing a major area of focus and presenting an award/citation at Annual Conference each year to an individual or congregation.

In 2001, CIR chose to make the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV) a primary focus for the next 10 years. CIR promotes and celebrates congregational participation in DOV and has a 2004 and 2005 emphasis on peacemaking among youth and young adults.

Another focus in the upcoming year will be exploring possible membership in Christian Churches Together, a new, growing ecumenical organization. CIR also continues its pursuit of cooperation with

Brethren and Historic Peace Churches, particularly as it relates to the DOV.

CIR members in 2003-2004 are Bob Johansen, Steve Brady, Michael Hostetter, Brandy Fix, and chair Belita Mitchell. General secretary Stan Noffsinger, who serves as the denomination's chief ecumenical officer, also sits on the committee. —**Steve Brady**



Walt Wiltchek

Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden, right, greets Dr. Patricia Ares Muzio during a Cuban Council of Churches visit to the Church of the Brethren General Offices in 2002.

Though one of the smaller ecumenical partners, the Church of the Brethren has a strong presence and is often called upon to speak clearly on issues facing the church universal. Carrying the title of "Historic Peace Church," the Church of the

Brethren is respected for its views on peace and justice and is a trusted voice in the area of mission and service.

Due in part to the commitment of the Brethren, the World Council of Churches adopted the current decade as a Decade to Overcome Violence, making resources available for peace education and creating programs that embody Christ's message of reconciliation and justice. Member churches are aware Brethren practice the commands of Christ, and thus the Brethren voice is often regarded as one of intention and integrity.

Conversely, through its ecumenical involvement the Church of the Brethren gains greater understanding of its own particular and "peculiar" faith witness. A non-creedal interpretation based upon the imitation of Jesus

colors the way Brethren view ministry, mission, and their personal and cooperate witness. Often after returning from an ecumenical activity, I not only understand the diversity of the church more appropriately, but I have a new appreciation for some aspect of what it means to be a member of the Church of the Brethren.

In my ministry, I have found ecumenism to be a place of God's grace and an opportunity for visible expression of God's oneness in humanity.

Only recently has my involvement extended beyond personal and church-to-church relationships to include the larger ecumenical institutions like the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the National Council of Churches (NCC). The gift of ecumenism I first received was in the friendships I formed with other pastors and church members from differing communions.

As for Jesus, many boundaries have been crossed as I have sat at table with Lutherans and Catholics, Mennonites and Presbyterians, breaking bread and sharing in our unity in Jesus Christ. From these conversations have come preaching opportunities, shared worship services, youth group trips to area church services, greater involvement in ministerial association activities, community educational events, blood drives, engagement with the local school system, simple and meaningful friendships, more meals, and greater fellowship. With each conversation, gathering, or event, I witness Christ the reconciler working through me and my ecumenical partners to rewrite a portion of the church's divided history and transform our relationship with each other.

Within the ecumenical movement, an important distinction is made between the ecumenical call and

Carol Fouxe



Outgoing NCC president Elenie Huszagh, incoming president Thomas Hoyt Jr., president-elect Michael Livingston, and NCC general secretary Bob Edgar joined for an installation service at the NCC's General Assembly this past fall.

■■■ NCC Commission on Interfaith Relations

Appointed by the Church of the Brethren's Committee on Interchurch Relations to represent the denomination as a member of the National Council of Churches (NCC) Committee on Christian-Muslim Relations in 1985, I have continued in that interfaith work to the present. Over that time, the Committee on Christian-Muslim Relations merged with the Committee on Christian-Jewish Relations to become the Commission on Interfaith Relations, now one of the five commissions of the NCC. What was once a peripheral interest has become of central significance.

This came about as the NCC has come to terms with the tragic and dangerous spiritual brokenness in the world, particularly as found among the faiths springing from the heritage of Abraham and Sarah—Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. These faiths share a common root of origin trusting in one God who is creator and sustainer of all peoples and of creation, but their common history became fractured.

NCC Interfaith Relations work is an attempt to be faithful to our common Abrahamic faith in God as one Lord of the whole human family and of all creation, while cherishing each diverse community's understanding of that, and living with mutual respect and understanding toward the particular faith commitments of others.

That interfaith objective has much in common with our peace church concern for being agents of reconciliation in God's world. Reconciliation comes about when former enemies discover their common humanity. Tragically, the faiths of humankind—when exclusively held—are one of the most divisive causes of conflict in our world. But with interfaith understanding and respect, people of diverse religious persuasions facing common crises in their world discover their common humanity enriched by their unique understandings of God and God's will in the world. —David Metzler



A congregation in Winona Lake, Ind., welcomed representatives of the various Brethren traditions to a Brethren World Assembly at Grace College last summer.

the Brethren is asked to continue in Christian fellowship by being a visible partner, contributing to the work of the ecumenical movement, and sharing the unique Brethren story while being open to God's story among the churches. The world's Christian communions are seeking the Brethren voice and continuing to invite the Church of the Brethren to embrace God's call to be one, so that the world might believe. It may mean another Pentecost awaits us. **W**

Jeff Carter is pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren and the denomination's elected representative to the World Council of Churches.

■ ■ American Baptist Churches relationship

When leaders from the American Baptist Churches (ABC) and the Church of the Brethren met this past January to review the 30-year "associated relationship" between the two denominations, they found plenty of reasons to continue.

The two denominations created this relationship in 1973, following conversations between Norman J. Baugher, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, and Edwin H. Tuller, his counterpart in the American Baptist Convention. As fruits of that endeavor, today seven congregations are dually affiliated. Each denomination has also sent an "observer/consultant" to the other's general board. Occasionally the Church of the Brethren's Committee on Interchurch Relations has met with the ABC Committee on Christian Unity.

As time has gone by, however, fewer people in each denomination remember that there is an associated relationship and how it began. Both groups began to sense that it was time to review the relationship and to ask whether it was being fulfilled in the best way possible.

At a day-long meeting in Valley Forge, Pa., where the American Baptist Churches are headquartered, leaders from both churches met to become better acquainted with each other's ministries and to discuss ways to enhance the relationship. The American Baptists were represented by Roy Medley, general secretary, and the ABC executive leadership council. The Church of the Brethren was represented by general secretary Stan Noffsinger and the General Board's leadership team.

In addition to sharing congregations with dual affiliation, the two denominations relate through ecumenical involvements in areas such as stewardship and publishing. Participants in the meeting identified additional areas where the churches could learn from each other, including disaster response, peace, new church development, and how to become more multicultural. The group recommended that the "observer/consultant" connection move out of the general board setting and directly into the two ecumenical committees, where it can be more fruitful.

The group planned to inform the dually affiliated congregations of this conversation and to invite their counsel regarding the associated relationship. Other plans include learning more about the history of the affiliation; educating the respective general boards about each other's beliefs, practices, and heritage; and using existing ecumenical gatherings as an opportunity for the denominations to meet for sharing together and with other Baptist and Anabaptist communions. The two leadership teams will meet again in February 2005, at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. —**Wendy McFadden**

the ecumenical witness. The ecumenical call is God's call for unity among the churches. This call is a gift, a grace, and an opportunity to be visible in Christian witness. The ecumenical witness is how the partner churches decide to act and then organize themselves.

Due to the current challenges of diminishing denominational membership, the tightening of budgets and loss of expected revenue, and the changing context of ministry among ecumenical partners, ecumenical institutions like the WCC and NCC are finding it more difficult to maintain the ministry established in the mid-20th century. As with many institutions, ecumenical institutions are preparing to decentralize so broader participation can be ensured through regionalization and multi-centeredness. An additional hope is a reduced financial burden, thus increasing flexibility and creativity in meeting immediate needs.

Recognizing such needed change, a process has begun to reevaluate the ecumenical movement in relation to three foci: unity, mission, and ministry. At a November Consultation on Reconfiguration of the Ecumenical Movement convened by the WCC it was noted that many factors—the growth of democracy, the explosion of communication, economic globalization, the changing nature of conflict, and the increasing pace of change—suggest the ministry context is changing, potentially leading the church away from an institutionally tied ministry.

Konrad Raiser, former WCC general secretary, challenged participants to focus less on institution and more on a life-centered, relational vision for ministry. For the Church of the Brethren, ministry—ecumenical ministry included—is relational. Ministry is about our relationship to God, to Christ Jesus, and to the community of believers. Healthy ministry depends upon accountability, mutual trust, and partnership.

Brethren are well acquainted with grassroots, relational ministry, where relationships matter both in their content and character. This is the genius of ministries such as Heifer Project and Church World Service.

As ecumenical partners continue in their Christian witness to meet the needs of the world, the Church of



Delivering new life, Mary Dadisman brought babies and hope into

Anticipation was keen. Clarence and Lucile Heckman had been remodeling and getting ready the storeroom and house of the Church of the Brethren Mission compound in Jos, Nigeria, for this hoped-for day of July 22, 1942. The teacher, Mary Dadisman, welcomed 12 pupils to begin Hillcrest School, a new venture of CBM. Only two pupils were missionary children of CBM. They were both first grade girls—Myrna Faw and Marilyn Studebaker. Auntie and Uncle Heckman were the houseparents in the dormitory, the large apartment on the CBM compound. Miss Dadisman, both a nurse and teacher, had left the Garkida Hospital to be the first teacher of the school.

A bed, food, foster parents, pupils, school room, teacher, but no textbooks. The order had been placed early, but the books were lost at sea because of the war. A second order was placed. When it didn't arrive, a tracer brought a report: ship sunk. Then in May 1943, 80 different packages arrived. School was dismissed and all the children went with the staff to the post office to bring the first textbooks to Hillcrest. Books had never been more welcomed by either pupils or teacher. . . .

—from *History of Hillcrest School: Twenty Five Years (1942-1967)* by Mary Eikenberry

A young Mary Dadisman holds one of the many babies she delivered while on the mission field in Nigeria.

The daily challenges that Mary Dadisman faced as a career Church of the Brethren missionary in Nigeria, from 1941 to 1979, are well-documented in denominational history books. What isn't recorded is the manner in which she improvised in the classroom or delivered babies in the bush: with great

spirit and without complaint. To handle the missing textbooks crisis, for example, she called on mothers of the children to help. "We copied from every available book, including the Bible, to teach the children to read," she said.

At 90, Mary D. (as she is affectionately known) still considers herself to be living a life of mission serv-

ice. "It's just that I've changed what I do," she said of her current life at another Hillcrest—Brethren Hillcrest Homes in La Verne, Calif.

She is coordinator for the auxiliary sewing group

there and serves on the board of quality assurance for Woods Hospital. At La Verne Church of the Brethren she still relentlessly promotes mission, witness, and care of creation causes. And true to her passion for life-long learning and health, Dadisman has an ambitious goal this year: to take advantage of Hillcrest's new wellness center pool, where she is learning to swim.

"I've always been a hard worker," she said. "Even as a child on the farm I was always busy at something. I cooked, milked, gardened, and drove horses. Those were days before tractors," she said.

HUNDREDS OF BABIES

Dadisman has no problem remembering the date of her arrival in Nigeria. On Pearl Harbor Day, Dec. 7, 1941, she began serving as a nurse at Garkida General Hospital. This era was captured in a story in the October 2002 issue of her retirement village newsletter, "Hillcrest Happenings": "This hospital

Fellow Hillcrest Homes residents Ruth Gold, left, and Mary Dadisman share greetings in the garden under the California sunshine.

Born in Texas, Mary Dadisman moved to Kansas, then Iowa, where she graduated from Fernald High School in 1932. She graduated from nursing school at Bethany Hospital in Chicago in 1935.

While serving as the college nurse, she earned a bachelor of science degree from Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa., in 1941. She was inspired to lifelong service in Africa by Grayce Brumbaugh, a fellow nurse.



Nurse Mary Dadisman welcomes a newborn into the world at a hospital in Nigeria.

then and now By Janis Pyle

the world in Nigeria, and remains an inspiration

had 75 to 100 beds. Mary was always on call as an RN, pharmacist, midwife, acting anesthesiologist, staff teacher, and all-around hospital administrator. The hospital averaged 50 to 75 babies delivered monthly, but one month their midwife happened to be on vacation. Mary delivered 100 babies herself!"

Dadisman believes her greatest effort was with health and hygiene for women. "With my teaching, I was able to teach mothers and midwives about cleanliness in cutting umbilical cords. A mortality rate from tetanus was cut dramatically," she said. She cited the example of a woman in an "out village" who had lost six babies from tetanus shortly after birth. Before the seventh delivery, she came to the mission hospital, and the baby survived. She was so happy that she decided not to go back to her home village. In time her husband joined her, and they had three more healthy children.

Dadisman kept track of many of the hundreds of babies she delivered, as well as their families. Dave Ingold, whose parents were missionaries in the 1960s and 1970s, marveled that Dadisman knew the family trees of the locals as well as she did those of the mission families. "She was part of the extended families of the Nigerians, too," said Ingold, now director of

Buildings and Grounds for the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

Generations in many families value her. Dadisman's pastor, Susan Stern Boyer—whose parents were missionaries in Mubi, Nigeria, from 1955 to 1962—recalled: "My mother stayed with Mary before I was born, and Mary gave me my first bath. When I was a college student at the University of La Verne, Mary and her good friend, Grayce Brumbaugh, had me over for supper. What I have known about Mary Dadisman all my life is still true. Mary is an anchor. She is active in the life of the church and its ministries. She is a visionary with an eye for detail, and a dedicated woman with a vibrant faith."

OUR OWN 'MOTHER TERESA'

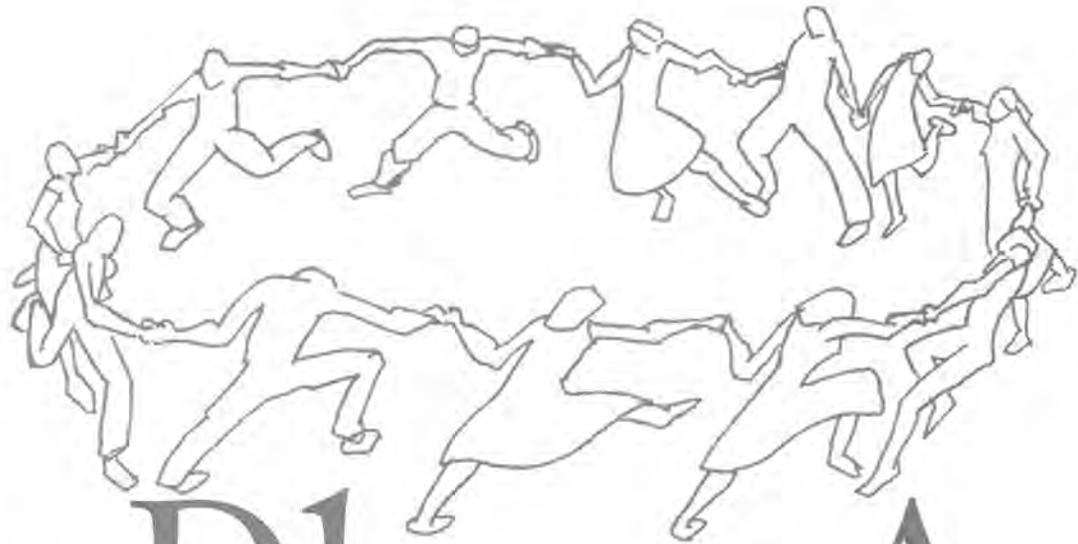
Dadisman received a special accolade in October 1998, when former missionary Charles Bieber singled her out in a MESSENGER article. They both traveled to Nigeria to attend an event celebrating 75 years of denominational partnership with Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) on March 17, 1998.

Bieber wrote: "One of the tour group to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Christian Ministry, Mary was the one most frequently sought and most fondly greeted by Nigerian brothers and sisters. Former patients and former hospital workers expressed deep appreciation and warm welcome. The way she had affected the lives of so many persons became clear to others in the tour group, and we recognized that in her the Church of the Brethren had its own Mother Teresa." ❧

Janis Pyle



Janis Pyle is coordinator for mission connections in the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office.



Seeking

A Place Ap

By Paul Grout

"And He said unto them, 'Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest awhile; for there are many coming and going and they had no leisure so much as to eat'" Mark 6:31 (KJV).

For the past few years, when I am speaking to a group of people, I have often begun with a few minutes of silence. Through this time, I have asked people to be attentive to their deepest longings, to ask God to reveal to them what they truly hunger for in the depths of their hearts and souls and minds.

The answers have been strikingly similar across age, gender, geographical, political, religious, and economic lines. High school youth and retired folks are so often saying the same things:

- "I long to be able to slow down. The pace of my life owns my life."
- "I long to be able to be doing something meaningful with my life, to make a difference."
- "I don't want to be afraid any more—of what might happen, of what people think of me, of life."
- "I long for a place where I truly belong, where I am loved and where I can love."

There is something powerful emerging among us across lines and walls that formerly divided us: a longing, a hunger of the soul, a "splinter in the mind"—a gnawing sense that something significant has been lost, that something is missing, that there is something more to life than what is being experienced.

Many of us within the church are beginning to realize that what we have become makes us part of the

problem. We have become active participants in a culture of emptiness. We have lost our center. There is an absence of living out what we profess to believe. We have, as the prophet Jeremiah confessed, "Walked after emptiness and became empty" (Jer. 2:5b).

Scientists had believed until quite recently that galaxies, having exploded out from a common center, would eventually slow down to a stopping point and then begin converging back together again. It has been discovered that just the opposite appears to be happening: Instead of decelerating, the galaxies are increasing in speed away from their center of origin, racing toward greater isolation and separation from one another.

This perceived action within our universe would seem to be an apt metaphor for our society. The depth of our separation from our center, from others, from creation, even from ourselves seems only to accelerate. Families, marriages, neighborhoods, churches, and communities seem to increasingly grow apart, and it isn't all one day magically going to come back together.

The isolated nuclear family of the recent past has further fragmented into isolated individuals living together only to the extent that people are sleeping under a common roof. The daily family meal is becoming a nostalgic remembrance. We race from one activity to another, and the demanding pace now even affects our youngest children. Increasingly, church becomes just another activity we schedule in for an hour a week.

For the next 10 years, I expect our church will, in most cases, continue to experience numerical and financial decline on the denominational, district, and

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New vision arises for life-bringing intentional community

local levels. This decline is already having a profound emotional and spiritual effect on leadership at all levels.

But the foundation of our problem is not the decline. The decline is a symptom resulting from the type of Christianity we have bought into through the past 30 years. The training of disciples for a lifetime of vibrant living has grown from weak to almost nonexistent.

Now, nearly everything that could contribute to our spiritual aliveness has been wrung from us. Our spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being have suffered atrophy. Systematized interpretations of faith—"correct" theologies—have replaced a living faith. I find that youth and young adults often mistakenly believe they are rejecting the Christian faith when they are actually rejecting a system of interpreting and doing religion that has grown to have little to do with the purpose of Christ's coming.

When I am teaching within the church, I have begun asking groups for a raising of hands of those who at some time in their life studied a foreign language. The percentage is usually high. I then ask for a raising of hands of those who speak a foreign language. In North America, someone can take four



The Genesis Church of the Brethren fellowship, located in Putney, Vt., is providing assistance for the launch of A Place Apart in the area.

years of high school Spanish followed by four years of college Spanish and at the end of those eight years still not know how to speak Spanish.

In North America, the educational goal is generally to teach "about" a language. Only those who go to and live within a foreign-speaking culture for a significant time learn the language.

This would seem to be another metaphor for the contemporary church. We teach about faith, but there is no culture of faith to experience the life that Jesus taught, empowered, and lived. It is possible, actually quite likely, that someone can spend a lifetime "going to church" and know nothing of life within the reign

of God that Jesus inaugurated.

I recently saw a large, commercially produced, plastic sign stretched across the front lawn of a church building. The church was celebrating its 100th year of existence. Across the bottom of the sign, printed in bold letters, was its mission statement, its reason for being: "Telling others about Jesus is our business."

That statement could have been in front of any of our churches. We have bought into "telling people about Jesus." We even think that is what the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) is about. Producing disciples is a lost goal. Modeling and sharing the way, the truth, and the life of Jesus Christ is almost nonexistent in North American churches.

We are living in one of the most exciting and challenging times in human history. We are beginning to understand that the planet cannot endure the lifestyles we have been living and promoting. We are beginning to understand that our bodies and souls cannot endure our lifestyles. What must happen in our society and within our world now has everything



Participating in a July 2003 planning gathering for *A Place Apart* were, front row: Laura Stone, Becky Ullom, Marie Rhoades, Chris Douglas, Connelly Stokes-Prindle, Philip Graybill; back row: Gloria Newton, Ethan Gibbel, Bob Etzweiler, Paul Grout, Eric Butler, and Jim Buckles.

to do with what Jesus was about.

We—as Anabaptist/Pietists, as Brethren—on one level understand this. Everything that we have said we are about now must come to actual fruition: The Church of the Brethren modeling "Another way of living. Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."

Everything must now be relearned. No longer is the focus on how to be good Christians, good citi-

A PLACE APART

A retreat center overseen by an onsite community of faith is being planned by a small group of young adults and Paul Grout, in consultation with Chris Douglas of the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry Office. Planning gatherings have occurred in July 2003 and January 2004, and another is scheduled for August. Grout spoke about the project to the General Board in March, and an insight session will be offered at Annual Conference.

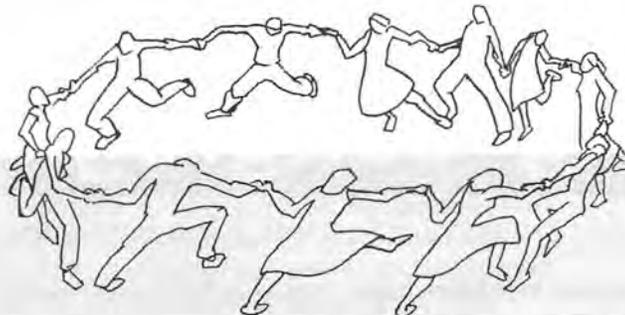
The project, located in Vermont, is accountable to the Southern Pennsylvania District, which has committed to providing initial funding and has created a support team for "A Place Apart." Additional assistance is coming from Genesis Fellowship Church of the Brethren in Putney, Vt.

Those wishing more information or wanting to receive newsletter updates on the status of the project can contact Jim Buckles at (through June): 220 S. 3rd St., Richmond, IN 47374, or 765-965-5361, or bucklja@bethanyseminary.edu; (beginning July 1): c/o A Place Apart, Box 307, Putney, VT 05346, or 802-387-4517.

The quiet town of Putney, Vermont, is nestled in the Connecticut River valley of northern New England.

Wait Wiltschek





PIECES OF THE VISION

An incomplete list of things hoped for as part of A Place Apart:

- Daily worship
- Holy transformation
- Prayer in many forms
- The blessing of the single life
- Reconnecting with God, with others, with ourselves, with creation
- The blessings of marriage and family
- Love of scripture
- Leisure, laughter, and love
- Sexuality as a gift of God
- Lifestyles of peace and justice
- Music
- Serving the least
- The importance of the arts
- Work and play
- The joy and beauty of simplicity
- Silence
- A place of solitude within community
- Food as a gift of God
- Cultivating vegetables and fruits
- Wilderness skills
- Cultivating flowers
- Raising livestock
- Living in joyful abandon
- Childlikeness
- Holy foolishness
- Living unafraid
- The gifts, fruit, and empowerment of the Holy Spirit

rhythms of the community's life and to receive training as missionary disciples who carry into the world, churches, and camps, a new way of living and a new way of being the church.

4. There will be a special focus on youth and young adults—upon their spiritual, mental, and physical preparation for the key roles they will need to quickly assume within the emerging church.

We live in a time when the North American church is hungering for hope and redirection. Something must help it come alive again. Something new has to happen. **W**

Paul Grout is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and served as the 2002 Annual Conference moderator. He lives in Putney, Vt.

zens, or how to be successful and happy. We are must learn at every level of existence how to be fully alive. We are going to learn how to live in this aliveness, and how to teach this aliveness to others.

Quoting Irenaeus, a 2nd-century saint of the church, "The glory of God is the human being fully alive." Jesus said, "I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" (John 10:10b).

• • • •

A number of people are coming to believe that creating a community that seeks to model "another way of living" would provide a significant first step in living and teaching this aliveness. Those working on this center, planned to be located in southern Vermont, have begun calling it "A Place Apart."

A Place Apart will seek in every aspect of its existence to be a place where the new way of living, the new way of being alive introduced by Jesus Christ and empowered by the Holy Spirit, can be experienced and participated in.

The primary purpose will be literally to provide "a place apart" where men and women, young and old, married couples and singles, clergy and lay people, Christians and those from other faith traditions and those without any religious affiliation can comfortably come and break with the frenzied pace, empty value systems, fakery, and pseudo-life of the world. It will be a place to develop a new relationship to God, to others, to themselves, to the Earth. A Place Apart will seek to be a place to regain hope, and a place to receive direction to channel that hope.

Those who come will be exposed to a variety of daily experiences, each provided to instill an awareness of the purposes of life for which we have been created.

A Place Apart will aim to establish an understanding of God's created order and develop a new relationship to that order. It will seek to develop an understanding of how the way, truth, and life of Christ brings us into relationship with all creation. It will attempt to live within the rhythms, the wonder, and awe of every aspect of God's creation.

We are looking at four different aspects of A Place Apart:

1. The existence of a permanent community of "foolish ones" (1 Cor. 1-4), humbly and imperfectly modeling through their life together the holy foolishness of those seeking to live in the depths of Jesus Christ. The life together of the community will be a central aspect of the teaching.

2. Most who participate will be short-term visitors who come to experience retreat and spiritual direction. We will hope to continue intentional relationship with any who wish to remain connected.

3. We anticipate that some women and men will come for an extended time to live within the

What makes a 'strong' congregation?

By Adelle M. Banks

Study shows that small churches are doing big things

Certain assumptions have long been made about what makes for the strongest congregational life—for example, that megachurches provide the best worship experience or that the best churches generally make children's ministries a priority.

But a new study by two social scientists shatters many such myths and finds a wide variety in the strengths of the nation's congregations.

Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations is the latest phase of published research on results of the US Congregational Life Survey of 2,000 congregations and their 300,000 worshipers, taken in April 2001.

While many polls about congregations have been based on the impressions of clergy or other key leaders, this study determined congregational strengths based on the perspectives of parishioners.

"The view from the pew is just different," said co-author Cynthia Woolever, professor of sociology at the Hartford (Conn.) Institute for Religion Research.

She and co-author Deborah Bruce found that small congregations had many of the 10 strengths they examined, far more than mid-size and large churches. Congregations with fewer than 100 worshipers and mid-size congregations of 100-350 worshipers are "unsung heroes," she said. Those congregations received higher average scores for strengths such as growing spiritually and caring for children and youth than did larger congregations.

"Congregations that are very small often feel they just can't do good work," said Bruce, associate research manager in the research services office of the Presbyterian Church (USA). "This certainly refutes this."

Despite being limited in clergy—some small congregations do not have full-time pastors—these churches ranked highest in congregational participation,

sense of belonging, sharing faith, and empowering leadership.

The researchers found that the sole strength for which large congregations received the highest average score was welcoming new people. But across congregational size, welcoming newcomers alone is not the sole answer to church growth, they said.

"Chances are, if they can't find something there that's meaningful, they're not coming back," Bruce said, "so just getting them in the door is not enough."

Woolever and Bruce found that conservative Protestant and historically black congregations scored higher on most of the 10 strengths studied than mainline Protestants and Catholics. The one area where mainline Protestants led the pack was in the area of focusing on the community.

"Historically, liberal and moderate Protestants—that's where they have seen their ministry," Woolever said.

She and Bruce found that across denominations, most worshipers did not rank caring for children and youth as a top priority.

"It may be that some congregations have just given up on that, and it's unfortunate, because I think that's one of the things that congregations can do really well," Woolever said.

Overall, the researchers found that the average age of worshipers in the congregation did not have much bearing on its strengths.

"I think the perception is that congregations with lots of young people are the ones that are doing it all and thriving and so on, but that's really not true," said Bruce. "Congregations with many older people are also doing effective ministry."

Just like the large congregations, though, younger congregations were found to be more welcoming.

The book detailing the findings of the large-scale survey is the second in an ongoing project funded in part by the Lilly

THE 10 STRENGTHS

- 1. Growing Spiritually:** help worshipers grow in their faith
- 2. Meaningful Worship:** provide worship services that meet the needs of worshipers
- 3. Participating in the Congregation:** create places where worshipers are involved in many of the activities of the congregation
- 4. Having a Sense of Belonging:** provide people with a sense of fellowship with others
- 5. Caring for Young People:** ensure that the children and youth in the congregation are nurtured in the faith
- 6. Focusing on the Community:** reach out to and serve those outside their doors
- 7. Sharing Faith:** help their worshipers feel comfortable sharing their faith with others
- 8. Welcoming New People:** ensure that new people become part of their faith community
- 9. Empowering Leadership:** help worshipers to share in the leadership of the congregation
- 10. Looking to the Future:** focus on a positive future

From Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations

Endowment. Congregations can still conduct surveys to learn about their strengths by going to the project's website, www.uscongregations.org.

Despite the generalizations that can be made about different categories of congregations—large and small, theologically conservative or liberal—there remains great diversity from one house of worship to another, Woolever said.

"We really try to stress that every church has its unique combination of strengths," she said, "and they should focus on those strengths and build on those strengths." ■

Adelle M. Banks is a writer for *Religion News Service*.

RESOURCES *Beyond the Ordinary: 10 Strengths of U.S. Congregations*, published by Westminster John Knox Press, looks at vitality and health in congregations. The authors believe there are 10 key strengths. Every congregation possesses these strengths to one degree or another, they say; by building on those strengths, congregations can transform their futures. The book also offers suggestions for evaluation and processes for change.

General Board Congregational Life Teams work at congregational transfor-

mation in several ways, including Natural Church Development and Healthy Congregations workshops. Call 800-323-8039 for details. In addition, a Small-Membership/Rural Church Leadership Team made up of seven local church leaders and General Board liaison Jim Kinsey is giving focus to ministry in and resources for smaller congregations. The team hopes to put together numerous regional "mini-conferences" on small and rural church ministry and a few larger such conferences in the next few years.

Children of all ages enjoyed story time with General Board member Frank Ramirez, during a Sunday morning service at the Board's spring meetings. The adult choir from Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill., provided music for the service.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



General Board praises God, addresses stewardship issue

"A new song," a theme taken from Psalm 89, framed General Board meetings in Elgin, Ill., March 12-15. Stories of work done in the name of Jesus Christ and on behalf of the Church of the Brethren set the tone as the board gave God praise for its ministries. The board also began a process to consider stewardship of its properties.

At several times during the meeting, stories told in reports, devotions, and worship were met with an appreciative silence. "It's not often that words fail me, but this is one of those times," chair Donna Shumate said after viewing slide presentations of the

rebuilding of a school in Iraq and relief efforts following an earthquake in Iran, both funded by the Emergency Disaster Fund. Later, an offering taken during worship received \$437 for the work in Iran.

Of the more than 20 reports received, highlights included stories from staff visits to North Korea, Vietnam, and Brazil; views of the work supported by the Global Food Crisis Fund; the general secretary's participation in "Christian Churches Together in the USA," with Church of the Brethren participation under study by the Committee on Interchurch Relations; a presentation by guests Paul Grout and Jim Buckles giving a vision for a new expression of church called "A Place Apart"; and budget and funding reports. Treasurer Judy Keyser reported that a planning team is working earlier than usual on budget projections for 2005, as well as on measures to counteract possible budget deficits.

The extensive reporting—planned with the intent to build community and gain a wider consideration of the board's work, according to general secretary Stan Noffsinger—led to questions from board members about how to be more directly involved in board ministries. A few expressed frustration at having a "passive role." Others talked about the challenge of communicating the stories. Board member Angie Lahman Yoder commented on the "privilege to be able to hear of so many wonderful things going on," and her desire to share that with others.

The board approved the formation of an ad hoc committee to study

New Windsor fire station receives Brethren grant

One of two capital funding requests approved at the General Board meeting was a grant of \$50,000 to the New Windsor (Md.) Fire and Hose Capital Campaign to help build a new fire house for the town. The Brethren Service Center (BSC) is the largest organization in New Windsor, which is experiencing growth and the need for better facilities for fire and emergency medical services.

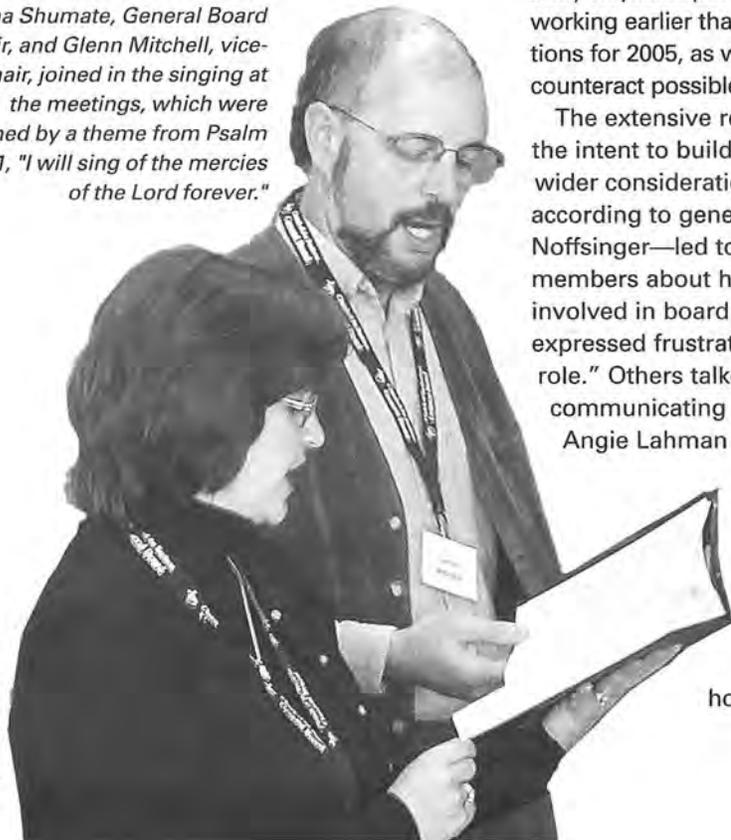
Emphasizing that the grant is not being made from donations but from depreciation funding and occupancy fees, Roy Winter, BSC executive director, said he hopes the grant will express "the desire of the church to be part of the community and not just in the community." The closeness of the fire station helps BSC hold down insurance costs, he added.

Over the years, the fire department has responded to several fires at BSC and to medical emergencies. BSC relies on service from the fire department, but as a religious nonprofit it does not pay taxes. Only two buildings on the BSC campus are deemed taxable. Fire department personnel tour the BSC campus every year to be familiar with the facility in case of emergency.

The grant amount of \$50,000 was requested from the Board's executive committee before the campaign made its request for the amount of only \$25,000. The generosity of the grant "will have a good impact on the community," Winter said. The campaign has a fundraising goal of \$1.5 million, with a projected total cost of \$4.25 million.

Donna Shumate, General Board chair, and Glenn Mitchell, vice-chair, joined in the singing at the meetings, which were framed by a theme from Psalm 89:1, "I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever."

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



UPCOMINGEVENTS

May 2 National Youth Sunday

May 2-9 Family Life Week

May 6 National Day of Prayer

May 8 Bethany Theological Seminary commencement, Richmond, Ind.

May 9 Rural Life Sunday

May 16 Health Promotion Sunday

May 17-21 Church Planting Training Event, Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

May 21-22 Level 1 Disaster Child Care Training Workshop, Lanark (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

May 28-June 10 Young Adult Workcamp, Taizé, France, and Geneva, Switzerland

June 1-5 Brethren Volunteer Service in-Service retreat, Newark, Ill.

June 4-5 Church of the Brethren Puerto Rico Assembly, Cristo Nuestra Paz Fellowship, Yahuecas, P.R.

The Church of the Brethren Credit Union's new website is at www.cobcu.org.

stewardship of its properties, responding to "voices from the pews," Shumate said. The ad hoc group will be appointed by the executive committee and reportable to the board, with the scope of its task and a timeline yet to be determined. The process will be open and include all of those potentially affected, such as employees and agencies that are tenants of the board, according to Noffsinger.

The board learned that Heifer International (formerly Heifer Project) is reducing the size of its board of directors but has assigned the Church of the Brethren a permanent seat as its founding denomination, in a report from current Brethren representative Kathleen Campanella.

Two capital funding requests related to the Brethren Service Center (BSC) were approved: up to \$220,000 to improve existing warehouse space for lease by SERRV, which will repay the costs over the next five years pending approval of its board; and a grant of \$50,000 to the New Windsor Fire and Hose Capital Campaign (see sidebar).

Following the meeting, many board members and staff took part in an eight-hour Seminar on Trauma Awareness and Recovery, a program of Church World Service and the Institute for Justice and Peacebuilding based at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va.

Credit union is now open to everyone in denomination

The Brethren Employees Credit Union took a historic step Feb. 23, as it changed its name and charter to make it possible for all Church of the Brethren members and their families to join.

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



On a break from General Board meetings, Carol Bowman (left), of the Board's Congregational Life Team for Area 5, chatted with Randy Yoder, district executive minister for Middle Pennsylvania, and Angie Lahman Yoder, a member of the Board.

Congregations can now join as institutional members. The credit union also approved a new 12-member national board.

These were the final steps needed for Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) to become the credit union's administrator and sponsoring agency. The new name, Church of the Brethren Credit Union, reflects the change in charter expanding membership eligibility. Previously, the credit union was open only to church members and their family members in Illinois and Wisconsin, Brethren pastors and their family members, and staff of denominational agencies and organizations and their family members.

"The approval of these changes voted on by the credit union's owners—its members—sets in place the foundation on which new services to more people within the Church of the Brethren can be built," BBT president Wil Nolen said. A vote by the membership was the last step in a process that started two years ago when the credit union began exploring partnership with BBT. In addition to ratification by the membership and approval by both boards, the proposed changes also needed approval by the Illinois Department of Financial Institutions.

The changes are milestones in the history of the credit union, which traces its origins to both the Brethren Employee Credit Union (BECU) and the Brethren Parish Credit Union. BECU was organized and chartered as an Illinois corporation in 1938 by the employees of the Brethren Publishing House. The Brethren Parish Credit Union was organized in 1941 by members of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill.

BBT assumed staffing and administrative functions for the credit union April 1. Dennis Kingery is director of Credit Union Operations. Other BBT staff assist with customer service, financial operations, marketing, and promotions. Telephone and fax numbers for the credit union remain the same; e-mail and website addresses have changed to cobcu@brethren.org and www.cobcu.org, respectively. The credit union unveiled its new website April 1.



Manchester, other colleges plan to launch Peace House in Indiana

The presidents of Manchester College, North Manchester, Ind., and two other Indiana colleges have selected the management team for a new Plowshares Peace House—including a role for Indiana’s former first lady, Judy O’Bannon.

O’Bannon, widow of Governor Frank O’Bannon, will serve as part-time director of external affairs for the residential peace studies program, which will be based in Indianapolis. “We welcome Judy O’Bannon to the Plowshares program,” said Manchester president Parker G. Marden. “Her career as a public servant in support of concerns in Indiana for community, peace, and social justice is legendary and bipartisan. Our students will greatly benefit from her talents and experience.”

The Peace House is a major focus of Plowshares, a collaborative program with Earlham College, related to the Friends (Quakers), and Goshen College, a Mennonite-related institution. Plowshares promotes peace and justice studies and related programs across the country, with emphasis on Indiana. It is funded by a \$13.8 million Lilly Endowment grant.

Undergraduates from the three sponsoring institutions and other schools will be housed at Peace House. Erwin Boschmann, vice chancellor and professor of chemistry at Indiana University-East campus in Richmond, is executive director; Ruth Hill, former assistant in conflict resolution at The Carter Center in Atlanta, Ga., is associate director.

ABC urges participation in ‘Cover the Uninsured’

The Association of Brethren Caregivers is encouraging congregations to participate in Cover the Uninsured Week May 10-16, to raise awareness of the 43.6 million Americans without health insurance. As the agency representing the health ministries of the church, ABC is embracing this national program started in 2003 through funding by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

This year the program features a “National Call to Care,” in which health professionals donate a portion of their time during the week to care for those who are uninsured. Other events for Cover the Uninsured Week are being planned in several metropolitan areas. To find out about events and local coordinators, visit

1. Haiti. As Haiti’s political and humanitarian crisis came to a head in early March, general secretary Stan Noffsinger encouraged Brethren to be aware of congregations with Haitian members and ministries. Noffsinger’s sharing of concern and prayers would be “a source of great comfort and encouragement, to know sisters and brothers will be praying for the Haitian people,” said Ludovic St. Fleur, pastor of Eglise des Freres Haitiens in Miami. General Board staff in New Windsor, Md., packed a Church World Service (CWS) shipment of relief supplies including 30 Interchurch Medical Assistance medicine boxes and eight Bristol-Myers Squibb disaster relief boxes. Food was shipped, as well. CWS also made contingency plans for services to Haitian refugees.

2. Nicaragua. A \$12,500 Emergency Disaster Fund grant will support an Interchurch Medical Assistance appeal to provide de-worming medication to more than 1 million children ages 6-12. The growth, nutrition, and school performance of the children is greatly harmed by chronic intestinal parasites.

3. Brazil. New General Board mission staff Greg and Karin Davidson Laszakovits and infant daughter Ellen left March 8 for Brazil. They will work alongside Marcos Inhauser, national director of the Church of the Brethren mission there, his wife Suely Inhauser, and the leadership of the Brazilian church.

4. El Salvador. A 16-person delegation from six Church of the Brethren districts joined other international visitors as

monitors for March 21 presidential elections. The trip was organized by New Community Project, a Brethren-related nonprofit organization. The team was hosted by long-time Brethren partner Emmanuel Baptist Church.

5. Kenya. The Historic Peace Churches are planning a conference in Nairobi, Aug. 8-14, at the invitation of the World Council of Churches’ Decade to Overcome Violence. The conference, called “Watu Kwa Amani” or “people of peace” in Swahili, will focus on the question, “What does it mean to be a peace church in Africa?” The Church of the Brethren has been asked to take leadership for the conference, and Bethany Theological Seminary is hosting the planning process. The 100 participants primarily will be African members of the Historic Peace Churches.

6. Africa. Church World Service (CWS) has launched a multi-year Africa initiative targeting the continent’s most at-risk populations: children, people living with HIV/AIDS, and uprooted people. The agency also will give special attention to women’s issues and women’s key roles in development of African society. The new initiative will first concentrate on countries identified in recent consultations with leaders across Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Angola, Sudan, and Tanzania. “The intent of CWS’ initiative is long-term commitment, support, and programs that step beyond traditional relief aid,” executive director John L. McCullough said.

www.CoverTheUninsured-Week.org. The website allows individuals to sign up for e-mail updates and promotional materials.

Although Medicaid insures 14 million people in poverty, 10.5 million others have no health insurance. In addition, 8.5 million (or 11.6 percent) of children under 18 are without health insurance.

Anniversary Committee plans for 2008, chooses logo

Meeting in Elgin, Ill., Feb. 29-March 2, the Annual Conference Anniversary Committee continued to plan for the 300th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren, to be celebrated in 2008. A highlight of the meeting was the selection of a logo to illustrate the anniversary theme: "Surrendered to God, Transformed in Christ, Empowered by the Spirit." The logo, designed by Becky Goldstein of Boise, Idaho, will be formally unveiled at Annual Conference this summer.

In other business, the committee continued collaboration with Brethren Press about anniversary publications; discussed ways in which youth might be engaged in celebrating the anniversary; and began designing a website. Brethren Benefit Trust is offering technical assistance and funding the development of the site.

A call was issued earlier this year for musical submissions (hymns, anthems, folk songs, children's songs, etc.) based on the



anniversary theme. The deadline for submissions is June 30, 2005. Calls for other types of resources will be forthcoming.

The committee's next meeting is jointly scheduled with the Tercentennial Committee of the Brethren Church for October in Ashland, Ohio, to further define cooperative efforts, including some combined events at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in 2008. Members of the committee are Jeff Bach, Don Durnbaugh, Dean Garrett, Leslie Lake, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, and Lorele Yager. Lerry Fogle, Annual Conference executive director, serves ex officio.

Personnel moves

• **Linda and Glenn Timmons** have been appointed coordinators for the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence initiative of the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership, a ministry training partnership of the General Board and Bethany Theological Seminary. They will provide leadership for the Vital Pastor Program and the Advanced Foundations of

Church Leadership program, made possible by a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. They will work at the academy offices in Richmond, Ind.

Linda has served the Association of Brethren Caregivers as administrative assistant since 1997; coordinated recruitment for Brethren Volunteer Service; been lay minister of Christian education at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill.; and managed a SERRV gift shop. Glenn served the General Board as executive director of Congregational Life Ministries and executive of Parish Ministries from 1992 until his retirement in 2003, and has pastored four Church of the Brethren congregations.

• **Annie Clark** has joined the staff of On Earth Peace (OEPA) as coordinator of the Conflict Transformation program. The program is popularly known as the Ministry of Reconciliation.

Currently a consultant with Goshen (Ind.) College, Clark is a member of Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind., and has worked as an educator in the public schools and as mediation services coordinator with Education for Conflict Resolution, a mediation center in northern Indiana. She has developed and administered a truancy mediation program and a peer mediation program in public schools, and has been a practitioner and mediation case manager. She is a graduate of Indiana University at South Bend.

Clark will work out of her home in North Manchester. Bob Gross, OEPA co-executive director, has worked with the Ministry of Reconciliation since 1991 and will continue to lead workshops and provide mediation services through the program.

• **Nadine Pence Frantz** has been appointed full professor of theological studies at Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind. In celebration of her appointment she gave a public lecture March 26 on the topic "Figuring the Sacred in Art and Text."

Frantz joined the faculty of Bethany in 1992 after teaching at Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno, Calif. She is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren and has served as pastor of two congregations. She holds a master of divinity degree from Bethany and a doctorate in theology from the University of Chicago.



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ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Bridgewater celebrated the 150th anniversary of the birth of its founder, Daniel Christian Flory, on April 6, presenting several awards during a convocation. Foreign languages chair Susan L. Piepke and psychology professor Donald R. Witters received awards for excellence in teaching; seniors Melissa Short of Hurt, Va., and Jonathan Puvak of Butler, Pa., received Outstanding Leadership Awards; and retired professor C. Ray Smith received an honorary doctorate.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

A panel including Ambassador John Craig (a current scholar in residence) and Elizabethtown faculty members Diane Bridge, E. Fletcher McClellan, and Kevin Scott discussed the war in Iraq March 30 in the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies. Interim provost Donald Kraybill acted as moderator for the panel.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Donald Mitchell, professor emeritus of chemistry at Juniata and founder of the college's outreach program Science in Motion, received the Technology Educator of the Year Award by the Technology Council of Central Pennsylvania on March 18 in Harrisburg, Pa.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

Kids' Music Club, a series of concerts created and produced by La Verne's Department of Music, offers children and their parents a chance to explore the thrill of live music. The latest program in the ongoing free series, "I Love the Piano," was presented March 6 by La Verne instructors Scott Farthing, Timothy Durkovic, and Jacqueline Petito.

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

The college broke ground for a new Recital Hall on March 30, with music by the A Cappella Choir just returned from its peace tour of Italy highlighting the celebration. The \$1.2 million project on the north end of the school's Otho Winger Hall is expected to take just five months and will seat 172 people.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

The Kansas State Department of Education has designated McPherson seniors Emily Cole of Salina, Kan., and Brandon Patterson of Grand Prairie, Texas, "Teachers of Promise" for the 2003-2004 academic year. Colleges and universities in the state are each asked to nominate two students annually.

Media, music add energy to Eastern Regional conference

About 250 Pennsylvania senior high youth and advisors gathered on the campus of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College March 26-28 for an upbeat Eastern Regional Youth Conference (ERYC).

Organizers emphasized a multimedia approach this year in exploring the theme "Uncluttered: Letting Go . . . Letting God." DVDs, film clips, and other video projections brought a new flavor to the event, while music from the Brethren band "Wake-Up Call" injected additional energy.

Jake Larson of the Los Angeles-based duo "Craig & Jake Live" provided keynote leadership for several sessions, working solo after Craig Gross was unable to come due to illness. Larson challenged the youth attending from the beginning, expressing a hope "that you leave here more excited about God."

The weekend also included several times of worship, "Encounters" workshops on 10 interactive topics including a labyrinth and artistic drawing, an improv night, and watching the movie *Radio*.

ERYC, held for youth in the northeastern part of the denomination, rotates each year between Elizabethtown and Juniata College, in Huntingdon, Pa.

Walt Wiltschek



Kahlem Fawber gets into the rhythms of opening singing led by the band "Wake-Up Call" at Eastern Regional Youth Conference.

Walt Wiltschek



Southern Pennsylvania District youth Jen Simmers, Kate Fealtman, and Becca Angle catch up at Eastern Regional Youth Conference begins at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College.

Bits and pieces

- Youth at Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren began a unique project in February, with 10 members of the group each receiving \$100 to assist a "needy person or situation," according to the congregation's newsletter. Each youth will team with an adult to determine how to best spend the money. Projects are to be completed by mid-May, with reports then given to the congregation.

- A survey by the University of California-Los Angeles found

that more than half of college students put a high value on "integrating spirituality" in their lives, according to a report in *The Lutheran*. Seventy-seven percent of respondents said they pray, and 73 percent said their spiritual beliefs helped them "develop my identity." The project surveyed nearly 3,700 students from 46 colleges and universities in spring 2003.

- Another strong group of young adults is preparing for this year's Ministry Summer Service orientation, June 5-11 in Richmond, Ind. The 16 interns scheduled to participate matches the record high set the past two years in the program, sponsored by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult and Ministry offices. The young adults will spend the summer serving alongside mentors at congregations and camps, on the Youth Peace Travel Team, and at other sites.

Lord of the Rings: Ordinary folk offer redemption

If I were to compare *The Lord of the Rings* to a biblical book, it would be *Esther*. God is unnamed but very present in times of extraordinary trouble.



FRANK RAMIREZ

If I were to compare the novel to a biblical passage, however, it might be the Sermon on the Mount. That's because, despite the bright swords and the glory of battle, in J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece true victory lies in the rejection of power.

In this three-part fantasy novel, set in our own world thousands of years before an explicit revelation from God, several characters are strongly tempted by a powerful weapon, the Ring of the title, which strengthens

but in the end corrupts absolutely. And while half the novel follows the trail of those whose prowess is in war, the only real purpose of those battles is to distract Sauron, who is evil incarnate, from the real thread of the story. That is the path chosen by Frodo the Hobbit, who—with his servant,

sized love for good soil, good food, and good drink—are cast like ordinary folks into extraordinary times. To the surprise of all in this realm of Middle Earth (Tolkien chose the medieval term for our world that lies between heaven and hell), it is these forgotten people who are called to be the instruments of peace in a land that has known nothing but war.

In addition, grace is active. In the end Frodo is not capable of completing the task, but the Power behind history is able to use the most despised of creatures to accomplish his will.

Tolkien, a Christian and practicing Catholic—and a veteran of World War I who lost most of his friends in that conflagration and discovered that not even a “war to end all wars” ends wars—wrote elsewhere that God is the only true creator, and that artists create in imitation of God. The success of their creations is measured by the extent they faithfully imitate God's work.

I won't attempt within the confines of this page to encapsulate the plot. The book is the thing itself, and is beautiful beyond words. Since I've become an old softie I cannot re-read certain passages—like the good wizard Gandalf taking a stand before the Balrog on the bridge of Khazad Dum, or Frodo recovering from grace to finally say, “I am glad you are here with me. Here at the end of all things, Sam.”—without tearing up. My goodness, I can't even type about those things without having the computer screen blur.

It is nice that the magnificent series of films directed by Peter Jackson (the expanded versions available on DVD are closer to the book) also captures the essence of the novel: joy. As one of the Hobbits, Pippin, observes in the fortress city of Minas Tirith, “. . . in the wizard's face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.”

Oh, by the way: I've re-read the book at least once a year since 1967 and have at least six copies floating around the house. Let me know if you want to borrow one. 

Frank Ramirez is pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

Despite the bright swords and the glory of battle, in J.R.R. Tolkien's masterpiece true victory lies in the rejection of power.

Samwise—seeks with no real hope to destroy the ring of power. To do so, they must travel to the heart of Sauron's realm and cast the ring into the fires wherein it was made.

The book is a delight to read, if for no other reason than Tolkien's eye for nature. It is rich with description of landscape and character. In addition, he has so intricately created authentic language and history that one is always aware that he is never telling all that could be known about this world.

But if Tolkien is to be remembered for anything, it is for his invention of the creatures he called Hobbits. In a world inhabited by immortal Elves, indomitable Dwarves, venal Humans, horrific Orcs, and the tree-shepherding Ents, these “Halflings”—who, though diminutive in height, have an over-

ABOUT THE MOVIES

When released: *The Fellowship of the Ring* came to movie screens in December 2001. *The Two Towers* followed in 2002, and *The Return of the King* this past December.

Rating: All three movies were rated PG-13 for “intense battle sequences and frightening images.”

DVD/video release: *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* is due to come out on DVD and video May 25, for \$29.95 and \$24.97, respectively. A special extended edition will be released later.

Awards: *The Return of the King* received 11 awards at this year's Oscar ceremonies in Los Angeles, including best picture and best director.

ABOUT THE BOOKS

Author: J.R.R. Tolkien **Published by:** Houghton Mifflin Company

Date: Tolkien wrote *The Lord of the Rings* over the period from 1938 to 1954. It was preceded by *The Hobbit*, designed for younger readers and published in 1937.



Why put Jesus through this violent torture again? We know full well that crucifixion was bloody, cruel, painful, prolonged death. Why make him repeat the experience, even on film?

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.

'Passion': Once was enough

Why see Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*? ["The Passion of the Christ: A Powerful Portrayal," April 2004 media review]

From the time I was an adolescent, in addition to protesting that "he did not deserve to be executed," my visceral reaction to the awareness that Jesus had

died a horrible death has been that I wished it had not happened. No one should die like that, certainly not someone I had come to love because of what his life and teaching meant to me. Nothing can justify that death.

So, when some Christians talk about Jesus having died "for our sins," my internal translator says he died "because of our sins." Jesus taught that God already forgave us for our sins (see the parable of the Prodigal Son). Thus, Jesus' death on the cross was not necessary for clearing the slate.

Despite his death being undeserved, unwanted, and unnecessary, gospel accounts of Jesus' passion do reveal some important lessons. Jesus demonstrated dying with dignity. He showed that at the approach of death, one need not give in to fear, one need not allow death to destroy what one has been in life. The "last

words" show Jesus' full humanity, his identification even with human suffering.

His utterance "forgive them, for they know not what they do" rings loud for Christians. Forgiveness, according to the Jesus model, applies to Romans, to Jews, to any who appear as lethal opponents to Christians.

If the movie lifted up those lessons, still won at too high a cost, I might feel better about it, but my conscience still objected to seeing it. For the disciple in me declared: Once was enough. Why put Jesus through this violent torture again? We know full well that crucifixion was bloody, cruel, painful, prolonged death. Why make him repeat the experience, even on film? My conscience objected. The disciple in me also said: Once was too much.

The original disciples have received some criticism for supposedly having been too afraid for their own lives to stay

Attend the First Older Adult Ministry Training Event

September 6 - 8, 2004 Lake Junaluska Assembly, N.C.

The 65+ age group is the fastest growing segment of the U.S. population, and it will continue to grow at an unprecedented rate for at least the next two decades. The social, economic and political impact of this age group on U.S. society and the church will be phenomenal.

Issues of meaningful older adulthood, fair distribution of scarce healthcare resources, spiritual well-being and "aging in place" confront this population. Is the church prepared to respond to the many needs of an aging population that will double in size over the next 20 years?

All pastors, chaplains, district offices and retirement facilities will receive a registration brochure by June 1. Others interested in attending should call the Association of Brethren Caregivers at (800) 323-8039.



Tex Sample, nationally renowned lecturer, author and consultant, will provide primary leadership for this two day event. This first ever older adult ministry training event will address the concerns of an aging population in our church by presenting:

- A functional understanding of the older adult demographic and the urgent implications for action.
- A compelling vision for older adult ministry.
- A tool box for older adult ministry — working with resistance, commitment and faithfulness.

The \$175 registration fee includes participation in the training event, all printed materials and a full registration to the National Older Adult Conference (NOAC). Training event attendees may enjoy as much of NOAC as they choose! The event will run from Monday evening through Wednesday evening. Attendee space is limited.

Who Should Attend? Clergy, retirement community staff, district staff, deacons and other lay leaders working with older adults.

Credit Offered? Pastoral CEU's will be offered for all Church of the Brethren clergy. ABC is working with The Brethren Adcademy to offer education credits for participating EFSM/TRIM students.



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Committee on
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Ecumenical Luncheon

Tuesday, July 6, 2004
Annual Conference

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"The Young and the Restless"

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- Watch the 2004 Ecumenical Citation for Young Adults
- Meet ecumenical guests from the Charleston area

Seating is limited. Order your tickets through the Annual Conference Office.

And,

Tuesday evening Insight Session panel:

"Taking a Stand for Peace. . . Stories from Youth and Young Adults."



and watch the crucifixion, for having abandoned Jesus at his hour of greatest need. I think another motivation came into play: They loved Jesus and could not bear to watch him suffer. We hear of people being forced to watch the cruel deaths of their loved ones. Why watch if we are not forced? Beyond that, why pay to watch an execution? Beyond that, why pay to watch the execution of someone I love?

Ron Martin-Adkins
Washington, D.C.

March issue invited readers in

I have never written to MESSENGER or its staff before, so it is good to note that life can always present "firsts."

Despite the fact that our household has received MESSENGER for years, I have not frequently been a reader. Perhaps it is because the "day job" presents a never-accomplished reading list, or that the catchy covers of some popular magazines are appealing and their content somewhat mindless and not challenging and therefore a good diversion, or perhaps there is always so much news to catch up on that there is never enough time to focus on somewhat "distant" church issues.

Well . . . something has changed. My attention was drawn to the "catchy" cover of a magazine on the top of my husband's pile. It was bright, inviting, eye-catching, with just that right touch of whimsy. And, it was MESSENGER! I picked it up and found myself going from one bit to the next. The titles had just the right "play on words" (i.e. "Czechs and Balances") that I adore but cannot usually craft myself. The articles presented information and challenges to thinking.

I expect I may approach "cover-to-cover" reading. I look forward to future editions, and hopefully becoming more "in touch."

Jan Flora
Westminster, Md.

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Brethren aren't so welcoming

Jesus' instructions to the 12 disciples (Matthew 10:5-23) may be appropriate for brother Matt Smucker ["Smucker withdraws membership," March 2004], as they were for me 15 years ago: "If any one will not receive you, or listen to your words, shake the dust from your feet as

you leave that house."

As much as Brethren want to believe they are a welcoming people, I'm afraid their pharisaical attitudes too often take precedence over their openness to the Spirit. Brethren would rather turn their own over to councils for condemnation and expulsion rather than embrace the diversity of God's creation in their midst.

I know Matt will find an embrace in other faith communities who recognize and value his ministry. And my experience has shown that even secular society offers a more Christ-like welcome than do most Brethren.

Stephen Newcomer
West Hollywood, Calif.

Cincinnati's new life brings joy

I was absolutely thrilled when I read in the October issue of the MESSENGER an article ["Taking Root: Vibrant Church Plants Bring New Life to the Church of the Brethren"] about what is now happening after these many years in Cincinnati, Ohio, among the Brethren.

Several days ago as I was preparing to move again, I happened to find a book entitled *The Church of the Brethren in Southern Ohio* published in 1955. The original church was dedicated Jan. 19, 1919, on the corner of Chase and Chambers with about a dozen people present. I am so very happy to know there are twice that many people attending services in a different part of the city.

Since my home church was located in Middletown (sad to say it is now closed), I was so very fortunate to have a lot of friends who attended the Cincinnati church during my senior high school years, after which I spent a year in Brethren Volunteer Service. I would attend services there at least once a month, fellowshiping and worshipping with everyone in the congregation.

While there, I received a lot of my earlier spiritual experiences that influenced my life as it is today. I was especially blessed during the pre-Easter services that usually ended with the traditional love feast service. Afterwards, all of us would stand in line waiting to eat our share of the leftover homemade communion bread that was made with a five-prong cutter.

Patricia Brate Connell
Sandwich, Ill.

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(July 27 - August 2)
CANADIAN MARITIME PROVINCES (August 7-16)
SWISS GLACIER EXPRESS (August 9-24)
ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (September 1-13)
IRELAND (September 3-14)
SWISS-VOLHYNIAN MENNONITE HERITAGE
(September 15-29)
LANDS of the BIBLE (September 17-30)
CHINA (October 3-19)
FALL FOLIAGE TOUR of NEW ENGLAND (October 4-10)
CHRISTMAS MARKETS in AUSTRIA and GERMANY
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(February 13-24)

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Heather Dean from the introduction

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Vacationing in California? You're invited to attend a Church of the Brethren Family Camp. Why not come and spend a week or a few days at Camp Peaceful Pines? Camp Peaceful Pines is located in the Sierra Mountains, one hour's drive east of Sonora, California. The dates for Family Camps are June 18-24 and July 23-29, 2004. For further information contact Joann Ewert, Registrar. Phone 209-523-9490, or by e-mail: mjemod@juno.com.

Consignment sales at Annual Conference. Brethren Press makes space available at Annual Conference for individuals and groups to sell items to Conference attendees on a consignment basis. Consignment space must be reserved by May 21. For information on consignment sales, contact Brethren Press Consignments, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or kstocking_gb@brethren.org.

Teaching Peace: Nonviolence and the Liberal Arts Curriculum, a peacemaking conference for scholars and educators from all disciplines, will be held May 26-28 at Bluffton College, Bluffton, Ohio. Keynote speakers are Robert Franklin, Presidential Distinguished Professor of Social Ethics from Emory University, Atlanta; and Susan Brooks Thistlethwaite, President of Chicago Theological Seminary. Sponsored by the Bluffton College Pathways to Mission and Vocation program with funding by the Lilly Endowment, Inc. For more information, visit www.bluffton.edu/conf/teachingpeace

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Saint Judas Passion on CD: Brethren composer/ventriloquist Steve Engle has released two new CDs. (1) The original SAINT JUDAS PASSION LP digitally enhanced and remastered with an added number and additional instrumentation. 79:47 minutes of music. (2) NEAT SONGS #1 by Steve's DUSTY & CO. PUPPETS. 11 songs—5 just for fun and 6 with painless messages—especially for children from 1 to 105! LISTEN ON-LINE, read reviews, and purchase at www.cdbaby.com/sengle. Or check/money order direct from: Steve Engle, 5125 Delmar St., Alexandria, PA 16611-9606. \$14.95 + \$3 S/H. PA residents add 6% sales tax.

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

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

New Members

Arcadia, Ind.: Carrie Bledsoe, Colleen Starrett, Smoke Starrett, Etta Mae DeMoss
Germantown Brick, Rocky Mount, Va.: Crystal Naff, Carolyn Dudley
Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.: Randall Neff, Mandy Neff, Minerva Williams, Stacey Carter
Grotoos, Va.: Michael Bartley, Rita Becks
Manassas, Va.: Stanley Ruthowski, Natalie Ruthowski
Manchester, North Manchester, Ind.: Grace Voorheis, Ken Frantz, Torin Eikler, Carrie Eikler, Ruth Egolf, Alyson Beery
Manor, Boonsboro, Md.: Blair Reynolds, Ann Reynolds, Phil Elgin, Marjorie Elgin, Eva Matute, Dennis Fulk, Belinda Fulk, Brooke Krockner, Robyn Cole
Maple Grove, New Paris, Ind.: Tiffany Snider, Becky Pratt, Ronald Kuhn, Patti Kuhn
Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.: Levi McDaniel, Devin Whitaker
Mountain Grove, Fults Run, Va.: Ashlea Shiflet, Daniel Spitzer, Stephanie Miller
Nampa, Idaho: Mary Alsager, Mel Alsager, Rowena Britt, Skyler Cobb, Hershel Doramus, Alice Marie Elliott, Richard Elliott, Jake Ellis, Marjorie Ellis, Clyde Fillmore, Dee Fillmore, Floyd Mitchell, Gladys Mitchell, Kevin Shoemaker, Jeretta Shoemaker, Doug Shoemaker, Charlotte Posey, Barbara Thompson
Olathe, Kan.: Abraham Omman, Mary Abraham, James Abraham, Elizabeth Abraham
Parker Ford, Pa.: Stephen Minnick, Traci Minnick, Howard Schankweiler
Peace Blossom, Easton, Md.: Dennis Wooters, Sr., Dennis Wooters, Jr., Gloria Buzi, Brenda Pierce, Michael Pierce, Phillip Ridenour, Susan Walbridge, Timothy Young, Melanie Young
Prairie City, Iowa: Kim Johnston, Christy Jones
Skyridge, Kalamazoo, Mich.: Geoffrey Zimmerman-Frost
Smith Mountain Lake, Wirtz, Va.: William Roethlisberger, Mary Roethlisberger, Betty Wiles, Russell Wiles
Timberville, Va.: Lonnie Justice, Susan Justice, Laura Coffman, Kelly Bradford
Virden, Ill.: Bryan Kreoger, Taylor Burtz, Ashley Burtz, Bonnie Pocklington, Kelly Pocklington, Natalie Mortimer
West Goshen, Goshen, Ind.: Everett Holderman, Ora Eash, Connor Biddle, Ashley LeCount, Dustin Stutsman, Sandra Birchfield
Williamson Road, Roanoke, Va.: Helen T. Bowman
York Center, Lombard, Ill.: James Leyva, Nancy Buffenmyer, Beth Rhodes

Anniversaries

Balsbaugh, Carl and Faye, Myerstown, Pa., 50
Biller, Edward and Evelyn, Harrisonburg, Va., 55
Blickenstaff, Delbert B. and Louise R., Greenville, Ohio, 60

Bowyer, Vinal and Marjorie, Peru, Ind., 60
Brumfield, Bill and Lucille, Roanoke, Va., 55
Burkholder, Robert and Maxine, New Market, Va., 55
Erbaugh, Lowell and Kay, Dayton, Ohio, 55
Frederick, Burton and Mary Jean, Goshen, Ind., 65
Garber, Bill and Eleanor, Timberville, Va., 60
Garber, Virgil and Phoebe, Timberville, Va., 60
Johnson, Roy and Gladys, New Windsor, Md., 50
Keizer, Gerard and Netty, Lawrence, Kan., 55
Kintner, Russell and Marjorie, Adrian, Mich., 50
Layman, William and Ellen, Dayton, Va., 60
Lewellen, Arthur and Phyllis, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 50
Peters, Ira and Doris, Roanoke, Va., 55
Royer, Jerry and Ruth, Virden, Ill., 65
Tritt, Wayne and Esther, Carlisle, Pa., 60
Weeks, Berman and Irene, Keymar, Md., 55

Deaths

Atkins, Carl O., 85, Richmond, Va., Feb. 21
Ayers, Velma Frony, 91, Dorcas, W.Va., Feb. 13
Bailey, Gladys Sern Huff, 94, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 19
Beasley, Julia, 45, Fostoria, Ohio, Jan. 23
Bedi, Lucille Noble, 77, Elverson, Pa., Jan. 28
Benois Helen Deacon, 81, Roanoke, Va., May 29, 2003
Biller, Bob, 74, Timberville, Va., Dec. 26
Biller, Milford Glendi, 87, Timberville, Va., Jan. 6
Book, Orpha, 93, North Manchester, Ind., April 1, 2003
Boshart, Ruth N., 81, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 12
Byers, Zola Farley, 77, Dayton, Va., Jan. 18
Cabaniss, Opal Geeting, 97, West Manchester, Ohio, Feb. 5
Carper, James H., 64, Fishersville, Va., March 2
Click, William A., 91, New Market, Va., Feb. 2
Cook, Eyvonne Ruth Flynn, 70, Dayton, Va., Jan. 6
Cabbage, Mary Ann, 63, Luray, Va., Jan. 4
Danison, Gertrude, 90, Thornville, Ohio, Feb. 24
Dayton, Richard Hayward, 66, Old Fields, W.Va., Jan. 4
Delawder, Lee Franklin, 70, Elkridge, Md., Jan. 27
Delawder, Robert, 73, Moorefield, W.Va., Feb. 8
Dodd, Margaret, 52, Bowie, Md., Feb. 4
Dove, Justin Wayne, 82, Broadway, Va., March 2
Dunafin, Helen, 79, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 25
Ebersole, John, 79, North Manchester, Ind., April 28, 2003
Fox, Dewey C., 85, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 4
Fraleigh, Catherine Cullers, 95, Redland, Md., Jan. 26
Frank, Garnett Oakley, 80, Singers Glen, Va., Jan. 8
Garber, Darlene, 66, Dayton, Ohio, Feb. 18
Ginder, Rick, 34, Elizabethtown, Pa., Jan. 5
Glauser, Vivian, 80, Tipp City, Ohio, Sept. 29
Gonser, Marie, 86, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 10
Green, John D., Jr., 61, Union

Bridge, Md., March 10
Grimley, Lillian Bessie, 84, Stanley, Va., Jan. 20
Gross, Carol J., 75, North Manchester, Ind., Dec. 31
Grubb, Paul, 87, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 21
Hamman, Grayson McDonald, Sr., 72, Stephens City, Va., Oct. 25
Hand, Lester E., 92, Battle Creek, Mich., Jan. 26
Harned, Ellis, 70, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Jan. 17
Harris, Harriet Gibson, 94, Fishersville, Va., Dec. 23
Harrison, Ellabelle, 90, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 26
Helser, Juanita, 83, Thornville, Ohio, Jan. 16
Hersberger, Glenn, 76, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 22
Hess, Arthur H., 78, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 12
Hildebrand, Jim, 79, Arcadia, Ind., Feb. 5
Hill, Jacob Calvin, 81, Gold Canyon, Ariz., Dec. 21
Hiller, Gerald, 95, McCune, Kan., Dec. 26
Hite, Freeman, 81, Goshen, Ind., March 22, 2003
Hoffman, Vera E., 101, Saint Petersburg, Fla., Jan. 23
Holderman, Everett, 90, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 9
Holdeman, Shirley, 66, Nappanee, Ind., March 4, 2003
Homes, Walter, 80, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 7
Hoover, Juanita Gertrude Whitmore, 84, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 24
Houff, Wilda Rachel Flory, 77, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 11
Huffman, Franklin Elijah, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 22
Humphrey, Harry L., Jr., 67, Uniontown, Pa., Jan. 29
Hurst, Ruth, 87, Lititz, Pa., Oct. 15
Jones, Berniece, 81, Girard, Ill., Nov. 21
Jones, Ruby, 87, New Lebanon, Ohio, Jan. 26
Jordan, Genevieve, 97, La Verne, Calif., June 25
Kenaga, Bonnie J., 83, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 18
Keplinger, Gladys, 84, Jordan Run, W.Va., Jan. 31
Kimble, Ronald Hillary, 70, Landes, W.Va., Jan. 3
Kinzie, Galen, 93, North Manchester, Ind., July 7
Knechel, Kathryn, 92, Allentown, Pa., Nov. 25
Lam, Hazel Charlotte, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 11
Lantz, Ruth Frances Wine, 88, Timberville, Va., Jan. 24
Leas, Mary Jo Shelley, 85, West Manchester, Ohio, Feb. 1
Lehman, Lloyd Harold, 88, Alum Bank, Pa., Feb. 21
Lehman, Merle, 86, West Milton, Ohio, Jan. 10
Liskey, Alice Katherine, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., March 1
Looker, Joseph C., 66, Bonaparte, Iowa, Oct. 6
Macy, Ralph, 90, West Milton, Ohio, Dec. 3
Martin, Elva Virginia, 89, Stanley, Va., Jan. 31
Martin, Norman, 76, Lititz, Pa., Oct. 12
Matheny, Martha Jane, 86, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 22
May, Ethel Irene Gladwell, 79, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 26
McCary, Mildred Catherine, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 7
McClanahan, Harry Raymond, 91, Fort Valley, Va., Jan. 15
McColm, Earl, 78, Pittsburg, Kan., Nov. 28
McFadden, Frances, 92, Ashland, Ohio, Jan. 10
Meckley, Goldie Louise, 85,

Waynesboro, Pa., Feb. 5
Merritts, James, 66, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 25
Michael, Amy Elizabeth Miller, 88, Churchville, Va., Jan. 1
Miller, Edna L., 98, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 31
Miller, Roy W., 85, North Manchester, Ind., July 21
Mishler, Helen, 89, West Milton, Ohio, July 24
Mitchell, Carl W., 81, Upper Tract, W.Va., Nov. 10
Moyer, Edwin Elwood, 71, Broadway, Va., Jan. 30
Murray, Loyd, 83, Pendleton, Ind., Nov. 29
Musselman, Leah P., 84, New Enterprise, Pa., Jan. 20
Myers, Alma Ruth Fitzwater, 85, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 21
Newcomer, Barbara, 82, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 25
Nielsen, Donna Jean, 77, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 11
Offutt, Ruth, 86, Lawrence, Kan., Feb. 19
Overholtzer, Robert T., 78, Pottstown, Pa., Feb. 12
Overton, Berta Toms, 66, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 7
Palmer, Richard, 87, San Dimas, Calif., March 15, 2003
Pepple, Lena Pearl, 89, Everett, Pa., Dec. 17
Peterman, M. Eugene, 85, Harrisburg, Pa., March 2
Pittington, Melanie Tutwiler, 39, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 12
Plaugher, Joe, 68, Dayton, Va., Jan. 22
Poletz, Betty, 81, Uniontown, Pa., Jan. 19
Prillaman, Lillie, 87, Rocky Mount, Va., July 27
Pullin, Irma, 95, Waterloo, Iowa, Jan. 8
Ratliff, James Harrison, 82, Moorefield, W.Va., Nov. 26
Ratliff, Lonnie Dellen Whetzel, 80, Upper Tract, W.Va., Nov. 18
Reed, Donald J., 72, Chester, Va., Dec. 16
Ringgold, Lois Irene Stutsman, 89, Bridgewater, Va., Dec. 9
Rhoades, J. Benton, 83, Claremont, Calif., March 19, 2003
Rhodes, Carl E., Sr., 90, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 8
Riffle, Harold Eugene, 75, Strasburg, Va., Feb. 25
Robinette, John L., 84, Everett, Pa., Sept. 18
Robinson, Daniel Carter, Sr., 68, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 24
Roth, Alma, 96, Rossville, Ind., Feb. 1
Routzahn, Janeiro, 86, Boonsboro, Md., Jan. 2, 2003
Rowe, Donald E., 83, Westminster, Md., Feb. 2
Ruffner, Charlotte, 65, Sheloceta, Pa., Jan. 13
Rupert, Percy L., Sr., 73, Quakertown, Pa., Jan. 15
Rush, Clarence L., Jr., 74, Edinburg, Va., Jan. 14
Sell, Clifford, 91, McPherson, Kan., Feb. 21
Senger, Geneva Wine, 82, Verona, Va., Feb. 20
Sherck, Noble, 91, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 26
Shoemaker, Carrie R., 56, Winchester, Va., Jan. 9
Simmers, Bernice Fay Liskey, 83, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 22
Smith, Carl Jennings, 71, Mathias, W.Va., Feb. 28
Snell, Phillip E., 78, Auburn, Ill., Feb. 21
Standiford, Alice, 86, Elkhart, Ind., Feb. 16
Stong, Royce, 84, Ankeny, Iowa, Jan. 24
Stroop, Althea J., 87, Edinburg, Va., Jan. 14

Sweet, Luke, 5, Ashland, Ohio, Feb. 8
Swoveland, Grover, 79, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 8
Thompson, Morton, 88, Drexel Hill, Pa., Jan. 24
Weaver, Hilda, 94, Englewood, Ohio, Feb. 27
Wells, Thelma B., 97, Wawa, Pa., March 2
Wenger, Ammon, 94, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 22
Wenger, Blanche, 89, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 24
Whetzel, Fannie Bell Ketterman, 77, Petersburg, W.Va., Jan. 14
Whitmer, Mary Virginia, 93, Oak Island, N.C., Feb. 19
Whitmer, Olan L., 72, Beaverton, Mich., Feb. 29
Whitmore, Albert L., 89, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 6
Wilkins, Minnie Bell Ketterman, 98, Mathias, W.Va., Jan. 12
Wilkins, Orlando Basye, 85, Mathias, W.Va., Feb. 1
Yankey, Frederick Randolph, 66, Timberville, Va., Jan. 8
Young, Mabel A., 94, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 26
Zitta, Anthony, 84, Spinnerstown, Pa., Oct. 14
Zitta, Irene, 82, Quakertown, Pa., Jan. 19

Licensings

Aukerman, Ruth R., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Union Bridge, Md.), Jan. 4
Baker, David A., W. Pa. Dist. (Plum-creek, Sheloceta, Pa.), Jan. 18
Fox, Randy, N. Ohio Dist. (Mount Pleasant, North Canton, Ohio), Feb. 8
Gaunt, Craig A., W. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.), Jan. 25
Hinton, Amelia R., Virginia Dist. (Roanoke, Va., First), Feb. 25
Mishler, Cheryl Jean, W. Plains Dist. (Trinity, Sabetha, Kan.), Feb. 29
Moyer, Clay Z., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.), Feb. 15
Rauch, Charlene, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.), Feb. 15
Wave, Robert Joseph, Mich. Dist. (Lakeview, Brethren, Mich.), March 7

Ordinations

Davis, Barbra Sue, N. Plains Dist. (Ankeny, Iowa), March 7
Risden, Nelda Jane, N. Ind. Dist. (Bethany, New Paris, Ind.), Feb. 29

Placements

Brumbaugh-Cayford, Cheryl, from pastor, Northern Colorado, Windsor, Colo., to General Board, director, News Services, and associate editor, *Messenger*, March 1
Davis, Barbra Sue, pastor, Messiah, Kansas City, Mo., Feb. 8
Doering, Timothy, pastor of discipleship ministries, Ephrata, Pa., Jan. 15
Hinton, Amelia Renee, minister of Christian education and youth, Cloverdale, Va., Jan. 1
Rhoc, Dennis, minister in training, Johnstown, Hedgesville, W.Va., Aug. 1
Shaulis, M. Eric, associate pastor, Meyersdale, Pa., Jan. 25
Stovall, Earl F., pastor, Hopewell, Va., Feb. 1
Swick, Michael R., associate pastor, Meyersdale, Pa., Jan. 25
Varnam, Robert L., pastor, Papago Buttes, Scottsdale, Ariz., March 1

Finding Hemingway

I made a great sacrifice this past February. Leaving behind the balmy wintertime climate of northern Illinois, I forced myself to take a six-day break in the southern reaches of Florida.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

In addition to visiting some friends, a key reason for this trip (no pun intended) was to visit Key West, the last stop as you head south from Miami. In part, I simply wanted to experience a new—and hopefully warm—place. A major incentive, though, was the opportunity to visit the home of Ernest Hemingway, who spent some of his most prolific writing years there.

His studio, on the second floor of what was once a carriage house, still feels as if he may have sat in it just yesterday. Every piece of furniture and decor seems as if it could tell a story.

Hemingway, admittedly, did not exactly live a Brethren lifestyle. He had a rocky personal life, but he did have some admirable traits. He believed in having balance in his life, working in the cool mornings and always finishing by lunch or when he had written a certain number of words. The rest of the day would be given to visiting, fishing, or exploring. He wrote crisply. He showed amazing

affection for a colony of cats who lived on his property. He formed loyal and long-lasting friendships.

Why go to the trouble of learning about Hemingway? It's been my belief that to become a better writer, I should study those who have excelled at the craft. That means reading their works, and learning about the people behind the pages.

I've enjoyed reading the likes of Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, and C.S. Lewis, as well as some more contemporary writers like John Grisham and Mitch Albom. Other recent trips have included Mark Twain's home in Missouri and Robert Frost's farm in southern New Hampshire. As a quote by André Gide on my favorite bookmark says, getting to know a writer means not just reading his or her words, but "to go off

with him, and travel in his company."

To grow and improve in any field, it makes sense to learn from the best. Young baseball pitchers might watch the careers of Greg Maddux or Roger Clemens. Up-and-coming composers may learn from Mozart or Bach. Aspiring actors and actresses might study Tom Hanks, Denzel Washington, or Katharine Hepburn.

As Christians, then, doesn't it follow that we should be doing the same? It feels sometimes that people of faith know more about the church than they do about God's Word. But deepening our faith means learning all we can about that biblical text and the people behind those pages—especially the central figure of Jesus Christ.

Our Church of the Brethren tagline of "Continuing the work of Jesus" is important, and a vital part of who we are, but it must be accompanied by seeking personally to become *more like* Jesus, as well. Central to this aim is developing our biblical literacy, truly knowing and learning to understand the Word that God has given us.

Many congregations have Bible studies at various times. Some have developed programs to read through the Bible in a year. Youth at the Palmyra congregation in Pennsylvania did a non-stop, 81-hour oral reading of the Bible to mark the New Year in 2003. These are good starts.

They model the spirit of this year's Church of the

Deepening our faith means learning all we can about that biblical text and the people behind those pages—especially the central figure of Jesus Christ.

Brethren national youth theme from Psalms 63, "Seeking, Thirsting, Longing," expressing an unquenchable desire to learn more about God, and to grow closer to God in our walk.

Hemingway's literary skill can tell us that *The Sun Also Rises*, but it is in reading the Bible that we learn what it means to be a people for whom the Son has risen and lives today. I hope none of us stop learning and growing in the vocation to which we have been called, and may we all study at least one author: the author and finisher of our faith (Heb. 12:2).—Ed.

COMING NEXT MONTH: Previewing Annual Conference 2004, with a profile of moderator Chris Bowman; quilt auction marks 30 years; helping Iraq rebuild; book review; and much more.

Developing Leadership ...

... Brethren colleges are important resources in the development of Church leadership.

"LEADERSHIP Development"



Manchester College has a long tradition of developing Church of the Brethren leaders; leaders like Christopher Bowman '84.

Chris earned his master's in divinity from Bethany Seminary in 1987 and his doctorate from San Francisco Theological Seminary in 1999. He has published a broad range of publications and served on the General Board from 1993 to 1998. Chris is pastor of Memorial Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, Pennsylvania, and is the Annual Conference Moderator-elect for the denomination.

Chris says Manchester College played an important role in developing his leadership skills. "My Manchester experience was educational and personal," he says. "It allowed me to explore issues of identity and calling within a caring and compassionate academic community. Manchester allowed me to enjoy accomplishments and to learn from my mistakes ..."

Brethren colleges continue to be important resources in the development of church leadership. "They are places of formation and of reformation," Chris says. "In a formative way, they help shape students in a way that is still connected somewhat to the historic truths of faith. Yet, in a reformation style, they encourage students to make those truths evident and relevant to their current, everyday life. Furthermore, leadership in the church is relationally based. Small colleges allow and demand relational living."



Christopher Bowman '84
Martinsburg, Pennsylvania

"Developing Leadership" is characteristic of each Brethren College.
To learn more, check us out at our websites listed below!

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Bridgewater, Virginia
www.bridgewater.edu

Manchester College
North Manchester, Indiana
www.manchester.edu

Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania
www.etown.edu

McPherson College
McPherson, Kansas
www.mcpherson.edu

Juniata College
Huntingdon, Pennsylvania
www.juniata.edu

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

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

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"Manchester allowed me to explore issues of identity and calling within a caring and compassionate academic community."



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Brethren Colleges ... **LEADING** the Way

Kim Joo



IF YOUR ENEMIES HUNGER, SEND THEM BARLEY SEED

These may not be the precise words of Jesus, but they convey an essential message: Don't let international tensions stand in the way of human compassion. And so thanks to a \$60,000 grant from the Global Food Crisis Fund, farmers in North Korea in March sowed barley for harvest this June, after which they will flood their paddy fields and transplant them with rice.

Double cropping at the time of North Korea's critical food shortfall is a first step in a long-term, international effort to rehabilitate 24,000 acres across three western counties. The goal is to achieve crops like that shown above, grown by North Koreans in 1998 from seed supplied by the Global Food Crisis Fund. Cutting food aid is not in the Brethren genes. Loving the enemy is.



GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS FUND

To contribute, send your gift to Global Food Crisis Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 (800 323-8039, ext. 264)