

Church
of the
Brethren

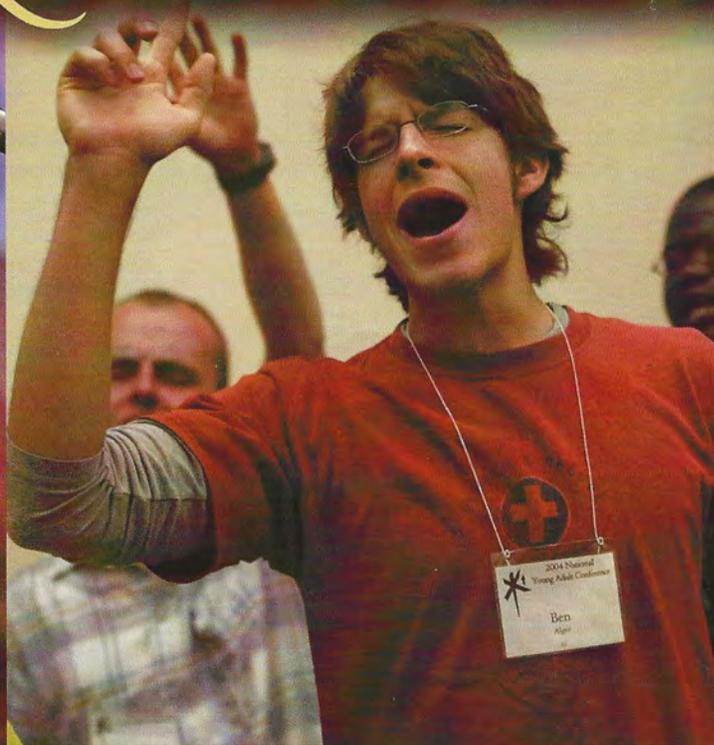
MESSENGER

AUGUST 2004 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



NATIONAL YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE

AT THE CROSSROADS



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Church
of the
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MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER

Clockwise from top left, Hannah Serfling of Preston, Minn.; Amanda Snell of McPherson, Kan.; Ben Alger of Ada, Ohio; and Barth Pobe, a native of Togo now living in State College, Pa., illustrate some of the scenes of worship, celebration, and joy that were part of this year's Church of the Brethren National Young Adult Conference. Some additional photos can be found at www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/NYAC/scrapbook.

Chris Detrick



8 NYAC '04: Standing at the crossroads

More than 250 Church of the Brethren young adults came to Colorado in June to “stand at the crossroads” of the denomination's first large-scale National Young Adult Conference. There they found music, worship, laughter, discussion, reflection, recreation, fellowship, and inspiration.

12 Honoring the rhythms of sabbath rest

Everyone needs to recharge their spiritual batteries periodically, but perhaps no one more so than pastors. Audrey Osborne Mazur takes a look at the need for sabbath rest for those who lead our congregations and as a model of healthy spirituality for everyone.



16 A year of 'Connections'

One year ago, Bethany Theological Seminary ventured into cyberspace for a new model of ministry education that combines online learning with periodic on-campus instruction and relation-building. It is not without challenges, but most who have been participating say the opportunity is a gift.

18 Low-carb Christians

The low-carb diet fad has taken the nation by storm, but Frank Ramirez says deprivation is not the key to healthy weight loss—or to healthy spirituality. Instead, God calls us to a life of abundance in which we embrace the yeast of these.

DEPARTMENTS

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Planners of this year's Annual Conference handed out some 600 red hearts made of recycled glass. Smooth and jewel-like, they were the perfect size to fit into the palm of a hand. But they weren't for keeping. We were to give them away to people we didn't know. Take a few minutes to get acquainted with another person, we were told, and then give the heart as a tangible symbol of the Conference theme, "Loving God and neighbor."

I gave my glass heart to a Jewish man named Robin, whom I met late Tuesday night on the street corner outside the civic center. He was with West Virginia



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Patriots for Peace, a local organization that co-sponsored a solemn exhibit of more than 800 pairs of boots, representing the US military deaths in Iraq. Robin showed me the photos he had just received from his son, a soldier currently serving in Iraq. He spoke gratefully of Church of the Brethren support for the boots exhibit and for a peace witness at the courthouse two days earlier. Few religious leaders in Charleston have been willing to speak out against the war, he said. "You are true Christians."

"True Christians" is not a phrase I'm comfortable using, but it sounds less presumptuous coming from someone like Robin than it does when tossed back and forth between followers of Jesus.

In Charleston, we struggled in various ways with the question of how to be the church. While disagreements were handled with grace and goodwill, still it was clear that we were not of one mind. The differences were most sharply obvious during the discussion of "Congregational Disagreement with Annual Conference Decisions," in which one proposed change lost by a mere five votes. Though delegates eventually approved the total paper by a solid majority, the feel of the split vote lingered in the hall.

What does it mean to dissent from Annual Conference decisions? In the final moments of business, delegates reported on their experiences as part of a "living peace church," following up one of last year's Conference actions. When one speaker announced that he did not support the peace position of the Church of the Brethren and neither did his congregation, many people applauded. What did this applause mean, and how should it be received in light of the brand-new paper on disagreement with Annual Conference?

Our peace position, our views on church discipline, how we include people of other cultures—these are matters integral to our understanding of how to be the church. Partisan applause and voting make our differences look deep. But it's possible the struggling and discerning are still taking place—not just between people but within, as individuals ponder the role of conscience; the relationship between congregation, district, and Annual Conference; how our decisions play out over time; and what it means to be the Church of the Brethren responding faithfully to God's yearning for us in this time. If we return to each other year after year, and if we keep before us Jesus' definition of the greatest commandment, we will not be far from the kingdom.

Wendy McFadden

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AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: The 31st annual Brethren Bible Institute took place July 26-30 at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College. Courses this year included Church History, The Book of Revelation, Contemporary Issues, and The Spreading Flame: Studies in Acts.

Atlantic Southeast: The 18th annual island-wide assembly of Church of the Brethren congregations in Puerto Rico was held at Cristo Nuestra Paz Fellowship, Yahuecas, June 4-5.

Idaho: The district on June 27 held a consecration service and reception for Nampa pastor Jim Hardenbrook as he prepared to assume the responsibilities of Annual Conference moderator for 2004-2005.

Illinois/Wisconsin: The district is reinvigorating its dormant website at www.iwd-cob.org. Alan Boleyn has been called by the district transition team to serve as webmaster and post new updates.

Michigan: District conference delegates this month will consider a query that asks Annual Conference to reconsider polity requiring only a simple majority vote of the district board in order to approve ordination for a ministry candidate.

Mid-Atlantic: The district has relocated a peace pole that stood at the former district office location in Ellicott City, Md., to the new site at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor.

Middle Pennsylvania: The district has announced its search process for a new district minister, following the announcement of current district minister Randy Yoder's retirement effective Dec. 31. Yoder has served the district for more than 19 years.

Missouri/Arkansas: The Carthage (Mo.) congregation is reaching out to its increasingly Latino neighborhood by sharing its building with Vida Nuevo (New Life), a group from Assemblies of God background in Guatemala. The two congregations are planning several shared gatherings.

Northern Indiana: Two big celebrations occurred in the district recently, with Heifer International kicking off its 60th anniversary observances June 25-27 in Goshen, Ind., and On Earth Peace holding one of its first 30th anniversary events June 12 at the Bethany congregation in New Paris.

Northern Ohio: Two district congregations have experienced challenges recently. The Pleasant View church in Elida was burglarized, and lost some sound equipment

and instruments, while North Bend, in Danville, had a fire caused by lightning that did about \$30,000 in damage.

Northern Plains: Mennonite comedy duo Ted & Lee will present their Old Testament play "The Creation Chronicles" at district conference Aug. 7 at the University of Northern Iowa.

Oregon/Washington: Volunteers from the district are assisting with a disaster response project in Skagit County, Washington, where floods damaged dozens of homes last fall.

Pacific Southwest: The Tucson (Ariz.) congregation, which has been working with the Southern Sudanese Resettlement Program for two years, is now sharing building space as the group opens a Sudanese church. The new congregation held its first service in April.

Shenandoah: The district held a "Celebrating Our Connections" event June 6 at Brethren Woods in Keezletown, Va. The afternoon included swimming, fishing, canoeing, and a carry-in meal.

South/Central Indiana: The Northview congregation and other peace churches in the Indianapolis area planned to hold an evening of music, workshop, and sharing ideas for peace witness July 17.

Southeastern: The district's John Reed Homestead retirement community, Limestone, Tenn., will hold its annual golf tournament fund-raiser Aug. 7 at Twin Creeks. The French Broad congregation (White Pine, Tenn.) is among those who are sponsoring a hole.

Southern Ohio: The Greenville and West Milton congregations in May hosted the second annual district stewardship dinners in May. The district development committee and volunteer staff member Steve Bohn planned the events, which raised more than \$4,500.

Southern Pennsylvania: The Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa., is preparing for another expansion. The first phase includes plans for 37 new cottage homes.

Southern Plains: Allen Martin has begun as the new caretaker for the district's Spring Lake and Retreat Center in Billings, Okla. Volunteers recently put a new roof on the caretaker's cabin.

Virginia: The Central, Ninth Street, and First congregations in Roanoke, Va., jointly sponsored a Lafiya Weekend May 21-22, led by Association of Brethren Caregivers executive director Kathy Reid.

West Marva: The district is planning to hold a family camp with the theme "Living a Christian Life in a Materialistic World" Aug. 13-15 at Camp Galilee, Terra Alta, W.Va.

Western Pennsylvania: A Heritage Festival Pastors Bake-Off will test district pastors' culinary skills on Sept. 18. Pastors will submit homemade cakes, cookies, and pies to be judged.

Western Plains: Thirty Brethren from four congregations attended a Renovare' spiritual renewal event held May 1 in Quinter, Kan. James Bryan Smith gave leadership to the conference, and the Quinter Praise Band provided music.



The Richmond (Ind.) congregation on May 16 moved out of the building it called home for the past 75 years, walking together to its new facility two blocks away during worship. The first service in its larger new home, formerly a Presbyterian church, took place May 23. Above, congregation members depart the old building.

Maple Grove youth group member Levi McDaniel, left, and pastor Mark Craddock (on drums) share their part in the day's music.



N.C. congregation builds upon the (Christian) rock

On May 15, youth at Maple Grove Church of the Brethren, in Lexington, N.C., did something unheard of for local churches in this quiet, rural area. They held an outdoor Christian rock-and-roll concert. Eight groups took part in the five-hour event, all performing free of charge.

Mark Craddock



At one point in the planning, there was some discussion about selling hot dogs and chips and drinks to subsidize the youth's Florida trip later in the summer, but youth pastor Michael McDaniel said he felt groups in the church were always trying to sell you something, so the youth decided to just give away the refreshments.

One of the youth offered his pickup as a huge cooler, and the drinks were put into the bed and then covered with ice. More than 500 hot dogs were on hand ready to serve.

"There were a lot of Christian-themed tattoos and a lot of body piercing," pastor Mark Craddock says of the diverse group that turned out

for the concert, "but these kids prayed and quoted scripture like seasoned veterans. As the day went on, we even noticed our neighbors in the mobile home park next to us sitting in their yards checking out the show. They weren't quite ready to join us yet, but maybe this was a start."

In addition to the music, a NASCAR race car donated by Richard Childress Racing also made an appearance for three hours. Craddock says the day was a huge success, and another concert was planned for July.

"Two teens made decisions to accept Christ that day," he says, "and if that was the only good that happened, then that was more than enough. We were blessed in so many ways by this event."

Penny project turns into a wrap session

After the children of Calvary Church of the Brethren in Winchester, Va., collected "Pennies for Seeds" for the Church of the Brethren General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund, someone left an anonymous donation at the church office: a five-gallon bucket full of pennies.

Karol Hottle, the Sunday school superintendent, had already counted and wrapped most of the \$225 worth of pennies collected by the children. She knew she needed more help when the bucket showed up. She took the bucket to a bank to wrap 207 more rolls of pennies—10,396 in all.

"Our check for Pennies for Seeds came to \$332.24," she said. "We also got two washers, one button, two foreign coins, and three paper clips! This morning, there was a small bank envelope with more pennies in my church box. This project not only helped the hungry, but it got a bunch of pennies back in circulation!"

Once the wrapping marathon was done, Hottle wrote a follow-up note to General Board staff: "Next year I think we'll do 'Dollars 4 Seeds!'"

Members of the York Center intermediate class stand with their completed creation. Renee Neher, who dreamed up the project, is at lower right. Others are, from left, Arthur Karasek, Alonzo Steiner, and Arbie Karasek.

York Center children fold a thousand cranes

In Japan, the crane is a sign of good luck. An old story says that if a sick person folds 1,000 paper cranes, she will get well. This story came to life for the intermediate Sunday school class at York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill.

Class member Renee Neher heard the story of a young girl her own age who lived in Hiroshima 10 years after the atomic bomb was dropped.

Carolyn DeCoursey



Sadako was a happy, athletic girl who suddenly developed leukemia. Renee shared the story of Sadako (by Elanor Coerr and Ed Young) with the Sunday school class and asked if they wanted to fold 1,000 paper cranes.

The class chose Easter Sunday as the goal. For six weeks, the students and teachers of the class folded cranes at home and during Sunday school. For another three weeks, the class threaded cranes on dental floss for display. And on Easter, four mobiles containing 250 cranes each adorned the sanctuary. The mobiles proved popular and have remained up through the summer. —Carolyn DeCoursey

Spring Run helps restore family's 1810 farmhouse

The Stanley and Evelyn McKee family was reminded anew of the importance of Christ's command to "bear one another's burdens." (Gal. 6:2) Members of the McKee family found themselves recipients of an outpouring of love and service following a devastating fire in their 1810 stone farm house near Spring Run Church of the Brethren in McVeytown, Pa.

On Aug. 3, 2003, members of this family were called from worship at Spring Run when neighbors observed flames pouring out of the downstairs windows of their home. This old house held history for the Spring Run congregation as it, along with several other houses in the area, had been a

meeting place for the congregation before its church building was constructed in 1858. In fact, John Kline recorded a visit to this home on one of his ministry journeys in August 1841.

The flames were thorough in their devastation, leaving few items to be salvaged. The flames were stopped at the attic door, which left the attic only smoke-damaged. This was especially meaningful, as it is assumed that the spacious attic was where worship was held for the early Brethren who met in the house. The stone walls of the house stood like a fortress, allowing renovation to occur.

Spring Run members, as well as many other friends, neighbors, and family members, answered the command "to bear one another's burdens." Folks immediately offered a place to live, clothes, food, and help in demolition of the interior of the house. In addition, a shower was organized that supplied all kitchen, bedroom, and bathroom needs. The Middle Pennsylvania District disaster response team supplied all the materials and labor to install electricity in the old stone house—no small feat considering the stone structure is almost 200 years old and the walls 24 inches thick!

Following eight months of renovation, the McKees returned to the house that has been their home since 1968. Spring Run members continued their service on moving day with cleaners, food providers, and movers.

A dedication service for the restored house was held May



Church members and friends gather in a closing circle for the dedication of the restored McKee house.

15 in the attic. Spring Run pastor Jerry Miller officiated at the service, which included words from Glenn Kinsel—a volunteer for Brethren Disaster Response in New Windsor, Md., and a descendant of the home's original builders—and music by

members of the McKee family. The dedication was followed by a picnic hosted by the McKee family as a thank-you to the many volunteers who helped them through this devastating loss and return to the home. —Donna Rhodes

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- **Broadfording Church of the Brethren**, located near Hagerstown, Md., celebrated its 25th anniversary as a congregation on July 11 with a worship service, fellowship meal, time of sharing, and evening gospel concert. Jim Myer was guest speaker for the morning service.

- The **Petersburg (W.Va.) Memorial congregation** broke ground on May 12 for a major new addition to its church building. Plans call for enlarging the sanctuary, doubling the size of the fellowship hall, and installing a first-ever steeple.

- **Water Street Church of the Brethren**, Kent, Ohio, marked its 100th anniversary June 11-13 with words from former pastors, performances by area Christian bands, a cookout, and a love feast service.

- A memorial dedication for **Marble Furnace Church of the Brethren** in Southern Ohio District, closed by district conference action last year, took place July 25 with the installation of a monument. The church closed after 125 years of service.

- The **Church Workers Assistance Plan**, created in 1904 as the Ministerial and Missionary Relief Fund to help Brethren pastors and missionaries who didn't have adequate resources for retirement, is marking its 100th anniversary this year. The plan, now administered by Brethren Benefit Trust, originated from a portion of the estates of James R. and Barbara Gish, according to a report in BBT's "BenefitNews" newsletter.

- Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren member **Morris Firebaugh**, nominated by the board of Camp Emmaus, received this year's Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) Volunteer of the Year Award. Firebaugh, who has given 56 years of service to the camping program at Emmaus, was presented with the award at the OMA luncheon at Annual Conference.

- **The Cedars** of McPherson, Kan., was honored this spring with the Clinical Care Award and a Recognition Award from Kansas Association of Homes and Services for the Aging.

Donna Rhodes

The burned McKee house stands with Jack's Mountain in the background last year.



Another way of answering

“So tell us about the Church of the Brethren,” the couple inquired. It was early March, and we were seated at an indoor track meet where our children were competing members of their college track teams.



JOHN BALLINGER

My wife Kathy and I had struck up a conversation with the couple seated next to us, and as we became acquainted they asked us what we did for a living.

“My wife is a dental hygienist, and I’m a district minister in the Church of the Brethren,” I responded. When they asked about our church, I thought I’d try a different answer instead of mentioning Anabaptism and Pietism.

Lately I’d wondered if restating our Anabaptist/Pietist heritage in modern terms might prove useful in describing our Brethren identity, so I’d done some reading. My studies convinced me that while the language of our heritage may no longer be understood by today’s culture, its underlying values are.

The word Anabaptism (which means rebaptism, not anti-baptism!) refers to a model of faith commitment and church life that originated in Switzerland in the 1500s. The movement grew in response to the baptism of infants into church and state membership, and it was characterized by obedience to the teaching of

the Bible that means reverence, godliness, affection for the family of God, pity, compassion, or gentle, harmless, and simple. Pietists practiced a vital, life-changing faith in God through Jesus Christ and placed great importance on the Bible.

These two movements converged in the hearts and minds of eight Christians who were rebaptized in the Eder River in Schwarzenau, Germany, in 1708. Among them was Alexander Mack (whom we call the “founder” of the Church of the Brethren) and his wife, Anna Margaret. The union of these Anabaptist and Pietist values created our Brethren identity.

I concluded that while the values of Anabaptism and Pietism are as relevant today as they were in 1708, most people have no clue what we’re talking about if we use those terms to describe our identity. So I considered using other terms such as “believing and belonging,” “spirituality and service,” “faith and faithful living,” “loving God and neighbor,” or “a vital, life-changing faith coupled with a sense of community” as substitutes.

But were those terms acceptable? Here was my opportunity to find out! Responding to the question, I took a deep breath and said, “We are a New Testament church that follows the teaching of Jesus, and we emphasize both believing and belonging, spirituality and service, faith and faithful living.” They were delighted with my answer, and it stimulated a lively conversation about the Christian faith!

While not a comprehensive study of our Anabaptist-Pietist heritage (I recommend Donald Durnbaugh, Dale Stoffer, Dale Brown, Harold Martin, Jeff Bach, or Carl Bowman for that), I offer these thoughts as “another way of answering” when asked to describe our Brethren identity. No other voice in mainline or evangelical Protestantism offers a vital, life-changing faith coupled with a sense of community in this manner.

I found that recalling our Brethren heritage and restating it in modern terms can stimulate lively conversation about our identity, and about the important values we have been given. This is our unique, timely expression of the faith we are commanded by Jesus Christ to share with the world. 

Jesus, believer’s baptism (baptizing only those old enough to consent to and understand their commitment), and devotion to the faith community.

The term Pietism describes a revival movement that swept over Europe in the 1600s, born in response to the cold, formal religious teaching of the time. Its name was derived from the word piety, a word from

While the values of Anabaptism and Pietism are as relevant today as they were in 1708, most people have no clue what we’re talking about if we use those terms to describe our identity. So I considered using other terms such as . . . “a vital, life-changing faith coupled with a sense of community” as substitutes.

John Ballinger is district executive minister for Northern Ohio District.

QUOTEWORTHY

“And sometimes there’s the finger, you know, people giving us the finger. But if you think about it, the finger is just half a peace sign.”

—Springfield (Ore.) Church of the Brethren member Trudy Maloney, talking to Eugene (Ore.) Weekly about responses to her work in peace activism/witness

“Living as part of a community is an art, a lifestyle one learns and which one improves upon along the way.”

—Milka Rindzinski of Uruguay, general editor of the *Mennonite Courier/Correo* newsletter

“Just as becoming good at sports or playing a musical instrument requires consistent practice, living well a life of faith also requires practice.”

—National Study of Youth and Religion researcher Dr. Christian Smith, on the need for regular scripture reading by youth and adults

“The church is always full of human beings. There’s no way around it.”

—Bethany Theological Seminary professor Dena Pence Frantz, talking with Ministry Summer Service interns about conflicts and tensions in the church

“I did something for the worst possible reason. Just because I could. I think that’s just about the most morally indefensible reason anybody could have for doing anything.”

—former President Bill Clinton, explaining his “terrible moral error” in his affair with White House intern Monica Lewinsky on the June 20 broadcast of CBS’ “60 Minutes.” (RNS)

“While numbers themselves can never tell the whole story, we have reason to assume they indicate the American Baptist call to Christ-centered renewal has touched and motivated many people.”

—the Rev. Dr. Roy A. Medley, general secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, speaking in *American Baptists In Mission* about the strong growth of the denomination in recent years

“It’s not just about being the church in the US. We’re in a church that spans the globe.”

—Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, after a trip to Nigeria

“Jesus originated the idea of servant leadership. But Jesus is rarely mentioned in the popular leadership literature as the one who first had the idea and is the model to follow.”

—Reformed Church member Carl Shafer, writing in *The Church Herald*

CULTUREVIEW

• **The public's confidence in organized religion** has inched back up after reaching a historic low in 2002, according to a Gallup poll released in June. The percentage of Americans who said they had a "great deal" or "quite a lot" of confidence in "the church or organized religion" reached 53 percent in May, up from 50 percent last year. (RNS)

• A scientific survey conducted by Harris Interactive in May determined that the majority of adult Americans (69 percent) believe that **religious differences are the biggest hurdle** to achieving global peace. While opinions appeared to be mixed as to how tolerant Americans feel they are when it comes to religious views other than their own (only 46 percent considered Americans very tolerant), nearly three in five (59 percent) said that they personally take the time to learn about other religions.

• **Fewer than one-third of all US Protestant teenagers** (32 percent) report that they personally read the Bible alone once a week or more often, according to researchers with the National Study of Youth and Religion. The majority of US Protestant teenagers say that they read the

Bible either less frequently or not at all. Furthermore, of all US teenagers, only about one in four reads the sacred scripture of their religious tradition weekly or more often (26 percent). Large numbers of US teenagers do claim religious affiliations and report attending religious services.

• **Gallup's annual Mood of the Nation** poll found that 64 percent of Americans are dissatisfied with the country's moral and ethical climate, while 35 percent say they are satisfied. Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 seem more optimistic—in the 2003 and 2004 polls, 53 percent of younger Americans said they are satisfied with the country's morality. Among Americans ages 65 and older, only 29 percent were satisfied. (RNS)

• **The number of religious radio stations** in the US grew 6 percent in 2003, according to a recent Arbitron report published in the *Christian Century*. The report showed a total of 1,965 such stations, about 14 percent of the nation's total.



JUST FOR FUN: CRYPTOGRAM

SCRIPTURE SLEUTH: Use letter substitution to decipher this passage of scripture. A hint and the answer are printed below:

“ P Q X K A X Q Q E B Z O L P P O L X A P X K A I L L H ;
 X P H C L O Q E B X K Z F B K Q M X Q E P , X P H T E B O B
 Q E B D L L A T X V F P , X K A T X I H F K F Q , X K A
 V L R T F I I C F K A O B P Q C L O V L R O P L R I P . ”

Hint: “E” = “H”

Answers:

the Brethren National Young Adult Conference (see story and photos, beginning on p. 8). International Version (NIV). This passage served as the theme text for the 2004 Church of and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls.” from Jer. 6:16 in the New “Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is;



STANDING AT THE CROSSROADS

Story by Walt Wiltschek
Photos by Chris Detrick

National Young Adult Conference brims with energy and openness to hearing God

Nearly a decade ago, Shawn Replogle—just coming off a stint as National Youth Conference coordinator—alerted an Annual Conference audience that the denomination’s youth and young adults would bring a “tidal wave” of energy, fresh ideas, and spiritual renewal to the church.

It appears that wave may have arrived.

This year’s Church of the Brethren National Young Adult Conference (NYAC) in Winter Park, Colo., was the first of its kind in both size and scope. More than 250 people came together at Snow Mountain Ranch June 14-18 for an emotionally and spiritually powerful gathering amid the Colorado Rockies.

“It’s not about me and you,” NYAC coordinator Becky Ullom said as she welcomed the group to opening worship. “It is about God. It is about the Spirit that is present here.”

The denomination has offered an annual Young Adult

Left: Kevin Schatz and Dan Royer provided lively drumming during the National Young Adult Conference week, adding a different rhythm and flavor to worship. Below: Erin McCourt enjoys a chance to get in the swing of things.



Conference at least since the 1980s, but it is only a weekend event and has drawn fewer than 100 people in recent years. The idea for a larger event arose from young adults who assisted with the 2002 National Youth Conference.

Several of those volunteers asked Chris Douglas, director of Youth/Young Adult Ministry for the Church of the Brethren General Board, why a similar event couldn't be held for young adults. Douglas took the idea to the Young Adult Steering Committee, who convinced her that it was worth trying.

"This is the team that dreamed about NYAC," Douglas said while thanking the steering committee at the conference. "Their dreaming and visioning pushed me to say, 'Of course we can make it happen!'"

And happen it did. The organizers allowed for up to 500 people to attend, but they were pleased with a registration of 250-plus for a first-time event with a hard-to-gather 18-to-35 age group.

Those who came found a week packed with worship services, discussion-oriented workshops called "padares" (an African term for a "marketplace of ideas"), sharing in small community groups, service projects, "open mic" evening coffeehouses, and ample free time for fellowship, recreation, and side

Youth/Young Adult Ministry director Chris Douglas, right, prayed with Jennifer Quijano of Brooklyn, N.Y., during one of the reflection times.



Jeff McAvoy, left, and Jill Kline caught the energetic spirit of worship with music led by Shawn Kirchner.

trips for hiking or whitewater rafting.

Worship speakers (see sidebar, pp. 10-11) addressed aspects of the "Stand at the Crossroads and Look" theme taken from Jeremiah 6:16, inviting the young adults to patiently explore God's calling for their lives via prayer, discernment, reading the scriptures, talking with others, and chancing new experiences—noting that it's OK to have questions and doubts. Journaling time was part of each worship service, and a prayer chapel provided additional space for those seeking a place for quiet reflection.

Some of the worship services had no main speaker, instead using storytelling, video, drama, drumming, and other music to communicate the message. Shawn Kirchner of La Verne, Calif., led music throughout the event and composed a catchy theme song that evolved through the week.

The ordinances of communion and footwashing were also included in two of the services, framed by scripture, poetry, and a mixture of gentle and upbeat music.

"It is a reminder of our need to be humble in service and evangelism to others," Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, said before the footwashing service. "When you look into the eyes of the person whose feet you are washing, dare to see the Christ."

Feet formed an additional focus during the conference, in the form of a shoe offering during one of the morning worship services. Young adults were asked to bring along one or more pairs of "gently worn" shoes to donate as a gift to those who cannot afford decent footwear.

Young adult Joe Arndts of Dayton, Ohio, and several others went a step further, literally giving up the shoes off their feet and going barefoot for the day.

"The Bible says you have to walk in another's shoes," Arndts said. "We wanted to get to know what others were going through for a day, what they had to do for the rest of their lives. It was well worth it. I had a smile on my face all day."

REFLECTIONS FROM NYAC

By Wendy Matheny

Being a young adult in the Church of the Brethren is a blessing, but it is also often a challenge. We are no longer seen as the eager youth, fresh from camp/National Youth Conference experiences—and yet many view us as “not quite old/mature enough” to assume leadership roles in the larger church.

Our ideas often differ from older generations’, and yet many of us do not understand why our dreams for the church should have any less merit than those of anyone else. Yes, we are “the future” of the church, but we beg to be recognized as today’s church, too.

National Young Adult Conference (NYAC) not only provided a fun-filled, worshipful, and dialogue-friendly experience for the 250-plus attendees; it also allowed us to take a look at the amazing values we share despite our differences of opinion and belief.

At one NYAC “padare” (workshop) titled “Build A Church,” we found ourselves so engrossed in the “building blocks” of the church (service, community, communication, love) that the issues that so often divide us took a back seat to the overall health of our church. Several individuals described experiences in their home congregations that seem to neglect the living, breathing, existing community in the hope of gaining new members. Others spoke of a need for true service in our churches—not to entice people to enter our doors, but simply to walk in Jesus’ shoes.

There will always be differences of opinion and belief in any community, but as a church—representatives of Jesus in today’s world—many of us have found the desperate need to first love one another (and, only after, to worry about the rest). Above, beyond, and beneath it all, a true love for our church fills us, and we long to see the Christ we claim as our own to be in and among us. As young adults we have a vision, and, as scary as that might be, we are passionate about its realization. Hopefully NYAC was only a beginning.

Wendy Matheny is a member of Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren and serves on the National Young Adult Steering Committee.



Josh Schnepf of Michigan washed the feet of a fellow NYAC participant during Thursday evening’s worship service.

Words from worship



Angie Lahman Yoder

“We have to live the question, ‘Who am I as a child of God?’ Once we stop trying to control God’s purpose for us, our gifts and abilities will come into view.”



Tony Campolo

“The Holy Spirit will make you alive! Is the Spirit within you? That’s the real question. I want you to be filled with Christ, so you will not burn out.”

A huge pile of shoes on the stage resulted from the offering, one of several times participants gave generously at NYAC. The young adults also gave dozens of pints of blood for a blood drive, cleared beetle-infested wood to protect healthy trees, donated nearly \$850 for On Earth Peace in one evening offering and—challenged to double that amount two nights later—gave \$3,468 to the ministries of the General Board, which underwrote many of the costs of the conference.

That outpouring convinced Douglas and Noffsinger that another such conference may be possible down the road. They said they were considering starting a “seed” fund and encouraging others to contribute to help build a pool for future events.

In the meantime, most of the 2004 participants seemed to leave with very positive feelings about this initial NYAC.

“It was a great experience,” said Sonja LeCount of Elgin, Ill., echoing many similar sentiments, “for meeting new people, reacquainting with old friends, for spiritual growth and renewal, and wonderful worship services.”

And they left with a promise. Susan Boyer, pastor of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, summed it up



Young adults formed a mammoth pile of footwear during a shoe offering held during the week. The shoes were given to area charitable organizations.



A signpost embodying the NYAC theme stood as part of the worship center throughout the week.

in the closing worship service, using a Quaker image.

“Jesus will always, always meet you in the crossroads of your life,” Boyer said. “As you live up to the light, more light will always be granted.” **W**

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER and participated in National Young Adult Conference. Chris Detrick is a senior photojournalism major at the University of Missouri and a member of Codorus Church of the Brethren, Loganville, Pa.



Belita Mitchell

“Prayer is a key to finding the answers we seek. . . . Nothing ignites the flames of faith like a little talk with Jesus!”



Stan Noffsinger

“Walking the talk isn’t about service alone and not about evangelism alone, but some balance of both. Walking the talk is a call for the body of Christ to love, support, and build each other up.”



Susan Boyer

“You are not being called to see the end of the journey, just the next step. What’s your next step? Where is your road to Emmaus? Where do you need to meet Jesus?”



Prayer (1859), oil on canvas by John Phillip

Honoring the rhythms of sabbath rest

By Audrey Osborne Mazur

Brethren guidelines, Lilly program help pastors recharge for ministry and life

While everyone experiences slumps in spiritual vitality and growth, pastors must maintain a constant faith capable of sustaining them as they provide public leadership and vision for the church.

Combined with the pressures of being on-call for emergencies and working many evenings and most weekends, these pressures quickly can lead to burn-out or depression. Taking a day off may not be enough to re-fuel and re-energize them for these on-going tasks. A sabbatical can go a long way toward re-vitalizing clergy for the ministry.

The term sabbatical brings to mind classes, stacks of books to read, note-taking, and maybe publishing an article or two. However, the Hebrew spiritual concept, *shabbat*, from which the words sabbath and sabbatical come, actually means “to cease” or “to rest.”

Theologian Marva Dawn describes this rest as “ceasing not only from work itself, but also from the need to accomplish and be productive, from the worry and tension that accompany our modern criterion of efficiency.” (*Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, p.3).

God took the first such rest on the seventh day of creation and in so doing sets forth a holy example of this ceasing. Throughout the Old Testament stories of God’s covenant with the Israelites, God repeatedly emphasizes the importance of sabbath-keeping. Jesus takes this commandment seriously, though not in a legalistic way (he heals on the sabbath). But Jesus does take time apart from the crowds to seek rest and to spend time in prayer.

Rest and prayer may look like laziness in this fast-paced, efficiency-oriented world, but sabbath rest is needed for the renewal of the church and God’s people. The church recog-

nized this through its 2002 Annual Conference “Guidelines for Sabbath Rest” that encourages pastors to take sabbaticals—renamed “sabbath rest” to avoid old expectations of classes, books, and publications, and to remind Brethren of the spiritual nature of this time spent apart from the local congregation.

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee and the General Board Office of Ministry developed the Guidelines for Sabbath Rest, which the 2002 Annual Conference delegate body then passed. The guidelines list reasons for sabbath rest including the biblical precedent for it, the promise of renewal and vision for the church, and the strengthening of lay leadership in congregations. The guidelines also note that clergy sabbath rest can increase the length of time a pastor may stay with one congregation, saving a congregation time, money, and the disruption of frequent pastoral searches.

The guidelines suggest that pastors might do a variety of things during their sabbath rest including time at home with family, spiritual retreats and direction, study and prayer, play and service, time with nature, and travel.

The Church of the Brethren is not the only group taking seriously the need for pastors’ sabbath rest. Lilly Endowment Inc. is now in its fifth year of providing funding for clergy sabbaticals through its National Clergy Renewal Program.

Lilly Endowment Inc. is a private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 and based in Indianapolis. The Lilly Endowment provides grant funding and support for religion, education, and community development. The endowment is specifically interested in attracting a new generation of talented young people to the ministry, nurturing the excellent pastors already “on duty,” and building vibrant and healthy congregations.

“In their efforts to address the constant demands of daily parish life, pastors’ own needs for prayer and sustenance often are neglected,” says Craig Dykstra, Lilly Endowment vice president for religion. “The clergy renewal program is a response to those needs. It has helped many pastors rediscover the joy of ministry.”

LEARN MORE

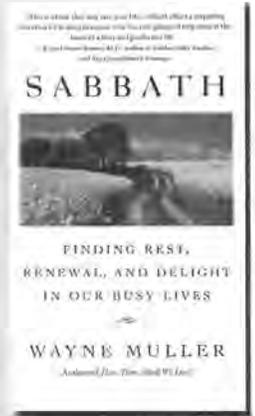
Be inspired by the models featured in this article, and let the idea of shaping your life around a weekly rhythm of sabbath rest and renewal call to you. You can learn more about ways of ceasing work and embracing a weekly sabbath through these books and online resources:

Books

- *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly: Ceasing, Resting, Embracing, Feasting*, by Marva Dawn
- *Sabbath: Restoring the Sacred Rhythm of Rest*, by Wayne Muller
- *Sabbath Time: Understanding and Practice for Contemporary Christians*, by Tilden Edwards
- *A Timbered Choir: The Sabbath Poems 1979-1997*, by Wendell Berry
- *Receiving the Day*, by Dorothy Bass

Internet Resources

- Read the 2002 Annual Conference “Guidelines for Sabbath Rest” at www.brethren.org/genbd/ministry/sabbath.pdf
- Learn more about the Lilly Endowment, Inc. at www.lillyendowment.org
- Read about the religion projects of the Lilly Endowment at www.resourcingchristianity.org
- Learn how to apply for a grant from the Lilly Endowment’s National Clergy Renewal Program at www.clergyrenewal.org (There is also a separate program for Indiana congregations).



In 2002, the National Clergy Renewal Program (which began in 2000) awarded 135 grants to congregations in 35 states and 15 denominations. Of those, four went to Church of the Brethren pastors and their congregations. The award money was used to offset the pastor’s expenses while on sabbatical and to assist the church in paying an interim or summer pastor.

The four Church of the Brethren ministers who received the grant for 2003 undertook a wide variety of experiences during their sabbath rests (see sidebar). Some of those experiences were purely for rest and

With God's grace and leading, these pastors returned from their sabbath rests with fresh visions for church renewal and the energy to lead the way.



Walt Wittschek

David W. Miller, pastor at West Richmond (Va.), and Katie Best spend time in quiet reflection during a Ministry Summer Service orientation retreat.

recreation, usually in connection with much needed family time. Other adventures included spiritual direction and retreats, classes and study, and travel and meetings with church leaders around the world.

This variety is consistent with the aims of the program, which was designed to meet the specific needs and interests of the individual pastor. With God's grace

MEET THE RECIPIENTS

Gerry Godfrey is pastor of nurture for Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren, Quarryville, Pa. Godfrey's 10-week clergy renewal program included a 100-mile hike on the Appalachian Trail with her husband, a visit to the Taizé community in France, and time spent observing children's programming in other congregations. She calls her sabbath rest, "A time that has given me some new ways to develop my spirituality."

Although she did not expect the hiking trip to be spiritually profound, Godfrey describes it as exactly that "because of the way God can speak to us through everyday things." The time in the wilderness reacquainted her with the basic necessities of food, clean water, rest, and shelter. These elements reminded her of how she needs to depend on God as her source of life, a fact too easily overlooked in everyday existence. The experience was so rewarding that she and her husband plan to hike part of the trail annually.

Her other experiences also contin-

ue to bear fruit a year later as she uses aspects of the Taizé worship style with youth in her congregation. And the evaluation and restructure of the children's programming begun through her observation in other congregations continues to unfold. Speaking of her time apart she says, "This helped me refocus and get new energy for the groups I work with."

Cameron Blake Kaufman-Frey is pastor of a dually affiliated Church of the Brethren and Mennonite congregation in Morgantown, W.Va. His nearly four-month-long sabbath rest included family events in Texas, Colorado, and Ontario, a silent retreat in Texas, and a trip to Africa. With the help of his spiritual director on retreat, Kaufman-Frey was able to spend needed time grieving for and healing

from the recent death of his father.

Then in West Africa, Kaufman-Frey and his wife spent time in the country of Benin, visiting his sister and brother-in-law who are working with African indigenous churches through the Mennonite Mission Network. He says, "I talked with church leaders there to see how their culture shaped the gospel and to think about how our culture shapes the gospel for us."

They then attended the Mennonite World Conference in Zimbabwe, after which Kaufman-Frey traveled on to northern Nigeria to visit in Church of the Brethren congregations. He observed how the churches there are packed full, while in the US churches are half-full on a good Sunday. He observed how the church headquarters runs a school,

York Center pastor Christy Waltersdorff, left, and her husband, Marty O'Brien, traveled to Mt. Healy in Alaska as part of Waltersdorff's sabbath rest through the Lilly Clergy Renewal Program in summer 2003.



and leading, these pastors returned from their sabbath rests with fresh visions for church renewal and the energy to lead the way.

Sabbath rest can also continue as a regular habit. The Annual Conference Guidelines for Sabbath Rest suggest that pastors can set aside a regular sabbath day (other than Sunday) during the week, in addition to taking a longer period of sabbath rest after four to seven years of service. The guidelines note that "The sabbath rest of the pastor is a good role model for the congregation."

As Marva Dawn writes in *Keeping the Sabbath Wholly*, there is a "great healing that can take place in our lives when we get into the rhythm of setting aside every seventh day all of our efforts to provide for our-

selves and make our way in the world. A great benefit of sabbath keeping is that we learn to let God take care of us—not by becoming passive and lazy, but in the freedom of giving up our feeble attempts to be God in our own lives." ❧

Audrey Osborne Mazur lives in Hanover, Pa., and is a member of Black Rock Church of the Brethren.

Brethren youth ministers were invited to a sabbath weekend in Maryland in 2002.



Walt Wiltschek

health clinic, tree nursery, and a project to raise laying hens.

"All this," he says, "with probably less than our church's annual budget. What can we do considering the resources we have? I was challenged . . . how seriously do we take our ministry here? What am I willing to do as a leader to help the church grow? How do I bring that challenge back? There's something about a challenge that makes faith grow."

Tim Speicher, pastor of Reading (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren, spent three months in sabbath rest after serving his congregation for 13 years. Tim attended Alban Institute seminars focused on spirituality and leadership development and set aside time for reading and relaxation. His sabbath rest coincided with his 20th wedding anniversary, and the grant included funds for the couple to go on a cruise.

His sabbath rest allowed him to spend time intentionally reflecting on his role in helping the church be effective in its ministry. Speicher notes, "Over a period of years one develops presumptions about how one goes about being a pastor." His time apart helped him to look at a refocusing of his energies and to challenge his own presumptions. He returned with a fresh outlook on ministry, ready to try out new roles and more effective styles of leadership.

During his sabbath rest, the dea-

cons at Reading instituted a Deacon of the Week program through which a deacon was always on call to provide care in emergencies. The deacons chose to continue this innovative program.

Christy Waltersdorff, pastor of the York Center congregation, Lombard, Ill., says of her sabbath rest that she "needed to take a step back and breathe, to reconnect with Christ and read the Bible."

She says she "felt some guilt about taking a sabbath rest" because she knows that people in her congregation work as hard or harder than she does, but she also realizes that most are not on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. She says her attitude was, "I know this is a gift from my congregation, and I'm not going to take it for granted."

Waltersdorff was at home during much of her sabbath time, resting, reading, taking a pottery class, and meeting with a spiritual director. She notes that this was the first time in the two years she has been married that she and her husband could really focus on each other without the pressures of a busy church schedule. She and her husband traveled to Alaska for two weeks and visited family in Pennsylvania for 10 days.

Coming back from her sabbath rest, she says, "I noticed a big change in my attitude. I feel I really have a new sense of purpose that has carried

through even a year later. I don't sweat the small stuff any more. I don't get the Saturday night anxiety any more."

GRANTS FOR 2004

Two Church of the Brethren congregations in Indiana have received grants from the Lilly Endowment's Clergy Renewal Program for Indiana Congregations this year.

Northview Church of the Brethren (Indianapolis) and pastor Phil and Louie Riemann received a grant of \$45,000, while Middlebury Church of the Brethren and pastor of Christian nurture Russell Jensen received a grant of \$35,429.

The Riemanns plan to take their "dream sabbatical" from late October 2004 to January 2005, with a balance of relaxation, spiritual growth, learning experiences, and time with family and friends, including time in Nigeria and Sudan. Jensen plans to spend next summer "reconnecting" with personal retreat, a reading course on missions and evangelism, and round-the-world travel.

A year of 'Co

Online approach offers more flexibility

This summer marks the first anniversary of a new development in graduate-level ministry education at Bethany Theological Seminary. Called "Connections," it is a program designed for students who seek quality ministry education but are unable to relocate to Bethany's main campus for a more traditional seminary experience.

In August 2003, 11 students completed an intensive course called "Introduction to Ministry Education" and became the first "cohort"—a group of students who

time in fall 2003, pairing with Russell Haitch, assistant professor of Christian education, who taught "Christian Education in the 21st-Century Church."

Why go to the extra work of offering an alternative route like Connections? Roop explains, "In our surveys prior to the 2000 strategic plan, the single most important issue to the Church of the Brethren by far was accessibility of graduate-level ministry training in a Church of the Brethren context. The changing demographics of those called to ministry in the Church of the Brethren required

Bethany to think of ways in which those who could not relocate for a residential program could have access to an M.Div. degree from Bethany."

Roop notes that careful planning was required in

It's funny how relational you can be on a computer. Because of the intentionality of creating some kind of relationship and community, we may be more connected than some residential students.

travel through components of Connections together—to begin the program. Nine of the 11 students are continuing for the second year of the program, and other new students have begun taking courses in anticipation of the next cohort, which will begin in August 2005.

After the introductory intensive last August, the cohort immediately began working through a sequence of eight core courses. Each semester, two of these courses are taught collaboratively in order to help students integrate their learning in related disciplines. Each pair of courses requires three weekend meetings on campus with online teaching and learning at other times.

Bethany president Eugene Roop has been a strong advocate of this more flexible option and was one of the first faculty to teach in the program. He taught "The Bible in the 21st-Century Church" for the first

order for Connections to build the sense of community central to Bethany's style of education. "Of all the challenges in setting up Connections, the ones related to community were perhaps the most difficult," he says. "How can we have effective distance education for ministry in a denomination whose understanding of the church as the body of Christ is grounded in a community studying the Bible together? How can we connect those studying for ministry so they can get to know one another, disagree with one another, and learn from one another, even if they are not studying together in classrooms?"

Fortunately, the first cohort has shown that a strong sense of community can be built among students living far apart (currently in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland, Michigan, New York, North

ABOUT CONNECTIONS

Students who finish the Connections core sequence in two years are on a pace to finish a master of divinity degree in six years of part-time study (up to eight years are allowed). For the remainder of their coursework, students can choose from a flexible mix of online courses, weekend intensives, and two-week intensives. Accreditation standards require students to take at least one-third of their courses at the main campus, but this requirement can be met through brief visits rather than long-term residency. The longest Connections students are required to stay on campus is two weeks.

Students do not have to enroll in a degree program in order to take individual courses, and many begin their seminary work as occasional students. Every year there are online courses that do not require visits to campus. Other courses meet in intensive formats designed for students who come from a distance. Information about course offerings and admissions is available by calling 800-287-8822 or by visiting Bethany's web site, www.bethanyseminary.edu.

Connections'

for ministry education

By Dan Ulrich

Marcia Shetler



From left, Karl Stone, Chris Zepp, and Dava Hensley are among those experiencing the first run of Bethany's "Connections" program.

Carolina, and Pennsylvania). Dava Hensley, a Connections student from Eden, N.C., remarks, "I would never have thought last year at this time that we would have the kind of relationships that we have developed. The two-week introductory intensive is the key to finding out what is going on with others in the cohort. You know that people are praying for you. You also know that faculty are spending extra time in order to relate with students online."

Jeanne Davies, associate pastor at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., says she would prefer to be a residential student if that option were possible for her. Even so, there were times last year when online conversations had the intensity and depth she appreciates in a face-to-face course.

"It's funny how relational you can be on a computer," she says. "Now when I read a message posted by someone else in the cohort, I can hear their voice. Because of the intentionality of creating some kind of relationship and community, we may be more connected than some residential students."

An important factor in the development of the cohort as a learning community has been a strong curricular emphasis on spiritual formation. Students wrote and discussed their spiritual autobiographies as part of the August intensive. They also agreed to share prayer concerns at least once a month on a confidential website created for that purpose.

In another course called "Exegeting the Call and Culture of Ministry," students were required to engage in devotional materials, common scripture readings, and prayer themes online. The instructor for that course, Tara Hornbacker, says she was impressed by the appreciation students expressed for the spiritual formation focus. "Students affirmed that component as helpful for discerning their own call to

ministry while engaging with others in seeking the mind of Christ," she says.

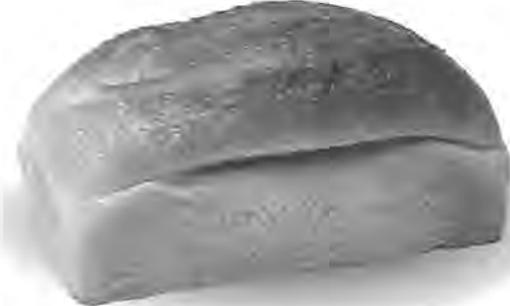
In addition to the challenges of growing spiritually and building a close-knit community, Connections students face the related challenge of finding enough time to study and meet other obligations. A typical 3-semester-hour graduate course can take 12 or more hours per week. Since Connections students typically remain in their current jobs and communities, careful management of time can be crucial. Time pressures were the main reason why two members of the original cohort decided not to continue for now. Two others were able to complete three courses per semester on top of full-time jobs, but they were the exception.

Like all students in seminary, Connections students need the prayerful support of their congregations, families, and friends. The congregation's support becomes even more essential when the student is serving as pastor. Allowing a pastor time to study is one of the most important investments a congregation can make for strengthening its ministry. In many cases, what the pastor is learning will produce dividends for the congregation right away. In other cases, it is laying a foundation for faithful ministry in the future.

Whether in spite of the challenges or because of them, Connections students have clearly learned a great deal during the program's first year. Davies describes her first year as "wonderful and transformative." She says, "I feel like God is giving me what I need."

Hensley concurs: "A lot of people have asked me how it has been. It has been wild, wacky, and wonderful! It has been the most challenging time that I have had ever in my life, yet I feel I have grown so much spiritually. I know God has put me there." ❧

Dan Ulrich is associate dean and director of distributed education for Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.



Low-carb

By Frank Ramirez

More than 30 years ago someone handed me a book that seemed to have the answer to the greatest problem facing people like me—how to lose weight. The book promised a miracle cure with no pain. Eat all you want, and lose more than you can imagine.

Let me emphasize that I am not a medical doctor, and this article contains no medical advice. I am, however, an expert in weight loss and weight gain, because I've had plenty of both over the course of my life. As an adult I've weighed as much as 300 and as little as 180. For the past 20 years I've tended to occupy a 30-pound swing zone between 190 and 220. And every time I let my guard down, I gain weight. Rapidly.

So back when I was in college I felt like I was handed the secret to the universe. The book told me I could eat as much as I wanted, stuff myself, gorge myself, as long as I avoided the evil that threatened the universe as we know it—carbohydrates, otherwise known as “carbs.”

I could eat beef, chicken, pork, eggs, bacon, and still more beef, chicken, pork, eggs, and bacon. I just couldn't eat bread, tortillas, cake, and most vegetables. Ever.

One thing we dieters hate is deprivation. I'm one of those people who eat only on those occasions when I'm happy, depressed, relaxed, stressed, celebrating, disappointed, on special occasions, church holidays, and in ordinary time. I hate to go without. So after I devoured

this book I decided to give it a try. I was attending La Verne College (as it was called in those days), and a table-full of us decided our cafeteria eating would include a hefty meat course and no green stuff.

The first day was great. I never felt so full, yet so virtuous. And it wasn't long before it began to work. My pants were loose. Was this great or what? No pain, plenty of gain.

I lasted a week. I just couldn't do it. I felt sick all the time. And I felt deprived. Even though I thought of myself as a meat-eater in those days, I soon learned it was easier to eat less of everything than to cut out everything of something. Abundance is something more, I learned, than simply stuffing yourself silly. It's having enough of everything.

A low-carb diet works because of malnutrition. If you deny the body something essential, it begins to waste away. It's not meant to be a permanent lifestyle.

Since then I've learned the true secret to weight loss: Eat less, exercise more. Sorry, it's that simple. In order for this to work for me I belong to an organization that practices this as a lifestyle, because I've learned I'm not a solitary dieter. I need to be present and accountable to others for this to really work.

I'm not a solitary Christian, either. I need to be present and accountable to the body of Christ in order for my faith to work. And I refuse to be a “low-carb” Christian.

Toward the end of the first Christian century there

Pontius' Puddle



Christians

Faith is all about abundance, not deprivation

were those who claimed to have special “knowledge” of Jesus. They were called Gnostics, from the Greek word for knowledge, *gnosis*. These Gnostics believed Jesus was all spirit and no flesh, that he only appeared to die on the cross, and that the resurrected Jesus was spirit only. Our own best destiny, therefore, was to renounce physical things of this world and embrace the spiritual, in part by acquiring strange and arcane knowledge.

The resurrection stories as presented in the gospels, though, make the point that Jesus ate with his disciples, almost as if to dispel this picture of a “spiritual” Lord. The body he wears is different in some difficult-to-quantify way, but it’s definitely Jesus, and he’s eating food.

Sometimes that’s the most recognizable thing about Jesus. In the story of Jesus on the road to Emmaus the two disciples who walk with him are so distraught about his death that they don’t “see” Jesus even though he’s walking alongside them. It’s not until they insist on showing him hospitality, and Jesus broke bread, that they recognized him.

They recognized Jesus in the breaking of the bread. The language is clearly reminiscent of the love feast, the meal we share together in remembrance of Jesus’ sacrifice. Sorry, but there are carbs involved here. In both Luke’s and John’s gospels, Jesus is seen eating with the believers, and that’s where is he most recognizable.

In Luke 24:42 we read, “They gave him a piece of broiled fish. . . .” and in John 21:13 the gospel says, “Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish.” It’s a balanced diet, protein and carbohydrates, and a new life.

The life of the resurrection is meant to begin now, and that life is full of abundance. God doesn’t seem to want us to miss out on any of it. Worship, prayer, love of nature, joy in activities, reading, writing, sowing, gardening, reaping, cooking, eating—it’s all good.

Indeed, at the center of the Christian life was a table where male and female, rich and poor, Jew and Gentile, slave and free, met to break the same bread that Jesus blessed in the presence of the disciples at Emmaus. This is what was so very threatening to the empire of Rome. Theirs was a society of separations, where people kept to their place, acknowledged

Caesar as Lord, and practiced stability. The Jesus life is one where we come together at one table, proclaim Jesus as Lord, and turn the world upside-down.

The low-carb Christian wants to eliminate a good deal of the goodness of life. But the unbalanced life breeds fanatics, the sort who think the death or destruction of “enemies” advances God’s cause. They strap on blinders and see one thing and one thing only. They are malnourished, without perspective, unable to appreciate the blankets of winter, the renewal of spring, the unabashed songs of love in Song of Songs, and the tempering reminders of Ecclesiastes that to everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven.

The world offers pain, alienation, despair, and hopelessness. God offers pleasures, marvels, wonders, joy—meat and potatoes, asparagus and bread. Putting God first means getting it all back, and then some.

This spring I worshiped with Brethren from across the country at a meeting with Brethren in Puerto Rico, and was struck by the fact that barriers of language, background, and border don’t seem to matter too much when we come together as sisters and brothers, one in Christ. What leaven for the whole loaf!

Others want to talk about the money we don’t have. I’m astounded by the grace and goods that we have in great abundance.

How could we have failed to see it? That’s what the disciples asked after they walked with Jesus for seven miles and never knew it was him, until the breaking of the bread. And why does it take communion, the washing of the feet, the sharing of the meal, the bread and the cup, to remind those who come to the table that we are one people? How can we have failed to see in our brothers and sisters the bright light of Jesus who is walking with us always, who has never left us, and who will be with us always, even until the end of the age?

Bread, carbohydrates, the staff of life—they are drawn from many fields, ground together by Christ, baked into one loaf, to sustain us, enrich us, fulfill us. What goodness, what mercy! When we break the bread of Christ we can see Jesus, and live abundantly. 

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



Cheryl Brunbaugh-Cayford

From left, Stephen Reid, academic dean of Bethany Theological Seminary, converses with Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, at the May planning session for a denomination-wide consultation on ecclesiology while Annual Conference secretary Fred Swartz looks on.

Planners refine process, goals for ecclesiology consultation

A unique group of Church of the Brethren leaders met May 12-13 at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., for a thoughtful and, at moments, passionate planning session for a denomination-wide consultation on ecclesiology, or the nature of the church. The broad intent of the work is to help bring about renewal. The consultation was initiated in 2003 with a statement from district executives identifying fragmentation in the denomination and calling for conversation "concerning who, whose, and what we are."

The planning group, a gathering of church leaders that may not occur in any other setting, includes district executives and representatives of Annual Conference and Conference agencies, and is not consistently the same group of individuals. This was the third meeting for the group, which wrestled with practical matters such as how to ensure participation by the diversity of the denomination, how to identify an evocative theme, how to acquire funding, how to train facilitators for the discussion, and how to structure a launch event for the consultation.

"We want everybody to be part of the conversation," Southern Ohio district executive Mark Flory Steury, who chairs the group, said

during a sometimes heated discussion of how to represent the denomination's diversity. Related worries for the group were that Brethren may not share their excitement for the conversation, that the consultation be a constructive dialogue rather than a forum for polarizing issues, and that it result in renewal and change.

The group is asking the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee that the launch event be a day at the 2006 Conference in which ordinary business is set aside. Conference was identified as a forum to ensure as broad a representation of the denomination as possible. If the request for Conference time cannot be met, a separate launch event will be held. The process will continue with regional events and a culminating celebration in 2007. A key component will be a study guide, prepared for the launch event and then made available to the denomination. Districts will be invited to use the consultation theme for their 2006 conferences.

Ron and Harriet Finney agreed to be volunteer coordinators for the regional events and for a training event for those who will facilitate the discussions. The Finneys are retired from leadership in South/Central Indiana District, and Harriet Finney was moderator of the 2003 Conference.

"People have been in prayer for so long in so many ways for the church. I believe this is part of the answer," said Ron Finney. "We're going to do something and put it into God's hands."

Walt Wiltschek



Bethany Theological Seminary staff member Amy Gall Ritchie joins in an upbeat worship celebration at this year's new church planting conference held at the seminary.



Members of Hispanic Church of the Brethren congregations shared an energetic gift of music with participants at the 2004 new church planting conference.

Walt Willschek

who works with new church leader development in Indianapolis.

The week also included "house church" worship services, workshops, stories of Brethren church plants, presentation of an upcoming new church development manual, opportunities for spiritual direction, and group discussion.

Roy Winter



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Older Adult Unit 259 held orientation in New Windsor, Md., April 25-May 7. The seven participants all decided to take an assignment in the near future. Volunteers, hometowns or churches, and project assignments are as follows: Front row: Samuel Bowman, BVS staff; David Ort, Altoona, Pa., to Brother David Darst Center, Chicago. Second row: Alice Petry, orientation leader; Carolyn Graham, Fellowship Church of the Brethren, Martinsburg, W.Va., to CooperRiis, Mill Spring, N.C.; Phyllis Ingold, Spring Creek Church of the Brethren, Hershey, Pa., to Meeting Ground, Elkton, Md. Third row: Larry Petry, orientation leader; Karen Roberts, BVS staff; Marilyn Schirk, Ontario, Calif., to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C. Fourth row: Edgar Graham, Fellowship Church of the Brethren, Martinsburg, W.Va., to CooperRiis, Mill Spring, N.C.; Frank Kane, Ontario, Calif., to Center on Conscience and War, Washington, D.C.; Roger Ingold, Spring Creek Church of the Brethren, Hershey, Pa., to Meeting Ground, Elkton, Md. For more details on BVS, visit www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org.

Church planting event builds 'deep roots, strong wings'

"Deep roots, strong wings"—the phrase formed a repeating chorus in a song composed by Jonathan Shively and Tara Hornbacker for this year's Church of the Brethren church planting training event. The event itself, sponsored by the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and held May 17-21 at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., also echoed the themes: being rooted in heritage while unafraid to soar into new horizons and possibilities. About 85 people attended the conference, the second to be hosted by the Brethren Academy.

Jay Steele, a member of the General Board's New Church Development Advisory Committee, opened the week with a keynote worship message. Steele asked rhetorically whether it mattered for new congregations to be distinctly Brethren. "Spirituality is a 21st-century term for pietism," Steele said. "The Pietist movement has been reborn. People want it, and we have what they want." Steele also heralded the Brethren qualities of peace-making, community, and service as being particularly relevant for today's world. "I just passionately believe that we have a unique message that speaks to some people and is needed," he added, "one that people are looking for."

Bethany dean Steve Reid picked up on the Brethren angle the following night, preaching from the book of Ezekiel. Reid lifted up the need to confront the "brutal facts" facing the denomination while never losing hope because "God is not done with us." Other featured speakers included Bob Logan of Coach Net Inc., Jeff Wright of the Center for Anabaptist Leadership, and Nadine Burton,

BRETHRENSPEAK

“A young couple called him a ‘burning bush’ in a children’s talk the Sunday after he was there. . . . Don is just that, and he has left little bush fires all along his Walk.”

—Ann Stover of Quinter, Kan., on the Kansas leg of Brethren Volunteer Service worker Don Vermilyea’s “Walk Across America”

Don Vermilyea completes 10,000th mile of his walk

“We’re calling it 10,000,” Don Vermilyea said as he completed 9,999 ³/₄ miles of his Walk Across America. A Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) worker on a mission to connect Brethren gathering places and witness to his faith by walking to each Church of the Brethren congregation in the United States, Vermilyea has been walking since Feb. 2, 2002. On June 15 his 10,000th mile took him through the door of a country church like many of those he has visited in the wide-open west—Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren, located on a gravel road three miles from York, N.D.

Vermilyea’s walk is sponsored by BVS and the General Board’s Brethren Witness/Washington Office. When he visits a congregation, Vermilyea offers to preach, teach, or simply join in worship. Host congregations provide housing and simple meals, and congregation members are invited to walk along for a few yards or a few miles. Vermilyea takes donations to a walk fund that benefits the General Board’s Global Food Crisis Fund and the Emergency Disaster Fund.

The walk challenges Vermilyea with times of discouragement, loneliness, and weakness, as well as times when God gives him new strength.

“When I look at it one day at a time, one step at a time, it’s easier to deal with,” he said in a phone interview. “Sometimes I say to myself, why am I doing this?”

That kind of honesty is why the walk works, he said. Vermilyea doesn’t tailor his message—about the need for peace and justice in this world—to the different kinds of congregations he visits or the different types of people he meets on the way. His basic message is clear. “God is truly great,” he said. “We just need to pay attention.”

Vermilyea started walking in Tucson, Ariz.; headed west to California; north to Oregon, Washington, and Idaho, where he spent the winter of 2002; crossed the Rocky Mountains in summer 2003; and visited congregations of the Plains states, where he continues to walk this summer. “I predicted the walk would take five years and five- to 10,000 miles,” he said. “It’s going to be a few more,” he added, as he looked forward to the next steps on a journey that eventually will take him all the way to the East Coast.

From Pleasant Valley he planned to visit Prairie Peace Fellowship in Surrey, N.D., then take two weeks to walk to Big Sky American Baptist/Brethren Church in Froid, Mont., and then walk 700 miles to Worthington (Minn.) Church of the Brethren. Then he will head south again, hoping to be in south Texas in January 2005.

Vermilyea retired his sixth pair of shoes, to be auctioned off at Northern Plains District conference on the same day his fifth pair—retired in McPherson, Kan.—were to be auctioned at Western Plains District conference. “The more they get worn out, the more money they’ll bring,” he said.

“I ask for your prayers,” he said to Brethren everywhere. “This walk works by my relationship with the Lord and the prayers of others.” For more information, call 800-323-8039 ext. 239 to hear Vermilyea’s telephone updates or visit www.brethren.org and click on keyword “Walk Across America.”

Personnel moves

• **John and Patty Crumley**, mission staff of the General Board in Nigeria, have completed their term of service and have returned to the United States.

The Crumleys began their work in Nigeria in 1999. Patty taught music at Hillcrest School in the town of Jos, and John filled a variety



Dan McFadden

Don Vermilyea completed 10,000 miles of his Walk Across America June 15. Most recently he has been walking to the far-flung Church of the Brethren congregations of the Northern Plains.

of mission support positions including the tutoring of students and working on buildings and grounds projects at Hillcrest. For the past year John also has taught at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria.

• **Leland W. Flora**, director of admissions for Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., resigned June 30. He served Bethany just under one year. Prior

to his work at the seminary, Flora was a teacher, assistant principal, and for 27 years a personnel supervisor for the Prince William County, Va., public schools.

• Bethany has appointed two associates in its Institutional Advancement office. **Theresa Eshbach**, who earlier this year announced her retirement as executive director of Institutional Advancement, will continue in

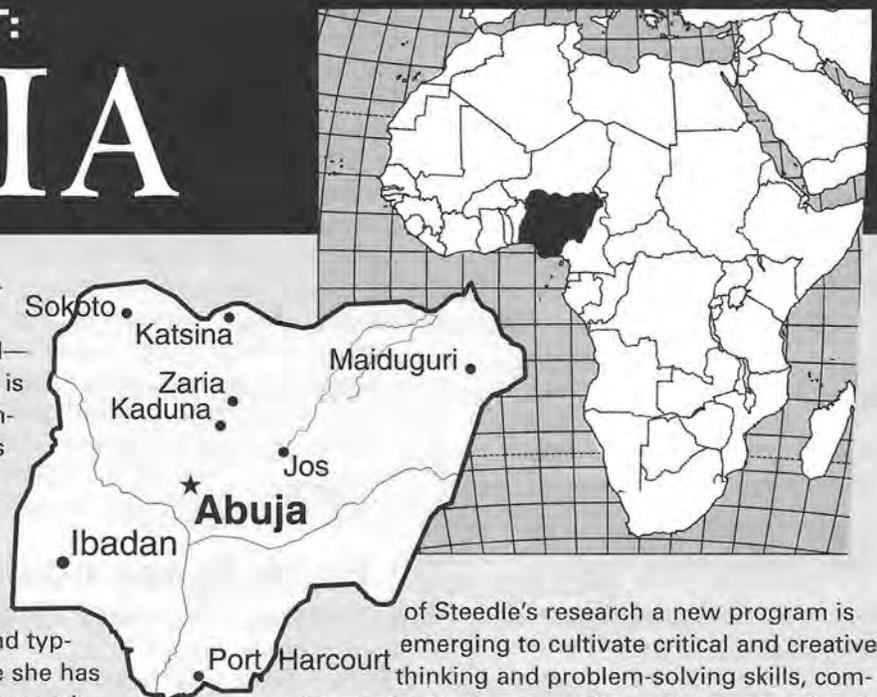
this new capacity half-time, working from her home in York County, Pa. **Fred Bernhard**, retiring as pastor of Oakland Church of the Brethren in Gettysburg, Ohio, will also join Bethany's staff, working from his home in Arcanum. Bernhard and Eshbach will serve for two years as Bethany completes its "Inspired by the Spirit, Educating for Ministry" financial campaign.

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: NIGERIA

A new emphasis on basic economics and business education for Nigerian women is beginning at the Women's Development Center of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). The new emphasis is made possible through the work of Nancy Steedle, a member of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, who is serving as community development staff for the General Board and as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker.

As of this spring, 65 women were enrolled at the center run by Zumuntar Mata (ZME), EYN's Women's Fellowship. Steedle reported in a letter to mission supporters. The center offers courses in sewing, knitting, and typing. Steedle is the first mission staff at the center, where she has worked for a year with the principal—who teaches literacy and typing—and two instructors of sewing and knitting.

After several months studying the Hausa language and spending time at the center, Steedle began a research project to help improve services. She interviewed each student, asking her reasons for coming to the center, what she learned, and future plans, and identified the problem of women who came to learn a skill to earn income but left without a plan for using the skill. Out



of Steedle's research a new program is emerging to cultivate critical and creative thinking and problem-solving skills, combined with basic economics and business education.

"I want the women to be able to think critically about their abilities and the resources in their village and then to have the tools to identify viable small-enterprise opportunities and start a business," Steedle said. She has been asked to meet with district ZME groups interested in development projects or in assistance with already existing projects.

"God is certainly at work in my life and in this place," Steedle wrote. "I see it in the efforts of the women at the center, some of whom have labored for years on their farms to save money to pay the center's school fees."

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$20,000 for an Emergency Response project in Poquoson, Va.
- \$15,000 for displaced people in the Darfur region of Sudan
- \$10,000 for a community empowerment and sensitization program in Sierra Leone
- \$10,000 for a Church World Service appeal following severe weather across the US
- \$5,000 for Disaster Child Care projects in Nebraska and West Virginia
- \$5,000 for an Emergency Response flood recovery project in Greenbrier County, W.Va.



Merv Keeney

UPCOMINGEVENTS

- Aug. 1-7 Senior high work-camp**, Pine Ridge, S.D.
- Aug. 2-8 Senior high work-camp**, North Fort Myers, Fla.
- Aug. 4-8 Junior high work-camp**, Dayton, Ohio
- Aug. 4-8 Western Regional Youth Conference**, San Francisco, Calif.
- Aug. 6-8 Northern Ohio District conference**, Ashland, Ohio
- Aug. 6-8 Northern Plains District conference**, Cedar Falls, Iowa
- Aug. 8-14 Historic Peace Churches conference**, Nairobi, Kenya
- Aug. 8-14 Senior high work-camp, Reynosa**, Mexico
- Aug. 9-15 Senior high work-camp, Gould Farm**, Mass.
- Aug. 9-15 Senior high work-camp**, Keyser, W. Va.
- Aug. 12-15 Michigan District conference**, Hastings, Mich.
- Aug. 14 Midwest Peacemakers Conference**, Union, Ohio
- Aug. 22-Sept. 1 Brethren Volunteer Service/Brethren Revival Fellowship** Unit 261 orientation, New Windsor, Md.
- Sept. 4 Brethren Press** fall curriculum quarter begins
- Sept. 6-10 National Older Adult Conference VII**, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

Church membership shows largest decline in three years

Church of the Brethren membership showed its largest decline in three years in 2003, according to year-end figures in the Church of the Brethren *Yearbook* published by Brethren Press. The denomination reported a net loss of 1,363 members last year, a decline of just over 1 percent.

Official Church of the Brethren membership in the US and Puerto Rico now stands at 132,481. The 2003 decline follows losses of 984 members in 2002, 1,051 in 2001, and 2,425 in 2000. The Church of the Brethren last showed an annual net gain in membership in 1974 (a small figure that some attribute to a statistical fluke), but the overall decline dates to the early 1960s.

Fifteen of the denomination's 23 districts reported net losses in membership, while eight were higher. Declines were more intense than increases, however, with six districts reporting triple-figure losses. West Marva District had the largest numerical and percentage net gain, up 154 members (2.66 percent). Shenandoah had the second-largest numerical gain, adding 65 members, while Atlantic Southeast—which had the largest decline a year earlier—recorded the second-largest percentage gain, up 1.7 percent (net gain of 33).

Atlantic Northeast District, the denomination's

largest, had the greatest numerical net loss in 2003. The district reported a decrease of 442 members, a drop of about 2.85 percent. Idaho District, the smallest in the denomination, grew smaller with the biggest percentage decline at 11.8 percent (a net loss of 83 members).

The total number of Church of the Brethren congregations in the US and Puerto Rico also continued a downward trend, dropping from 1,032 to 1,025. A number of new churches were planted, but not enough to offset the number closing. The number of fellowships and projects remained steady, at 32 and 5, respectively. Total reported average worship attendance was down about 5,000 members from a year earlier, at 67,767 per week.

In some good news, total per-capita giving rose from \$41 to \$44 per person. Giving was up to all special-purpose funds and to all agencies except for gifts to the General Ministries Fund of the General Board, which fell about 4 percent.

Yearbook figures are based on data provided by congregations that turn in updated statistical reports; about 70 percent did so for 2002. The totals do not count overseas membership in the Dominican Republic, Brazil, and the large Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)—which is now larger than the US church at about 150,000 members and growing.

On Earth Peace board meets on theme 'Sown, Grown, Living'

The On Earth Peace (OEP) board of directors and staff met April 16-17 at New Windsor, Md. With the theme "Sown, Grown, and Living," the group took time to reflect on how they, as individuals and as an organization, sow seeds of peace while reaping the fruits of reconciliation.

Plans for OEP's 30th anniversary celebration were outlined, including four regional weekend events that will include two concerts and a full-day workshop each weekend. Board and staff also assessed response to the Annual Conference call to be a "living peace church." Staff described OEP programs and projects with special emphasis given to the Organizing for Peace event; participation in the ongoing ecclesiology consultation; an 18-month conflict transformation leadership program for a group of managers at the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, that is a prototype for future trainings; and the announcement of the 2004 Youth Peace Travel Team.

The personnel committee is working on a three-year evaluation of executive directors and the organization, part of a process in which the first-year evaluation is by board and staff members, the second year by directors and staff of other Annual Conference agencies, and the third year by a wide spectrum of people and groups throughout the denomination. The committee currently is creating an evaluation tool for the third year. The nominating committee presented the resignation of Charles Kwon from the board and appointed Verdina Lee of Kent, Ohio, to complete his term.

The executive committee reviewed organizational costs for board meetings in comparison to other Church of the Brethren agencies, and determined OEP is comparable to or somewhat under the level of expense of other agencies. The committee also explored how to build stronger connections with Latino/a communities in the Church of the Brethren.

Advancement committee chair Ken Frantz led the board in "Equipping the Development Tool Box," to create a list of talking points that help people understand OEP's mission and work.

A working group brought a draft of position descriptions for the board as a whole and for board members. The board worked in small groups to consider the position descriptions and identify competencies needed for effective board work. The working group will continue to develop descriptions to bring back to the board at its fall meeting.

Walt Witschiel

ONCAMPUS

Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

For the first time in its history, Bridgewater College won the Old Dominion Athletic Conference Men's Commissioner Cup. The cup is presented to the school with the best overall performance in the 10 men's championship sports sponsored by the conference. Bridgewater edged Roanoke College for the title by 3.5 points.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Six Elizabethtown students are participating in Summer Service this year, spending 10 weeks of service at one of more than 50 community organizations. In return, they get a \$2,500 grant for the next year's college expenses. A Lilly Endowment Theological Exploration of Vocation grant funds the program.

Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata students Christopher Spiese, a 2004 graduate from York, Pa., and Marsha Loth, a junior from Hollidaysburg, Pa., had their chemistry research project displayed at the Rayburn House Office Building in Washington, D.C., this spring.

University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

La Verne president Steve Morgan announced June 25, that, following an extensive review process, it was decided to discontinue the university's men's volleyball program, effective immediately. The move came after La Verne experienced a shortfall in tuition revenue during the 2003-2004 academic year, necessitating a "reallocation of expenditures."

Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

Students in Manchester's Accounting and Business Case Studies class formed a class-run, non-for-profit business called "O'Chet," which spent spring semester marketing and selling discount cards, cookie mixes, and cleverly worded T-shirts. Students also contributed 463 volunteer hours to area youth—serving at The Firehouse youth events site. A total of \$4,449, all of O'Chet's proceeds, was donated to The Firehouse.

McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

Shawn Flory Replogle, co-pastor at McPherson Church of the Brethren, has been appointed campus pastor at the college for the 2004-05 academic year. Replogle's appointment is the result of a congregational decision to release one of its co-pastors from part of their current responsibilities to help support the campus ministry program.



From left, interns Lee Smith, Seth Flory, Jeff McAvoy, and Meagan Harlow participate in an evening worship time. Interns took turns leading worship during orientation.

Record number of interns train for Ministry Summer Service

A record number of interns met in Richmond, Ind., June 5-11 for this year's Ministry Summer Service (MSS) orientation. Some late additions raised the total number of young adults participating to 17, the highest total in the program's nine years. The program, sponsored by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministries office, gives young adults ages 18-24 an opportunity to explore ministry options under the guidance of a mentor. Interns serve for nine weeks in congregational or other church-related settings.

Ministry Office director Mary Jo Flory-Steury and Youth/Young Adult Ministries director Chris Douglas led many of this year's sessions. Faculty from Bethany Theological Seminary, Southern Ohio District executive Mark Flory Steury, and other denominational staff provided additional leadership. Topics addressed included Brethren heritage, personality styles, ministerial ethics, and church polity. The group also worshiped at Richmond Church of the Brethren, visited Bethany's campus, and took turns leading devotions. Mentors arrived for the final three days of the orientation, getting to know their interns and building plans for the summer. The week concluded with a commissioning service.

Ten female and seven male interns are participating this year. Ten are serving in congregations; others are working with camps, on the Youth Peace Travel Team, with youth workcamps, in the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, and with Compañeros en Ministerio of Tijuana, Mexico.

More than 100 young adults have been part of MSS since it began in 1996. It now faces the challenge of securing more support so the program can continue. Underwritten by an individual donor for its first eight years, the program now requires other funding. General Board staff are seeking donors and funding resources.

Bits and pieces

• Fourteen young adults from across the US spent Memorial Day weekend at Camp Emmaus in Mount Morris, Ill., at a "Raise Your Voice" retreat offered by New Community Project, a Brethren-related nonprofit organization. The event was a leadership development experience to equip young adults for advocacy within and beyond the church on issues of justice and care for the Earth. Leadership was provided by Don Vermilyea, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker on a "Walk Across America"; New Community Project director David Radcliff; and Brethren musician Joseph Helfrich. The Ecumenical Eco-Justice Network was a co-sponsor, and funds for participants' travel were provided by Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren

'Miracle': A glimpse into history

When it comes to the movie *Miracle*, the facts are clear. We beat the Russians in hockey at the 1980 Winter Olympics. You can look it up. The scores are etched in stone, and no one can change them.



FRANK RAMIREZ

But goals and saves don't tell the whole story. History, after all, is not only the study of what actually happened, but the interpretation, as well. It's not just what the facts are, it's what they mean.

You can make the point that whoever controls the past has at least a say in what happens in the present. Take Brethren history, for example. Folks on both sides of an issue cite

the same historical figures as well as scripture texts to back up their arguments.

One of the best examples is the Brethren history by education pioneer Martin Grove Brumbaugh. Brumbaugh won the race to write the first real history of the Brethren, and in the process shaped the past and the future. He claimed all the trappings of the "progressive" movement—Sunday schools, higher education, and a fully operational denominational press—were hallmarks of the colonial Brethren. Only the trauma of the Revolutionary War had sent reeling Brethren into a tail-spin in which they retreated from their progressive past.

Brumbaugh's vision clearly illuminated the path towards the future, as progressive Brethren pursued an activist agenda that included the creation of the Brethren Service Commission, Brethren Volunteer Service, and Heifer Project International, along with active participation in the founding of Church World Service, the United Nations, the National and World Council of Churches, and CROP. It's a grand story, not tarnished in the least by the fact that at least part of Brumbaugh's history was manufactured out of whole cloth.

That brings me back to *Miracle*, an excellent family movie. The victory of the American hockey team provided a great lift to many people. However, I hope that families who buy or rent the DVD or video will take the time to discuss what they see.

When the Americans upset the Russians, the Cold War was hot. The Soviet Union had just invaded Afghanistan, and no one knew at the time that this action would prove to be an even greater quagmire to the Russians than the

WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

"What makes *Miracle* so good—and so accessible, even to non-sports fans—is the way the story is framed in the political and social context of its time."

—Paul Clinton, CNN

"The film ends on a familiar, rousing note of triumph, which is bound to move most audiences with its message of perseverance and belief in one's dreams."

—Claudia Puig, USA Today

Vietnam war was for Americans. Islamic fundamentalism was thrusting itself into the attention of Westerners when American diplomats were taken hostage by Iranian militants. Gas not was not only expensive but sometimes non-existent. The self-esteem of Americans was very, very low.

Against that backdrop, a plucky American hockey team made up of amateurs beat overwhelming odds and defeated all comers, including a Soviet team that was amateur in name only. The Russian squad was composed of full-time professionals who regularly beat National Hockey League squads. (It is sometimes forgotten that the whole idea of amateur athletics involved rewriting the past, too. Those of the wealthy class sought to exclude working-class athletes from competition, but the competitors in the ancient Greek Olympics were, of course, professionals.)

It's important to remind younger viewers the film takes place in a world that no longer exists. There is no longer a Cold War between two equally matched superpowers. The people of the United States are no longer lovable underdogs. Having stepped away from mutually assured destruction and a confrontation between "-isms," we have re-entered the world that existed before 1917, in which nationalism balkanizes states and terrorism is the weapon of choice for disaffected peoples.

The world is a better place without a Soviet empire, but it is still a dangerous place. The old answers—bigger bombs, fantastic weapons systems that border on fantasy, and an "Us-Versus-Them" mentality—must give way to a new way of looking at things.

In a world turned inside out, we need the upside-down kingdom of Jesus. Jesus provides the only answers that make sense in every historical era. **W**

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



ABOUT THE MOVIE

When released: Originally hit movie screens in February; DVD/video was released in May.

Rating: PG. **Running time:** 135 minutes.

Produced by: Walt Disney Pictures

Noteworthy: Rather than use professionally trained actors, director Gavin O'Connor decided to use "hockey players that could act" to play the members of the US Olympic team.

Pontius' Puddle

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.



"A Place Apart" rings true

I must respond to Paul Grout's article on "A Place Apart" in the May issue.

He is right about what has to be relearned. He is right about empty value systems, and the pseudo-life of the world. We have sold too much of our soul to the values of this culture.

Jesus invites us to go beyond our fears and live fully alive as Christians. Brother Paul's words always give me hope for the church.

Elsa Littman
Walkerton, Ind.

'Brethren' should return to roots

I would like to add my voice to those who want a new name for the Church of the Brethren. No, I don't think our current name is "old-fashioned." To the contrary, I think our current name isn't old-fashioned enough!

You see, about 26 years ago I spent my junior year in Germany with Brethren Colleges Abroad, and made two visits to Schwarzenau, where our church was founded. On the first visit, when I saw the sign for "Alexander-Mack-Strasse" (Street), something began to nag at me. But what was wrong?

Several months later, on my second visit, I figured it out: The sign calls Alexander Mack the "Begründer der Kirche der Brüder." That's "Founder of the Church of the Brothers." It doesn't say Brethren, it says Brothers. The light bulb went on: There is NO word for Brethren in German! It doesn't translate back again!

English has two words, "Brethren" and "Brothers," but German, like nearly all other languages, only has one word,

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**April 1-3, 2005
Goshen, Indiana**

A national Church of the Brethren missions conference to energize and equip ourselves to faithfully share Christ's love with the world.

Mark your calendars,
and watch for more information.

The word our founders did use is "Gemeinschaft," which means "community," "partnership," or "association." All of these words refer to individuals gathered around a common purpose. But did you notice? Not one of them means "Brethren" or "family."

"Brethren." So we couldn't start using the word Brethren until after we went English!

Actually, a better German word is "Geschwister." It means "brothers and sisters," and comes from Old High German. And "Geschwisterliebe" (or "geschwisterliche Liebe") means "love (as) between brothers and sisters." Perfect! The obvious Brethren-type word that the early German Baptists would choose. And yet they didn't choose it. Family wasn't how they thought of themselves.

The word our founders did use is "Gemeinschaft," which means "community," "partnership," or "association." All of these words refer to individuals gathered around a common purpose. But did you notice? Not one of them means

"Brethren" or "family." Hasn't anybody checked a German dictionary lately?

When we "went English," our German "Gemeinschaft" became a "fraternity." It is from "fraternity," I think, that we began to be called "Brethren," and eventually got the idea of being "just like family." But much of this is due to semantic drift, and to theological drift. And just look at how much we have drifted!

Today, because we have become "Brethren," because we have become "just like family," we are stuck with each other—even when we violently disagree. Any family-systems counselor will tell you this is spiritually unhealthy. Better we return to our pre-Brethren, early German Baptist ideal, of people gathered together

Today, the average American will...

- ◆ Drive 30 miles
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- ◆ Eat 12 ounces of meat, requiring 5,000 gallons of water to raise
- ◆ Use 2# of paper—10 times the world average
- ◆ Live in a house 2 times larger than our European counterparts (*mais oui!*)
- ◆ Draw on 3 times more of the earth than is our fair share

All this in a world where 1 out of 5 of our neighbors doesn't have clean water or enough paper to do their homework.

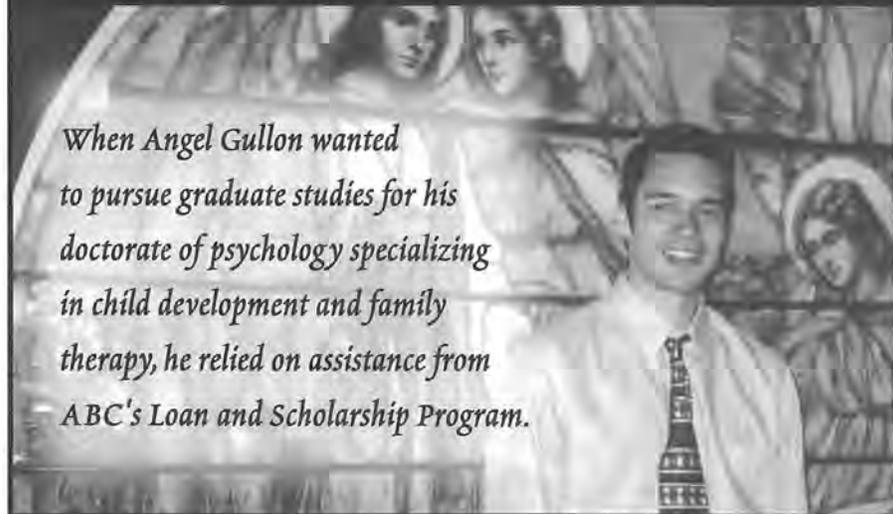
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for a common purpose. It's our choice. Remember, you can choose your team, but you're stuck with your relatives.

Bill Bowser
Martinsburg, Pa.

What about violence of abortion?

I read with interest in the June 2004 issue of MESSENGER, "From the Publisher," Wendy McFadden's commentary regarding the war in Iraq.

She states, "For centuries, the Brethren have believed that war is inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus." I find it extremely peculiar that so strong a pacifist church remains silent regarding the daily murder of innocent children in our country.

Does the church consider abortion to be consistent with the teachings of Jesus?

Jack Kruppenbach
New Holland, Pa.

Editor's note: The most recent Annual Conference statement on abortion was adopted in 1984. It can be viewed online at www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/84Abortion.htm. [See also March 2004 Letters.]

Truth is found in scripture

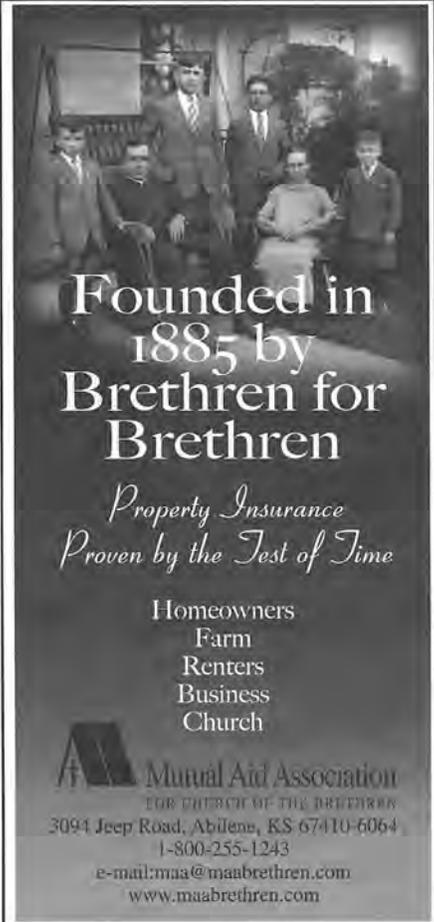
I am responding to the thoughts of Ron Martin-Adkins from the April 2004 MESSENGER.

I have no problems with Mr. Martin-Adkins' choice not to see the movie, *The Passion of the Christ*. I do have a problem with his statement that the death of Christ was unnecessary for the forgiveness of sin. I believe that according to the divine revelation in the Scriptures, Jesus is fully God who became fully human that he might offer his blood as payment for our sin. I base this belief on many scriptures and list but a few for your meditation.

In 1 Cor. 15:3 we have these words: "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures." In 1 John 1:7 we read that the blood of Jesus cleanses all from sin.

John 12:23-36 contains a clear statement from Jesus himself, to the fact that he laid down his life willingly so that man could experience salvation.

In Heb. 10:19-20 we are told we enter heaven by the blood of Jesus. Rom. 5:9 states that we have been justified by the blood of Jesus. Rev. 5:9, speaking of



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The Bible clearly states that the death of Christ was necessary that we might spend eternity in heaven. Why God allowed it to happen with such violence, I cannot understand.

Jesus as the lamb of God, says, "Because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men from God from every tribe and language and people and nation."

The scriptures in this letter are but scratching the surface on who Jesus is and why he came. The Bible clearly states that the death of Christ was necessary that we might spend eternity in heaven. Why God allowed it to happen with such violence, I cannot understand, but I do know that it was prophesied how it would happen. May we all be daily in the Scriptures asking God to show us truth.

Sandra Brandt
Palmyra, Pa.

CORRECTIONS

Staff in the Dominican Republic have discovered that Anastasia Buena is actually not the first woman moderator of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic, as was reported to MESSENGER for the June 2004 issue (p. 22). Angelica Maria Berigüete Jimenez, pastor of the Los Guaricanos congregation, was actually the first woman to serve as moderator. Buena is, however, the first moderator of Haitian ancestry to serve, which Dominican mission coordinators Irv and Nancy Heishman said "is significant in this culture and for this church." Buena had hoped to bring greetings in person to Annual Conference this summer, but she was unable to get a visa from the US Consulate.

CLASSIFIED ADS

Part-time pastor sought. Peaceful, southeast Minnesota Root River Church of the Brethren, rural Preston, MN, is seeking a part-time pastor. Housing is available. Interested applicants should contact: Kathy Schoppers 507-765-3646.

McPherson College seeks an individual to fill the position of Director of Development, a full-time position responsible for fundraising and relationship building on behalf of McPherson College. Travel will be required. Interested persons should submit letter of application, resume', and references to Michael Schneider, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, McPherson College, P.O. Box 1402, McPherson, KS 67460 or schneidm@mcpherson.edu. Job description available at <http://www.mcpherson.edu/careers/jobs.asp>. EOE

McPherson College seeks an individual to fill the position of Director of Career Services and Internships, a full-time position responsible for providing leadership for the college's career-oriented liberal arts focus through career counseling, assessment, internships, and post-graduation placement. Interested persons should submit letter of application, resume', and references to Michael Schneider, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, McPherson College, P.O. Box 1402, McPherson, KS 67460 or schneidm@mcpherson.edu. Job description available at <http://www.mcpherson.edu/careers/jobs.asp>. EOE

Have you placed your Sunday school curriculum order yet? This is the time to place your fall order for Jubilee, BibleQuest, Guide for Biblical Studies, or other Sunday School curriculum. If you have had an automatic, yearly order in the past, you still need to renew that order now. Please call Brethren Press at 800-441-3712 if you have any questions or would like an order form.

Heartbeat of Heaven devotions for Advent through Epiphany by Robin Wentworth Mayer. Order from Brethren Press by October 1 and receive the special pre-publication price of \$1.50 per copy. e-mail brethrenpress_gb@brethren.org; phone: 800-441-3712; or fax: 800-667-8188.

Sponsor a subscription. MESSENGER has begun a new campaign to get the Church of the Brethren's official magazine to every congregation and into as many members' homes as possible. Consider giving a gift to support this effort. A new gift subscription costs \$13.50 a year. You may designate a specific recipient(s) (please include address) or send a general gift to aid the campaign. Send to MESSENGER, ATTN: Give a Gift, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Questions? Call 800-323-8039, ext. 247.

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- CHINA (October 3-19)
- FALL FOLIAGE TOUR of NEW ENGLAND (October 4-10)
- CHRISTMAS MARKETS in AUSTRIA and GERMANY (December 1-8)

2005 TOURS

- SERVICE TOUR in SUNNY JAMAICA (January 21-30)
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- PARAGUAY SERVICE TOUR (March 31 - April 14)
- TULIP TIME in HOLLAND (April 25 - May 4)
- IN the FOOTSTEPS of the APOSTLE PAUL (May 27 - June 12)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 8-20)
- SWITZERLAND, FRANCE and GERMANY for GRANDPARENTS/GRANDCHILDREN/FAMILIES (June 14-21)
- SPECTACULAR SCANDINAVIA and its FJORDS (June 17 - July 1)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 7-22)

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New Members

Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: John Harding
Big Creek, Cushing, Okla.: Jackie Wiggs, Jessica Holderread, Martha Dobson
Brook Park Community, Brook Park, Ohio: Victoria Baer, Michael Horner, Alan Kraus, Karol Montgomery
Central, Roanoke, Va.: Virginia Haffen, Garland Bowman, Betty Bowman, Tony Walker
Chicago, Ill., First: Rose Montgomery
Columbia, Md., United Christian: Marcia Brown, Sarah Brown, Dan Brown, Ev Corum, Michelle Corum, Brady Corum, Rachel Oslund, Carol Scott, David Scott, Leah Bulka, Amanda Miller
Curryville, Pa.: Meghan Myers, David Mattern, Betsy Mattern, Kelsey Bechtel, Ronald Foor, John Zimmerman, Christopher Post, Bindy Zimmerman, Erin Worthing
Dixon, Ill.: James Radke
Dupont, Ohio: Chris Stockman, Mark Stockman, Doug Weller, Bonnie Weller
Elkhart Valley, Elkhart, Ind.: Landon Stump, Madalyn Metzger
Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md.: Ashley Beall, Schuyler Fogle, Allie Fogle, Thoba Khumalo, Erin Loughran
Haxtun, Colo.: Elwin McVicker, Doris McVicker
Kokomo, Ind.: Nathan Soblotne, Kristy Swisher, James Wann, Rhonda Woodmansee, Alex Fruth
LaPlace, Ill.: Tony Hodge, Lindsay Royal Hodge
Locust Grove, Mount Airy, Md.: Laurie Johnson, Brandy Deavers, Angela M. Eyer, Connie Burall, Roger Lafferty, Melissa Potts, Lorrie Burall, Sarah Carns, Jason Manning, Miriah Trail, Lindsey White, Rachael White
Manassas, Va.: Mary Geisler
Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.: Josh Floyd, Ryon Powers, Ron Dunsmore
McPherson, Kan.: Brooke Dillon, Max Goering, Elissa Hoffer, Wes Hoffer, Andy Ullom, LeAnna Ullom
Midland, Va.: Chase Holmes
Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.: Nicole Garrera, Jenny Geiman, Richard Gerken, Merinda Hutchison, Elizabeth Kaestner, Robbie Kite, Duane Petcher, Ernestine Petcher, Linda Stumph, Tom Stumph
Nettle Creek, Hagerstown, Ind.: William D. House, Carolyn Sue House
New Enterprise, Pa.: Darlene Teeter, Lacey Sollenberger, Nicole Leach

Oak Grove, Lowpoint, Ill.: Joe Meredith, Jr., Georgia Winters, Karen Schmidt, Vanessa Reynolds, Bernie Lunsford, Teres Lunsford, Jennifer Lunsford
Oakland, Gettysburg, Ohio: Joshua McAdams, Jennifer Beanblossom, Gary Jones, Eric Cook, Amanda Etter, Merrill Royer, Eunice Royer, Claude Fenstermaker, Marilyn Fenstermaker, Mary Wheeler, Kurt Heise, Barb Heise, Mike Hemmelgarn, Leata Hemmelgarn, Donald Pohlman, Bruce Klepinger, Barb Klepinger, Scott McClellan, Gail Trump, Pam McAdams, Belgar, Rebekah Ball, Kirstin Keller, Christopher Clark, Brandon McAdams, Kristen Meeks, Henry Bourne, Siegfried Bourne, Jillian Pellicer, Kip Myers
Oakton, Vienna, Va.: Mary Alice Curtiss, William White, Adrianna Taylor-White
Peach Blossom, Easton, Md.: Dylan Faulkner, Morgan Pierce
Peoria, Ill.: Elizabeth Ann Boulton, Natalie Sue England, Aubrey James England
Philadelphia, First, Wyndmoor, Pa.: Derek Ramsey, Julie Ramsey
Pike Creek, Monticello, Ind.: Donna Logan, Roy Anderson, Mat Anderson, Brad Wilson, Darren Criswell, Dorothy Burget, Artis Spencer, Herbert Whiteman, Zelma Whiteman
Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.: Jennifer Klinedinst, Ben Smith, Margaret Smith, Jeff Figg
Plymouth, Ind.: Kylie Brown, Cody Bucher, Sam Cole, Morgan Gay, Kaly Hirschy, Andrew Kurtz, Emily Osborn, Joe Quintana, Paul Nye
Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio: Steve Loop, Becky Loop
Purchase Line, Clymer, Pa.: Jordan Antisdel, Kathy Lucas, Jaci Matz
Quakertown, Pa.: Taylor Vandegrift, Jim Yorgey, Mark Yorgey, Jeffrey Yorgey
Richland, Pa.: Robert Oxenreider, Cassandra Oxenreider, David Sensenig, Scott Heckard, James Bauer, Margaret Bauer, Abigail Bauer, Nathan Bauer
Rummel, Windber, Pa.: Eric Bahorik, Tom Bauer, Michele Bauer, Matthew Bauer, Justin Berkebile, Kathy Cordetsky, Chloe Huston, Anthony Venzon
Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Rachel Finnerty, Cody Shannahan
San Diego, Calif.: Margi Secor, Margie Himes, Christine Wills, Savannah Mathews, Nina Mathews
Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Katri Christy, Linda Short, Rick Stansbury
Somerset, Pa.: Dorothy Heist, Jeff Langley
West Goshen, Goshen, Ind.: Ralph Elmore
Wilmington, Del.: Eric Burke, Cara McKenney, Janice Sommerhoff, Udo Sommerhoff, Sally Tinsman

Wedding Anniversaries

Berkley, George and Agnes, Johnstown, Pa., 55
Blickenstaff, Delbert and Louise, Greenville, Ohio, 60
Bobb, George and Alverta, Carlisle, Pa., 50
Boitnott, James and Daisybelle, Somerset, Pa., 60
Byrd, Jack and Wanda, North Canton, Ohio, 55
Dunbar, Robert and Shirley, Adrian, Mich., 50
Hart, William R. and Marjorie E., Virden, Ill., 55
Harter, Denver and Lenora, Greenville, Ohio, 50
Haworth, Paul and Virginia, Pemberville, Ohio, 65
Holderread, Arno and Arlene, Canton, Ohio, 60
Koontz, Glenn and Freda, Martinsburg, Pa., 72
Layman, John and Marian, Charlottesville, Va., 50
Mason, Marion and Joan, Bridgewater, Va., 50
McCort, Francis and Elizabeth, Hartville, Ohio, 60
Merkey, Vernon and Frances, Ankeny, Iowa, 50
Myers, Richard and Phyllis, North Canton, Ohio, 55
Romick, Ray and Betty, Alleman, Iowa, 60
Spangler, Wayne and Carol, Vienna, Va., 50
Stermer, Melvin and Dorothy, Hartville, Ohio, 65
Taylor, James and Mary Sue, Ashland, Ohio, 50

Deaths

Aldridge, Wyona Margarite, 78, Shenandoah, Va., May 24
Arbogast, Odell McArthur, 68, Scherr, W.Va., April 27
Barr, Barbara, 42, Pasadena, Calif., Feb. 14
Barthey, Deborah Sue, 48, Grottoes, Va., April 18
Beckham, Dolores, 83, LaPorte, Ind., May 3
Beery, Glen A., 89, Greenville, Ohio, Oct. 1
Bernhard, Melissa Renee, 20, Greenville, Ohio, Feb. 6
Black, Morris, 63, New Carlisle, Ind., Jan. 20
Bowman, Pearl, 85, Easton, Md., May 15
Breedlove, Jean, 66, Blue Ridge, Va., May 10
Brenneman, Deanna L., 66, York, Pa., May 8
Brubaker, Glenn S., 81, San Dimas, Calif., Sept. 5
Buxton, Hazel V., 94, Haxtun, Colo., March 2
Calhoun, Faye L., 66, Fort Seybert, W.Va., April 10
Clay, Vernon E., 89, Hartville, Ohio, Dec. 26
Cline, Garland L., 82, Dayton, Va., April 26
Clouse, Effie, 97, Woodbury, Pa., May 3
Cluts, Glen, 94, Elgin, Ill., May 22
Coleman, Miriam James, 90, Roanoke, Va., May 28
Conrad, Daisy Myrtle, 92, Petersburg, W.Va., May 18

Converse, Gertrude, 85, Kalamazoo, Mich., May 12
Cooper, Alice, 91, Johnstown, Pa., June 14
Crikenberger, Catherine Margaret, 86, Waynesboro, Va., April 26
Cullison, Irene M., 84, Gettysburg, Pa., June 3
Currens, Cecelia (Jo), 88, Bel Air, Md., May 1
Egge, Dean L., 85, Roanoke, Va., May 27
Garvey, Rosemary, 75, Cerro Gordo, Ill., May 22
Gibson, Lizzie, 97, Boones Mill, Va., Sept. 13, 2003
Good, Steven Wayne, Sr., 55, Edinburg, Va., April 27
Harper, Edith S., 95, Moyers, W.Va., April 30
Hartman, Paul Welton, Jr., 45, Bergton, Va., May 18
Herring, Virginia, 83, Vienna, Va., April 29
Hershberger, Violet J., 103, Saint Petersburg, Fla., March 31
Himebaugh, Sarah A., 95, Canton, Ohio, Dec. 15
Himelright, Janice Plaugher, 86, Woodstock, Va., April 15
Jackson, Miriam, 81, Wilmington, Del., April 24
Jonas, Lilburn, 91, Annapolis, Md., June 10
Jones, Virginia May Richman, 87, Mount Jackson, Va., April 12
Kagarise, Ruth, 92, Pasadena, Calif., Feb. 14
Keister, Lee Roland, 72, Brandywine, W.Va., May 4
Kendall, J. Paul, 96, Kokomo, Ind., April 23
King, Shirley (Kay), 69, Everett, Pa., April 19
Layman, Ward Good, 82, Dayton, Va., May 7
Leets, Sandra, 39, LaPorte, Ind., March 24
Likins, Betty Lou, 74, Burlington, W.Va., April 10
Link, Irma, 79, Forreston, Ill., June 9
Long, Clara Ethel Hussey, 79, Staunton, Va., May 5
Mauck, Floyd Durwood, 66, Woodstock, Va., May 22
McClafferty, Susanne, 77, Mechanicsburg, Pa., April 28
McCort, Elizabeth A., 81, Hartville, Ohio, Jan. 5
McCoy, Velma, 94, Marion Center, Pa., Nov. 22
McGowan, Gladys, 92, Greenville, Ohio, April 3
Morris, Lucy Christine Marshall, 66, Grottoes, Va., April 28
Muller, Ken, 82, Mount Morris, Ill., June 12
Overfelt, Mildred C., 84, Roanoke, Va., April 8
Priest, Tracey Mae Dickenson, 80, Harrisonburg, Va., May 2
Putman, Margaret May Hunt, 58, Woodstock, Va., April 15
Ratliff, Thomas, 83, Everett, Pa., April 28
Rotruck, Carl Brooks, 87, Petersburg, W.Va., April 8
Schriever, Carol, 81, Harmony, Minn., April 13
Schupak, Fedora, 95, Hockessin, Del., May 28
Sharp, Thelma, 89, Pasadena, Calif., March 26

Smith, Esther R., 76, Carlisle, Pa., Jan. 30
Speck, Portia, 78, Ashland, Ohio, May 8
Spence, Virginia Catherine, 78, Edinburg, Va., May 4
Stahl, Lloyd L., 95, San Jose, Calif., April 10
Statler, Connie, 46, Windber, Pa., May 18
Stauffer, Cecil A., 86, Polo, Ill., May 14
Stephan, Walter, 84, Bradford, Ohio, April 16
Stephens, Wilbur, 87, LaPorte, Ind., May 4
Stewart, Anne, 93, Morton, Ill., May 25
Stutzman, Kathryn Bowman, 85, Bridgewater, Va., May 23
Swart, Jean R., 80, North Canton, Ohio, July 10, 2003
Swineford, Marie Leiter, 64, Woodstock, Ga., Dec. 25
Thacher, Eleanor, 83, Harmony, Minn., April 4
Thomas, Frances, 72, Guthrie, Okla., Nov. 29
Thompson, Fred M., 88, Roanoke, Va., June 9
Thompson, Glenn Woodroe, Sr., 81, Grottoes, Va., April 18
Tucker, David L., 63, Cushing, Okla., April 1
Tusing, Howard D., 78, Mathias, W.Va., May 22
Vanatta, Donald, 59, Eaton, Ohio, April 9
Vandevander, Lois Catherine, 72, Harrisonburg, Va., April 20
Whitmer, Norman E. 78, Mount Jackson, Va., May 9
Yoder, Hazel M., 79, Hartville, Ohio, May 28
Zipf, Robert J., 85, Johnstown, Pa., May 27

Licensings

Kieffaber, Dean, Pac. S.W. Dist. (Pomona Fellowship, Pomona, Calif.), May 30
Wolfe, Jeffrey, W. Marva Dist. (Locust Grove, Mount Storm, W.Va.), June 6
Zeek, Rebecca Miller, M. Pa. Dist. (Carson Valley, Duncansville, Pa.), May 23

Ordinations

Mueller, John, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Christ the Servant, Cape Coral, Fla.), June 6
Mueller, Mary, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Christ the Servant, Cape Coral, Fla.), June 6
Shaulis, M. Eric, W. Pa. Dist. (Meyersdale, Pa.), May 23

Placements

Biddle, Guy Charles, pastor, Syracuse, Ind., June 1
Combs, Galen, pastor, Barren Ridge, Staunton, Va., June 15
Hendricks, Joseph C., from pastor, Meadow Branch, Westminster, Md., to pastor, Leakes Chapel, Stanley, Va., June 1
Peachey, Mark E., pastor, Mount Joy, Mount Pleasant, Pa., June 1

Any questions?

The answer: *Narthex.*"

Buzz. "What is a brand of facial tissue?"

"Oh, I'm sorry, that's incorrect."

Buzz. "What is Stan Noffsinger's middle name?"

"No, that's also incorrect."

Buzz. "What is the vestibule of a church?"

"Yes! Pick again."

"I'll take 'Obscure church terms' for \$300, please."



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Almost everyone has seen "Jeopardy!" at one time or another. It's the game show where every response must be phrased in the form of a question.

Alex Trebek and friends may have been on to something. Approaching the world with questions isn't such a bad way to go. It's natural for those of us in journalism, of course. Questions are a reporter's best friend. But ques-

tions also have much to offer in our faith journeys.

General Board member Glenn Mitchell, a gifted spiritual director, noted this in a devotional at a board meeting earlier this year. Mitchell, quoting from poetry, said, "There are so many beautiful stories more important than answers."

Jesus demonstrated this model time and time again in the gospels. Requests for black-and-white laws were met with colorful imagery.

Questions were often met with questions. "What is written in the law?" "Now which of these three would you say was a neighbor to the man who was attacked by bandits?" "Who do you say that I am?"

Mennonite comedy duo Ted & Lee, who have performed at numerous Brethren events, touch on this tendency of Jesus to teach via metaphor and story rather than giving easy answers. In their unique interpretation of the gospels, they portray the disciples repeatedly hearing Jesus' parables and asking in frustration, "But what does that *mean*?"

Christians today wrestle with those same questions. Differing interpretations of scripture lead to all manners of challenges within the church body. Yet it is in that

"seeking the mind of Christ," as Brethren have phrased it, that genuine growth and community occurs.

Many have noted, too, that Jesus' teaching style translates well to today's "postmodern" culture, in which people are wary of absolutes and need to find truth for themselves rather than having it thrust at them.

As youth ministry professor Garth Friesen wrote in *Youthworker* magazine this past winter, "In order to define what Christianity is today and be salt and light, we need to explain it in terms that the postmodern culture can understand. . . . Storytelling has replaced logic and reasoning as the primary method of communication.

"Jesus was the master of asking questions and testing what his followers believed," Friesen continued. "He used storytelling to communicate truths."

Church of the Brethren young adults echoed these words at the National Young Adult Conference held this past June in Colorado (see story beginning on p. 8). Many of the speakers talked about needing to "live in the questions" that come with faith. Workshop times focused on discussion rather than presenting information. The very theme from Jeremiah, "Stand at the crossroads and look," spoke to the need for discernment and prayer along life's path.

I like to think that God teaches by the Socratic method: constantly posing new questions to draw us into new insights about life, faith, and eternity. As Christians, yes, we know that Jesus Christ provides the

Jesus demonstrated this model time and time again in the gospels. Requests for black-and-white laws were met with colorful imagery. Questions were often met with questions.

ultimate answer. How we live that out, however, should be constantly tested.

In his closing message at this year's Annual Conference, titled "Are We There Yet?," Andy Murray cautioned, "The moment we think we've arrived may be the moment when we're profoundly lost."

Seeking truth is fine, but being comfortable in the midst of questions is equally valuable. It's when we stop questioning and think we have all the answers that we may be in spiritual jeopardy. Isn't it?—Ed. **W**

COMING NEXT MONTH: Reports from Annual Conference 2004 in Charleston, draft legislation and selective service, Brethren Service Center anniversary, stewardship, and much more.

As members of the global community, graduates from Brethren colleges have an appreciation and understanding of the cultural diversity that exists today ...



“GLOBAL Learning and Awareness”

When Warren Small, an international studies major at Bridgewater College, decided to spend a year studying language and culture in Japan, his decision was based upon a long-standing interest in that country.

“Japan had fascinated me since I was a child,” he states. “I grew up watching Japanese animation and I loved Japanese comic books, Japanese popular music, and martial arts. I also liked the way the language sounded and had begun studying it informally on my own.”

The Brethren Colleges Abroad (BCA) program in Sapporo, Japan presented a perfect opportunity for him to find out more about the country that had held his attention for so long. He was able to study Japanese language at the BCA study center at Hokusei Gakuen University in western Hokkaido, as well as take courses in Japanese politics and culture. He found the university—and the Sapporo community—warm and welcoming.

He found wide acceptance in Japan, especially among young people. “Japanese people go out of their way to help foreigners, and many of them—especially young people—are very interested in the U.S.,” he states.

Small lived with a family who took good care of him. “My host family couldn’t speak English, but it was a blessing in disguise. It forced me to learn Japanese more quickly, plus they were very supportive.”

I also traveled around the country and saw wonderful things and met wonderful people. I had the greatest time you can imagine,” he says.

“The year in Japan really shaped my life,” Small notes. “I plan to go back, and I want to improve my Japanese, especially my reading.”

BCA has offered international exchange programs since 1962 to educate students for global citizenship with special emphasis on the values of peace and justice. BCA students can study at 20 sites in 17 countries.



Warren Small '03
Woodbridge, Virginia

“Japan had fascinated me since I was a child.”

“Global Learning and Awareness” are characteristic of each Brethren College. To learn more, check us out at our websites listed below!

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www.bridgewater.edu

Manchester College
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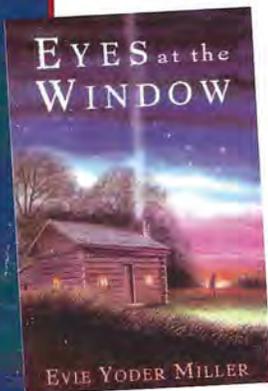


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Brethren Colleges ... LEADING the Way

Good to Read, Good to Discuss



Eyes at the Window by Evie Yoder Miller

A gripping historical novel, set on the Pennsylvania-Ohio frontiers from 1810-1861. The murder of an Amish baby goes unsolved for more than 50 years, greatly disturbing these settlers and their newly formed communities.

This is a startling story of judgment and misplaced responsibility, of attempts at love and forgiveness, and finally of grace despite unspeakable loss. The story unfolds lyrically from within the Amish world, an often-idealized but sometimes-scarred human community.

"Miller crafts a narrative that seizes the reader's imagination from the beginning and never lets go. A rewarding read, a rich portrait!" — Publishers Weekly

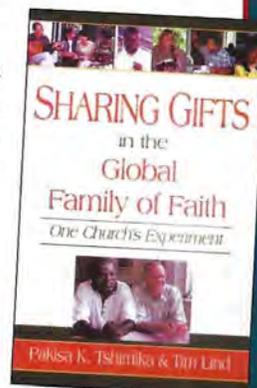
"Miller is particularly skilled at conjuring the internal lives of people who might seem stoical but, upon deeper examination, prove as passionate as anyone." — Booklist Starred Review

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Sharing Gifts in the Global Family of Faith by Pakisa K. Tshimika and Tim Lind

As the "center" of Christianity has moved south to Africa, Asia, and Latin America, what gifts can churches in different parts of the world truly share with each other? Are churches in Europe and North America willing and able to *receive*, as well as *give*? An African and a North American reflect together. Full of many insights and examples. *Study Guide* available.

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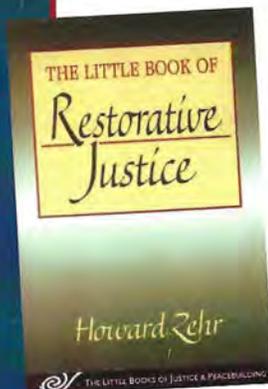
The Little Book of Restorative Justice by Howard Zehr

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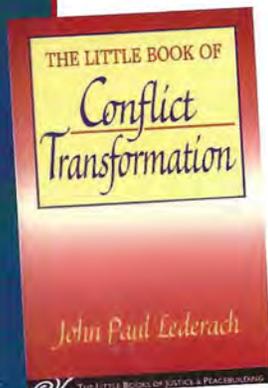
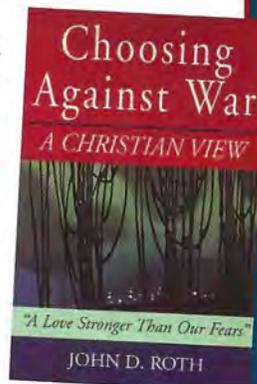


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