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# MESSENGER

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Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

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## ONTHECOVER

Demographic surveys have shown Floyd County, Va.—located southwest of Roanoke near the North Carolina line—to possess a unique characteristic. It’s the one county in the US where more people reported belonging to the Church of the Brethren than to any other denomination. This month’s cover article invites readers on a visit down the winding, and very Brethren, roads of Floyd.



Bill Hare



Chris Detrick



### 8 Welcome to Floyd

The theme song of the TV show “Cheers” extolled it as a place “where everybody knows your name.” In Floyd County, Va., it’s a place where everyone knows the name Church of the Brethren. And why not? In this corner of the world, you can find Brethren just about everywhere.

### 12 The houses (of worship) that Ray built

Ray Johnson of Polo, Ill., has a passion. He loves to build churches, and he has built a lot of them—including work for 19 Church of the Brethren congregations. He turns 80 this month, and he continues building: “I’m going to keep going at it as long as the Lord will let me,” he says.

### 14 Blazing their own trail

This report from Religion News Service examines a growing trend among young adults: They are intentionally seeking a personal and authentic faith community, and that often means they are no longer satisfied to simply follow in their parents’ religious footsteps.

### 16 I saw the face of war

It’s one thing to talk about the evils of war; it’s a far different thing to live it. McPherson College student Ivy Manhamo, who grew up in present-day Zimbabwe, shares her haunting memories of living through a brutal civil war. It has led her to cry: “No more of this!”

### 18 Exodus: The heart of Jewish faith

Where would Charlton Heston have been without Exodus? MESSENGER continues its “Journey through the Word” with a look at this second book of the Pentateuch. Graydon F. Snyder traces the major stories of this pivotal book, which deeply shaped Jewish life and gave the world the Ten Commandments.

## DEPARTMENTS

- 2 From the Publisher
- 3 In Touch
- 6 Reflections
- 7 The Buzz
- 20 News
- 25 Youth Life
- 26 Media Review
- 28 Letters
- 31 Turning Points
- 32 Editorial

**E**ven before the forthcoming *Gather 'Round* curriculum is unveiled next year, it is demonstrating an innovation—that is, in the way it is written. While recent years have brought the advantages of electronic files, still curriculum publishing has tended to involve mailing stacks of paper to lots of people.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

This time around, nobody's shipping paper and nobody has to have any special software. Rather, everyone involved is going to the *Wiki Wiki* Web, a collaborative writing system housed on the Internet. Writers post each lesson on the wiki ("wiki wiki" is Hawaiian for "hurry hurry"). The writers for the other age levels can read all the lessons, making for valuable cross-fertilization. Then Bible scholars, education specialists, and other readers go online to read and comment on the manuscripts. Finally, test congregations download the necessary materials for use in their classrooms and then post their comments directly on the wiki.

Particularly intriguing is the transparency of the process. Certainly it's a new way of working for writers, who can easily compare their progress with their colleagues and can both send and receive comments all along the way. It's also a new experience for the many others reading and responding to the manuscripts. Never before have first drafts and comments been visible to such a large group of people, most of whom are outside the immediate editorial process. It's a system that requires a slightly tougher skin and open-mindedness from the writers, and careful, thoughtful commenting by reviewers. So far the process is working well.

It's reasonable to expect some glitches along the way, though the formal accountability makes the wiki different from some other forms of electronic communication. In listserves, for example, the informality and fluidity of the group e-mail conversation make it easy to hit the send button prematurely or to unintentionally convey the wrong tone of voice in hastily written words.

Interestingly, though, there can be a self-correcting nature to listserves. In a listserv, people correct what they perceive to be each other's errors. Those who were misunderstood try to clarify. Those who shoot from the hip may come back and apologize. Unkind words can't be erased, but they can be retracted.

Not every mode of discourse offers this opportunity for a second chance, however, and I think about this often. A number of years ago, a plainspoken, warmhearted saint here in Elgin died unexpectedly in her sleep. Several days later, people received Valentine's Day messages that she had sent before she died. Of course she did not know that her last words would be these messages of love and gratitude. But when I'm tempted to send someone a piece of my mind, I remember that anything I write might be the last thing I write—and I decide I'd rather be like Mildred.

*Wendy McFadden*

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A free study guide for each issue of MESSANGER is available on the site; go to keyword "MESSANGER" and click on the study guide link.

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## AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

**Atlantic Northeast:** The sporting district offered a volleyball tournament and family swim Jan. 15, and a table tennis tournament is planned for Feb. 19 at the Hempfield congregation.

**Atlantic Southeast:** The district office was preparing to move down the state in January, from Tampa to Sebring. District executive Martha Beach and her husband, Bob, relocated to Florida, and the Palms of Sebring retirement community offered free office space.

**Idaho:** Elton Hunsucker will be chair of the district board for this year, and Bruce Holderread has been called as the district's representative to the General Board.

**Illinois/Wisconsin:** The seven Chicago-area congregations gathered for an annual joint Advent service Dec. 5 in Batavia, Ill. An offering of \$525 was received to support district ministries.

**Michigan:** The district will now be represented on the board of directors for Winding Creek Camp and Conference Center, where district conference takes place. Dan McRoberts has been named to the position.

**Mid-Atlantic:** Forty people from Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren, Hagerstown, Md., took part in a walkathon on the Washington Mall Nov. 20, raising \$2,000 for the Brethren Nutrition Program in Washington, D.C.

**Middle Pennsylvania:** Pastors and spouses will gather May 20-21 at Camp Blue Diamond for a retreat centered on "The Joys and Concerns of Pastoral Ministry."

**Missouri/Arkansas:** SueZann Bosler, an advocate for abolishing the death penalty, spoke at a Witness Weekend Nov. 12-14 at the Cabool congregation. Her presentation was titled "Taking Action: A Journey from Anger to Forgiveness."

**Northern Indiana:** Junior high youth of the Cedar Lake congregation (Auburn, Ind.) invited the congregation to join them in making health kits for Church World Service. Forty-five kits were collected.

**Northern Ohio:** The district's Peace Task Team will offer a get-away weekend on "Peace Skills for the Family" March 11-12 at Inspiration Hills. Russ Veal and Annie Clark will be guest leaders.

Wait Wiltschek



Four months after it began, the 2004 district conference season came to a close in November. Virginia District, above, held the final gathering. Its conference took place Nov. 12-13 in Roanoke, Va., with a total of 562 people registering. Delegates approved a 2005 district budget of \$283,491.80.

**Northern Plains:** The Stover Memorial and Ivester congregations recently hosted a time of conversation with Peggy Gish, who has been serving in Iraq with Christian Peacemaker Teams.

**Oregon/Washington:** Camp Koinonia, located near Cle Elum, Wash., will hold its annual "Snow Camp" Feb. 4-6.

**Pacific Southwest:** Mesa (Ariz.) Community Church of the Brethren Fellowship held its final worship service Sept. 26. Mesa donated its building fund to the nearby Papago Buttes congregation.

**Shenandoah:** Among business items at district conference in November, delegates approved a name change for the Trout Run congregation. It is now Sugar Grove Church of the Brethren.

**South/Central Indiana:** District congregations raised more than \$7,000 for a Florida hurricane relief fund during the fall. The donations were sent to the General Board Emergency Disaster Fund.

**Southeastern:** A district disaster offering raised \$7,022 for tsunami relief efforts. . . . The ministry commission will offer a "Signs of Abuse with Children" workshop April 2 at Pleasant Valley.

**Southern Ohio:** An "Auction in the Spring" kickoff dinner Jan. 21, featuring folksinger Joseph Helfrich, began building

momentum for this year's disaster response auction, slated for April 30 in Greenville.

**Southern Pennsylvania:** Camp Eder, located near Fairfield, Pa., broke ground Oct. 29 for renovation of its Schwarzenau retreat lodge. The project, part of a capital campaign, was slated for completion in January.

**Southern Plains:** A company working on the flood plain around Camp Spring Lake (Billings, Okla.) paid the district \$15,000 to relocate a cabin. The money was put in reserve to build a new cabin.

**Virginia:** The district sent more than \$15,000 in congregational offerings for South Asia tsunami relief efforts to Emergency Response/Service Ministries in early January.

**West Marva:** An anonymous gift of nearly \$5,000 has allowed the district to upgrade its office computer, buy two new chairs and a sweeper, and put aside \$4,000 toward a projected 2005 deficit.

**Western Pennsylvania:** The district is planning bi-monthly praise and worship celebrations for youth and young adults in 2005. Three of the celebrations were held last year, at the Westmont and Maple Spring congregations and at Camp Harmony.

**Western Plains:** Association of Brethren Caregivers executive director Kathy Reid will serve as keynote speaker for this year's women's retreat April 8-9 in Salina, Kan.



Jeremy Santos

As part of an interactive children's curriculum she developed for Stone Church of the Brethren, Joanne Thurston-Griswold helped the congregation's kids make Indian naan bread on World Communion Sunday.

## Here an angel, there an angel

The musical *Angels Everywhere: A True Story of the Brethren* by Frank Ramirez and Steve Engle, had raised more than \$8,000 through the end of 2004 for Middle Pennsylvania District ministry education programs.

*Angels Everywhere* is the story of Catharine Hummer, a Brethren teenager who claimed she saw angels in 1762. The Hummer incident was the source of much controversy, says Ramirez, who has been studying the story since 1997. It prompted discussion at the Annual Meeting of 1763.

"The Annual Meeting decision was a crucial one," he says, "speaking more to the need for Brethren to speak together in love than actually settling the matter. As Alexander Mack Jr. put it, 'Therefore, dear brethren, let

us watch and be careful, and above all preserve love, for thus one preserves light.' "

Ramirez, pastor of Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, wrote the first draft of the script and lyrics and asked Steve Engle, a Church of the Brethren author, songwriter, and ventriloquist, to join the project. Engle wrote the music and contributed to both the script and lyrics.

The musical was performed Oct. 9 at Roaring Spring (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Nov. 20 at Everett, and Dec. 4 at Hollidaysburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. Each congregation provided a meal as part of a "dinner theater" package. In addition, excerpts were presented at Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren as part of Atlantic Northeast District's annual enrichment program.

In all, more than 600 people saw the musical during the fall. The intergenerational cast included 22 performers from five congregations in the district. They hope to do a tour of several more congregations in the spring of 2005 and 2006, Ramirez says. A soundtrack CD of the musical is also planned and should be available in early 2005.

## Church develops interactive lessons

How would the children in your church react if you passed out popcorn in Sunday school? What if you gave some of them large servings and others just a few kernels? Teachers at Stone Church of the Brethren, Huntingdon, Pa., were encouraged to do just that. It was part of a lesson on the uneven distribution of food among God's people. The children are learning about hunger and other world issues such as poverty, child labor, recycling, stewardship, prejudice and tolerance.

The curriculum at Stone is written by Joanne Thurston-Griswold, mother of two and Sunday school teacher. During a 2002 trip to Guatemala, she and others wondered, "What can we do to help the kids have a sense for how we fit into God's world and what our responsibility is to our neighbors?" Later that year, she began to develop a lesson plan, geared toward students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 5.

Each lesson uses a picture book along with a biblical pas-

sage. Thurston-Griswold describes the storybooks as the cornerstone of her curriculum. Through stories, she says, the children can really make connections to their own lives. Each eight-week unit includes a variety of books. That way, the teachers can decide which are appropriate for the age level and interests of a particular class.

Teachers also choose from a list of

art projects and activities that support the theme. Ultimately, Thurston-Griswold says she wants more for children than simply the learning of Bible stories. She asks, "What do we want our kids to know? What do we want them to learn in Sunday school? You know, what was Jesus trying to tell us? How to treat each other." —Brooke Meadows



Jeremy Santos



A cast of 22 performers put on productions of "Angels Everywhere," based on the life of Catherine Hummer, at four sites during the final three months of 2004.



Charles Bieber

**A delegation of eight members of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria** (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) visited Atlantic Northeast District for two weeks this past fall. The visitors expressed gratitude for the district's help in constructing the Abuja church in Nigeria's capital. They traveled to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., and other Brethren sites, visited several congregations and district conference, met with Brethren business people, and toured New York and Washington, D.C.

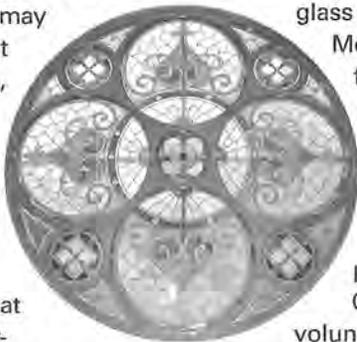
## Mack 'rose window' shines once again

Every year people come from across the United States to see the Church of the Brethren historical murals in Quinter-Miller Auditorium at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind. Now, after nearly a third of a century, visitors to Camp Mack may again gaze in awe at the beautiful, round, 11-foot diameter stained-glass window high above the altar in the auditorium.

For years, this large rose window at the front of Quinter-Miller—donated to the camp in 1937 by a contractor who tore down a closed church in nearby Fort Wayne—was covered, as its deteriorated condition was precarious. Some thought the glass may have fallen down between the wall and the outside of the building. Many had almost given up hope of ever again seeing the sun streaming through the window. Occasionally someone would dream of repairing it, but the feeling was that even if a way could be found to restore the window, the cost would likely be prohibitive.

In 2003, when the desire to repair the window again surfaced, things fell into place. A

donor offered a \$10,000 matching challenge gift to make the restoration financially feasible. Ted Moss of Moss Stained Glass in Anderson, Ind., had experience and was willing to take on the large task. The window was uncovered, and even though the frame was deteriorated and fragile, most of the glass was intact.



Moss' crew carefully removed the glass, section by section, taking pictures as they worked and noting the pieces' locations. Camp staff and

volunteers, using a computerized frame design developed by a camp employee, worked to replicate the complicated design in 3-inch cherry, and the sturdy, separate outside ring of tulip poplar. Six people, with the help of a rope over a beam, raised the heavy frame to its waiting home where it was cemented into place.

Moss' crew tediously installed the restored glass during Thanksgiving week, 2004. It was a time of rejoicing—a dream had become reality, thanks to the many people who embraced the Rose Window Challenge through monetary gifts, materials, and labor.

—Phyllis Leininger

## REMEMBERED

• **Bernard N. King**, former college minister at McPherson (Kan.) College and Bridgewater (Va.) College and former executive of Middle Pennsylvania District, died Jan. 2 in Hanover, Pa. He was 98. King was a graduate of Juniata College and Bethany Biblical Seminary.

He also pastored congregations in six states and in 1996 authored a book on his church experience.

• **Orval C. Wagner**, former administrator of The Cedars retirement community in McPherson, Kan., died Nov. 11 in McPherson. Wagner served as administrator for 18 years, beginning in 1955.

## LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Lower Miami Church of the Brethren**, the "mother church" for Southern Ohio District, will mark its 200th anniversary over three weekends in June. Planned speakers are Stephen Reid, Stan Noffsinger, Mark Flory Steury, Kreston Lipscomb, and Ron McAdams.

• **Peace Church of the Brethren**, Portland, Ore., is celebrating 100 years of service to its community Feb. 25-27. Guests will include all living former pastors of the congregation, as well as past and present members. The celebration will feature a Friday evening panel of former pastors and current pastor Kerby Lauderdale and a Sunday worship address by former pastor Andrew Murray.

• **Monroe County Church of the Brethren** (Albia, Iowa) celebrated its 100th anniversary Nov. 14 with morning worship, a candlelighting memory service for past members, and a dinner.

• Happy 100th birthday to **Frank Mosholder** of Johnstown, Pa. Mosholder, who has been a lifelong member of Roxbury Church of the Brethren and remains an active deacon, celebrated the milestone Nov. 26 with 152 people attending.

• **West Richmond (Va.) Church of the Brethren**, which has averaged a dozen walkers and \$1,200 raised in annual CROP Walks, set a goal of doubling those totals this year. The congregation ended up with 29 walkers and nearly \$3,100 raised for the Church World Service program.

• Annual Conference executive director **Lerry Fogle** was featured in the October issue of *Religious Conference Manager* magazine. Fogle talked about the challenges of the position in the profile piece. "There's never a dull moment," he said. "I guess I thrive on that."

• **Dorothy Raish** and **Alice Beaman** of Dayton, Va., were honored recently by the Rockingham County School Board for their volunteer work at John Wayland Elementary School.

• Sisters **Faith** and **Allison Martin** of Prairie City (Iowa) Church of the Brethren were among those whose artwork was chosen to be part of 2004 cards by Heart Connection Children's Cancer Programs ([www.holidaycardsbykids.com/holiday\\_cards.htm](http://www.holidaycardsbykids.com/holiday_cards.htm)). The card sales support camps for children with cancer and their siblings. Faith, in second grade, has been clear of leukemia for more than a year.

• **Missouri-Arkansas District** celebrated filling one Heifer International "Ark" at district conference thanks to a \$5,000 donation by Ethmer and Kathryn Erisman. By the time of the dedication service for that Ark Oct. 17, a second Ark had been added by members of the **New Beginnings congregation** for a total donation of more than \$10,000, representing a sponsorship of 30-plus animals.

## Faith shines where 'fairness' fails

**I** grew up in a world where I could expect life to be more or less just and fair. Indeed, I've been afforded liberties beyond the imagination of many.

I am free to travel anywhere I might want to go in the world. I've had the privilege of a quality education. I work in an economy where I am paid in a currency worth at least 50 times more than many others. I expect that if I follow the proper procedures, I can fulfill any of my dreams and aspirations.



IRVIN HEISHMAN

Sister Anastasia grew up in a very different world. She is a daughter of Haitian immigrants who moved to the Dominican Republic to work in the sugar cane industry. Earning less than a dollar a day cutting sugar cane was a vast improvement over what her family ever could have hoped for in Haiti. Still, the daily struggle to survive, the feeling of hunger, and shortages have been part and parcel of her life. Her beautiful, dark skin identifies her ancestry and places her within the humiliating influence of powerful prejudices against her people.

**Within these profound limitations she has flourished. As a dedicated Christian woman, she has a dignity about her that reflects her inner knowledge that she is a child of God.**

**The harsh realities of her life cannot diminish this truth.**

Yet within these profound limitations she has flourished. As a dedicated Christian woman, she has a dignity about her that reflects her inner knowledge that she is a child of God. The harsh realities of her life cannot diminish this truth. She has become a respected leader within the Dominican Iglesia de los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren), where she and her husband serve as co-pastors of one of the largest and fastest-growing congregations.

She leads with gentleness and grace, but when she stands to sing or pray, a sudden joyful power breaks forth from her, leaving no doubt where her strength comes from. The theological education program of the Church of the Brethren has been a blessing in her life, allowing her to sharpen her leadership skills. Last year she was elected as moderator of the Iglesia de los Hermanos, becoming the first person of Haitian ancestry to hold this position.

In this capacity of moderator, Dominican leaders are given the dream of a lifetime, to travel to the United States to share with American Brethren at our Annual Conference. Sister Anastasia was thrilled about this possibility last summer. But she comes from a different world. The US consulate was closed on the day when she had been given an appointment

for her visa interview. This scheduling error meant that the next day consulate employees were rushing through interviews to try to squeeze in hundreds of people whose interviews had been mistakenly scheduled the day before.

As she entered the US consulate, I prayed that the way would be opened for her. I prayed that she might have this experience and that the Annual Conference would have the blessing of hearing from this great leader in its Dominican mission.

Maybe it was her dark skin—clearly Haitian. Maybe it was that she was obviously poor and had little property—likely to go to the US to stay for better economic opportunities. Maybe it had something to do with the war in Iraq—possibly a security risk. Filled with a host of possible suspicions and pressures, the employee barely looked at her, dashed through her interview, and chose not to bother reading any of her carefully prepared documents (including a letter of invitation from the Church of the Brethren General Board and documentation of why she would need to return to her home following her US visit). Thus, without giving her a fair chance to introduce herself, he promptly denied her visa. A great opportunity for good suddenly vanished.

In moments like this Sister Anastasia has a great advantage over me. She doesn't expect life to be fair. She has learned to flourish in Christ within the strict limitations and blows of injustice—not that it doesn't hurt, of course. I, on the other hand, grew up in a world where I do expect life to be fair, and so I

could barely stomach the way she was treated by "my government." I fought in my mind against the notion that life can be so unfair for some while I have every liberty and opportunity I could ever want. My "right" to travel anywhere for a conference, for example, would not be questioned. I have not figured out the strange ways of God who doesn't part the waters for some and yet enables them to flourish, "hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed" (2 Cor. 4:8-9).

Perhaps it's harder to be "struck down" and "not destroyed" when you don't expect life to be fair. As I experience the harsh injustices of this world, I yearn to tap more profoundly into that fountain of sustaining faith that doesn't depend on justice or opportunity or fairness in life to thrive. ❧

Irvin Heishman is co-coordinator of Church of the Brethren mission in the Dominican Republic along with his wife, Nancy. He serves through the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships office.

**Editor's note:** Prayers and perseverance paid off for Sister Anastasia! She made another trip to the consulate in January and was granted a visa for the 2005 Annual Conference. She is expected to preach there Tuesday evening.

## QUOTE WORTHY

**“It’s sure been a lot more challenging to write a 10-minute sermon for 1,000,000 than a 20-minute sermon for 100!”**

—Oakton (Va.) Church of the Brethren pastor Chris Bowman, talking about the challenge of preparing the message for the denomination’s nationally telecast Christmas Eve service on CBS

**“Dying is hard, but everyone has to do it, and I hope I do it well.”**

—Verona Johnston, America’s oldest known person, shortly before she died at age 114 in December. Johnston’s quote was recalled by her daughter and reported by the Associated Press.

**“It’s no wonder that reality television is so appealing—and it’s also not a surprise that it’s so condemned, because it’s a revealing, harsh reflection of the way our world works.”**

—Andy Dehnart, writing for MSNBC about lying as the route to success on CBS’s “Survivor” series

**“This is not about gays and lesbians; this is about the constitutional rights of a responsible organization to exercise the freedom to speak on a medium licensed to serve the public interest.”**

—the Rev. Larry Hollon, executive of United Methodist Communications, on opposition to a decision by CBS and NBC not to run a 30-second United Church of Christ ad that highlights inclusiveness. Hollon was quoted by United Methodist News Service

**“As people of faith, we are challenged to love the victimizers as deeply as we love their victims, and to walk in the way of peace and forgiveness.”**

—Mandy Wampler, writing in the Brethren Witness/Washington Office Witness to Washington newsletter on the violence in Sudan’s Darfur region

**“War may sometimes be a necessary evil. But no matter how necessary, it is always evil. We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other’s children.”**

—Former US President Jimmy Carter, quoted in a Center on Conscience & War update

**“Giving is not based on need or budgets or compulsion, but rooted in grateful response to what God is doing.”**

—Ed Taylor, executive director of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, in an address on “Untamed Stewardship”

**“If there’s anyone in America that it was okay to lose to, it was Larry Bock.”**

—Washington University (Mo.) head coach Rich Luenemann, after Bock’s Juniata College women’s volleyball team defeated Washington for the 2004 Division III national championship

## CULTUREVIEW

• The fall 2004 issue of **Christian History & Biography** magazine features the history and beliefs of Anabaptists in America, with the cover title “Pilgrims and Exiles: Against persecution and prosperity, the Mennonites, Amish, and Brethren have followed Christ and their convictions.” Brethren writers included Jeff Bach, David Eller, Frank Ramirez, William Kostlevy, and Donald Kraybill. The magazine is published by *Christianity Today*. More information is at [www.christianhistory.net](http://www.christianhistory.net).

• The **Old German Baptist Brethren Church** in Stanislaus County, Calif., has submitted a request to construct a 15,171-square foot church building on part of an 18.65-acre parcel. It would have a capacity for more than 800 people and a parking lot for 318 vehicles (from *Brethren Revival Fellowship Witness*).

• **Alternatives for Simple Living**, best known for their alternative Christmas celebration

resources, has produced similar materials for Lent and Easter. “Ten Tips for a Simpler, More Meaningful Easter” is available at [www.simpleliving.org/main/MR/10tipEaster.html](http://www.simpleliving.org/main/MR/10tipEaster.html).

• The work of **Heifer International** was the featured subject of CBS’ “60 Minutes” on Jan. 12. The broadcast had originally been scheduled for December but was pushed back due to other breaking news items.

• **Evangelist Billy Graham’s four-day California crusade** in November was instantly interpreted into an unprecedented 26 languages, including sign language. Ira Schipper, who has worked for Billy Graham for 34 years, said crusades have been translated since 1980, but none has been immediately interpreted into as many languages as this year’s Rose Bowl event. (RNS)



## JUST FOR FUN: TOP 10

In the spirit of Valentine’s Day, here are the top 10 signs that a Brethren may be in love (although they’re usually not very good at hiding it anyhow):

10. Walks right by a table full of potluck dishes without taking a second look.
9. Keeps repeating the “kindle our hearts” phrase of “Move in Our Midst.”
8. Has a joy to share during the church service every Sunday.
7. Urges the pastor to preach regularly from 1 Corinthians chapter 13.
6. Begins figuring out which Annual Conference location would make the best honeymoon site.
5. Does an exegesis on the phrases stamped on those sugary little candy hearts.
4. Starts looking for words that rhyme with “Dunkard” to use in romantic poems.
3. Enrolls in Brethren Volunteer Service to secure a stable income.
2. Submits a query on the proper gift to give for a one-month anniversary.
1. Dreamily stares at ice cream due to seeing significant other’s profile in the wavy lines of the fudge ripple.

(Adapted from a list originally compiled for the Church of the Brethren *BRIDGE* young adult newsletter.)



**In one southwest  
Virginia county,  
Brethren top  
the charts**

by Walt Wiltschek

**B**rethren sometimes like to wonder what things would be like if they ran the world. In one southwestern Virginia county, they practically do.

Welcome to Floyd County, nestled in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia District. According to surveys, Floyd has been—and is believed to still be—the only county in the United States where the Church of the Brethren is the largest reported religious group.

How thick is the Brethren presence here? The 2004 *Church of the Brethren Yearbook* listed 1,447 Church of the Brethren members in Floyd County's 12 congregations. In a county of about 14,000 people, that accounts for approximately 10.5 percent of the population.

The Floyd County Chamber of Commerce notes, "The spiritual needs of the county are served by a variety of denominations." Guess which denomination is then mentioned first? That's right, the Church of the Brethren. It reveals that Topeco Church of the Brethren, built in 1857 at a cost of \$1,300, is believed to be the first brick church in the county. Brethren had organized congregations here before the Methodists, Baptists, or Presbyterians.

Virginia District executive minister David Shumate, an

avid historian, says that the out-of-the-way spot was a natural haven for Brethren. Away from the major highways and cities and the public eye, religious dissenters had space to live out their beliefs.

"Our ancestors came here to get away from other people," Shumate says. "For a group like the Brethren, this was the perfect place to come. You're out of sight, out of mind." He says it was also the first place in the US where English-speaking people came to the church in large numbers, while other Brethren groups were still primarily German.

The county remains off the beaten path today, making it a magnet for artists, nature-lovers, and some intentional communities. You'll find no four-lane highways in the county, though about 30 miles of the Blue Ridge Parkway does curl within its borders. And in all of Floyd County there is exactly one traffic light, located at the main intersection in the town of Floyd, the county seat. It's lovingly called "The Stoplight" in some tourism materials.

"We're very proud of that light," the chamber of commerce website notes, tongue-in-cheek, "but beware, there is 'No Turn on Red.'"

It's a point from which you can find your way to the various Brethren churches, if you can navigate the maze of winding roads. Shumate jokes that a district staff member once tried to look up directions to a Floyd congregation on Mapquest and found it a bit of a challenge.

"You just have to know your way," he says. Directions are found via small road signs, barns and other structures, and landmarks like Daddy Rabbit's Campground.

Farming and forestry reign supreme, but businesses in the county include a couple of car dealers, a furniture store, a bank, and three funeral homes. A few chains have found their way in, though residents have fought to keep them away. Hardee's was the first to crack the borders, and a



*Burks Fork Church of the Brethren, built in Floyd County in 1892, retains much of its historical character.*

Subway and Food Lion supermarket have since arrived.

There is also an abundance of places to worship. One travel writer observed that the town of Floyd had fewer than 500 residents but 21 churches.

The Brethren congregations are all in outlying areas (though eight do have a Floyd address), but Brethren presence is everywhere. A Church of the Brethren member serves as the county sheriff (he ran against another

Brethren member in the primary). Another is the county's deputy clerk. Still others serve as county board supervisor, on the school board, on the town council, and as a Commonwealth's attorney.

Those Brethren and their colleagues are apparently doing a good job of running things. Mike Varner, pastor of the Topeco congregation (a Brethren "mother church" for the area), says Floyd County is a good place to live.

"We like it," Varner says. "It's one of the best places to raise kids. We're not afraid of anything. We leave the doors open. There's a sense that people trust each other, and people look after each other more than I've ever seen. We rarely have any problems."

He says it's a community that strongly supports ministers and shows a lot of respect for them, especially those who have been in the area for a long time. Pastors here are still invited to come to schools and pray or lead programs with the students, often at the students' invitation.

"There's support from the whole community," he says. "Christianity is shared so much."

Shumate says that same respect also applies to congregational life, where "worship has a dignity to it, a depth to it."

Down the road at Burks Fork Church of the Brethren, worship has also occasionally had some frigidness to it. The small congregation still worships in the original meetinghouse, built in 1892. The only heat is via wood stoves, which aren't enough to keep out the cold in winter.

*Virgina District executive David Shumate, rear, and free minister Ralph Duncan look at the baptistry of Burks Fork Church of the Brethren, one of the first indoor baptistries in the denomination.*



Mike Varner is pastor of Topeco Church of the Brethren, the original "brick church" in Floyd County, Va.



Walt Wiltschek

"I didn't need a clock to tell me when to finish preaching," says Ralph Duncan, a free minister who has served the congregation for more than 20 years. "My toes would get cold!"

About five years ago, the congregation built a new

**"A lot of Floyd looks like calendar scenes, sort of a Norman Rockwell kind of place," Shumate says. "There really are places like that that exist."**

fellowship hall next to the original building, and it now meets there for worship when the weather turns cold. That new addition, paid off by the time it was finished, also marked the first time that members didn't need to use an outhouse for bathroom runs.

Brethren history abounds at the church, which has handmade benches that turn up for love feast tables, kerosene lamps on the walls, an antique clock, and an old kitchen with a large, black cauldron used to cook beef for love feast.

The church was also one of the first to have an indoor baptistry, located under the wooden floorboards near the pulpit. Deacons would carry in water from a nearby stream in buckets, though leaks made it difficult to keep it filled. Duncan jokes that when some

Members of Topeco Church of the Brethren, the second-largest in Floyd County, rehearse for a Christmas play.

Walt Wiltschek



members complained that baptisms should occur in running water they were told it *was* running—running right through the cracks.

"Everywhere you look is history around here," says Duncan, pointing to a large rock where kids used to sit for Sunday school. "We're trying to restore some heritage in the church."

Duncan receives just \$25 a week for preaching and has another \$25 sent to support the district's Camp Bethel. He also runs a gas station and grocery store nearby (where he has sold an estimated 650,000 hot dogs since 1980, according to a local newspaper feature).

Another bit of local history occurred recently at Laurel Branch Church of the Brethren, which called Angela Carr as interim pastor by unanimous vote. Shumate says Carr is the first woman to serve in a pastoral role in Floyd County, although at least three other female clergy have come from Floyd congregations. One of those, Sue Morris, was ordained by Copper Hill as a hospice chaplain.

Another is Joan Daggett, who is serving in denominational leadership as associate executive for adjacent Shenandoah District. Daggett, who grew up in the Red Oak Grove congregation, says she has come to understand the uniqueness of the Brethren presence in her home area since moving away in 1979.

"Growing up, the Church of the Brethren was very well known," she says. "Even here in the Shenandoah Valley I'll run into people who ask me about it, but in Floyd people knew who the Church of the Brethren was. Just about everyone was Brethren, it seemed."

She was, however, very conscious of the church's central role in her life. She says there was a "real sense of family connectedness" there.

"The church was at the center of the community, and the heart of what we did as a family," Daggett recalls. "I didn't know any other way. It certainly impacted my life and my choice of vocation."

There are things to do besides going to church, too.

At the [www.floydvirginia.com](http://www.floydvirginia.com) website, visitors are invited to “discover the heart of the Blue Ridge.”

It offers suggestions of stops such as the Floyd Country Store and its music-filled Friday Nite Jamboree; County Records, billed as “the world’s largest distributor of bluegrass and old-time music”; the Mabry Mill Blue Ridge Parkway Visitors Center; and several other shops and restaurants.

After a Floyd County getaway that included a stop at the country store, Washington, D.C.-based columnist Kim Lee wrote, “I re-entered the rat race with the knowledge that there is still a place, not too far away, where, when people stop and say, ‘Thank ya kindly,’ they mean it.”

If visitors aren’t staying in a local Brethren home, numerous bed and breakfasts, lodges, and cabins are available, along with some motels and a resort along the Blue Ridge Parkway.

Around it all lies wave after wave of green mountains for hiking or driving or just for gazing upon.

“A lot of Floyd looks like calendar scenes, sort of a Norman Rockwell kind of place,” Shumate says. “There really are places like that that exist.”

One other interesting fact about Floyd: It is located along the eastern continental divide and at the headwaters of the New River and Roanoke River. As a result, the state’s geographical survey notes, all water flows out of Floyd County.

Thus it can be stated that for one corner of the globe, at least, Brethren are truly on top of the world. Welcome to Floyd. 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He took a driving tour of Floyd County with Virginia District executive minister David Shumate in November.



Walt Wiltschek

*Laurel Branch Church of the Brethren recently became the first in Floyd County to call a woman to a pastoral role.*

## FLOYD COUNTY FACTS

**Population (2000 US Census):** 13,874

**Land area:** 383 square miles

**Location:** Southwestern Virginia, south of Blacksburg and Roanoke

**History:** Carved from neighboring Montgomery County in January 1831; named for Virginia Gov. John Floyd

**Highest elevation:** 3,971 feet, Buffalo Mountain

**Lowest elevation:** 1,900 feet, Copper Valley

**Per-capita income (1999):** \$16,345

**Median age (2000 US Census):** 37.8

**Number of Church of the Brethren congregations:** 12

**Brethren membership (2004 Church of the Brethren Yearbook statistics):** 1,447

### For more information:

[www.floydvirginia.com/visitors.html](http://www.floydvirginia.com/visitors.html),  
[www.visitfloyd.org](http://www.visitfloyd.org), [www.fin.org](http://www.fin.org)

## FLOYD CONGREGATIONS

Church of the Brethren congregations in Floyd County, Va.:

- Beaver Creek, Floyd, Va.
- Burks Fork, Floyd, Va.
- Copper Hill, Copper Hill, Va.
- Duncans Chapel, Willis, Va.
- Fairview-Floyd County, Floyd, Va.
- Laurel Branch, Floyd, Va.
- Parkway, Mabry Mill, Va.
- Pleasant Valley, Floyd, Va.
- Red Oak Grove, Floyd, Va.
- Stonewall, Floyd, Va. (Federated Brethren/United Methodist)
- Topeco, Floyd, Va.
- White Rock, Floyd, Va.



# The HOUSES (of worship) THAT RAY BUILT

by Betty Hare

Illinois man has completed more than 80 church projects, and counting

**R**ay Johnson is a quiet, smiling, soft-spoken man—until he begins to talk about his life's work of building churches.

Born in Canton, Ill., in February 1925, Ray entered the business while still a teenager. His father, Stephen, was a contractor who mainly built homes, and in 1941 Ray began working with his father. Ray says his father taught him not only the skills of the building trade, but also the joy and satisfaction of seeing to completion a job well done and as near to perfect as possible.

Together they built two churches, and Ray was hooked. His father encouraged him to continue in the building trade, but to expand his knowledge by learning more about the electrical and masonry trades and to become a "finish" carpenter, hanging doors and doing the final woodwork.

Ray and his father first built a church for an African-American congregation in Canton, then had the privilege of building a new home for their own Canton Church of the Brethren—where Stephen was a deacon and Sunday school teacher—after the original church building was sold in 1946.

"That's something we cherish," Ray says. "It was a great experience."

The Brethren later came back with another project, a parsonage for the church, but the request came in the midst of a very cold winter. No problem for Ray, who had them erect a "big top"-style tent provided by a deacon who was president of the local park board. The work continued under the tent, and when it was removed the parsonage was completed.

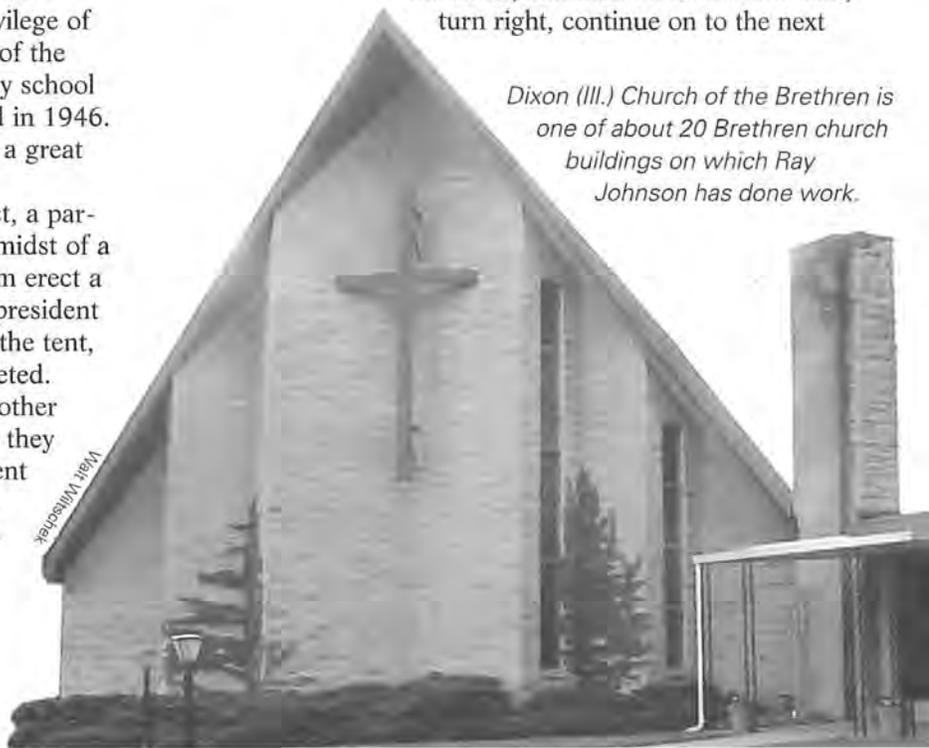
The family business grew in 1950, when Ray's brother Harold began working with him. In the early 1950s they built The Cedars, a Church of the Brethren retirement facility in McPherson, Kan. They also built a sports stadium for nearby McPherson College, where temperatures reaching as high as 114 degrees made it necessary for the laborers to wear leather gloves in order to touch the metal framing materials.

While working together, the two brothers made a practice of hiring college and foreign exchange students as summer workers. Harold retired in 1958, but Ray continued with his passion for building churches. He would move from state to state, taking his wife, Fonda, and their two children with him in a mobile home. In 1964, they finally gave up the mobile home for more permanent housing.

Some memorable stories have come out of the various projects over the years. In one case, Ray was working on a church in Garden City, Kan., where one of the building committee members was persistent in his invitation for Ray, Fonda, and the children to come to his home for a meal.

Toward the end of the project, Ray agreed, and asked directions to the home. The gentleman instructed him to, "Go out to the street, continue on to the first road, turn right, continue on to the next

*Dixon (Ill.) Church of the Brethren is one of about 20 Brethren church buildings on which Ray Johnson has done work.*





*Ray Johnson of Polo, Ill., looks over plans for a church construction project.*

## **BRETHREN BUILDING**

Cities and towns where Ray Johnson has constructed or done other work on Church of the Brethren buildings:

**Florida:** Jacksonville

**Illinois:** Canton, Decatur, Dixon, Franklin Grove, Lanark, Lombard (York Center), Mount Morris, Polo

**Indiana:** Indianapolis (Northview), Markle

**Iowa:** Adel (Panther Creek), Grundy Center (Ivester), South English (English River)

**Kansas:** Garden City

**Nebraska:** Beatrice, Lincoln (Antelope Park)

**Ohio:** Dayton (East)

**Pennsylvania:** Indiana

Bill Hare

road, turn left," and their farm was the first one on the left.

They quickly discovered that even such simple directions can be deceiving in the wide-open spaces and large wheat fields of Kansas. Sixty-nine miles later, as it turned out, they arrived at the farm and a very welcome meal.

Another time, Ray was working on a United Church of Christ building in Davis, Ill., and the women of the church wanted to provide a coffee break for the workers. Ray agreed to a simple break time, but the "break" mushroomed to include pie, cake, sandwiches, and more three times a day.

Not wanting to offend the well-meaning ladies, Ray had to tell them that the workers just could not take that much time from their work. Break time did continue with delicious refreshments, but on a much less time-consuming basis. "Those women were spoiling my workers," Ray says with a smile.

The first building of that UCC congregation was destroyed by fire, and the only item they were able to salvage was the bell. After the fire, the congregation hired Ray and his workers to construct an educational wing, and later to build the new church. It was erected using 90 percent volunteer labor, which included about 125 women doing painting and decorating.

Ray and Fonda were invited back when that congregation celebrated its 40th anniversary, and Ray was the guest speaker for the service. Ray says he and his wife were delighted to see the entire chancel area filled with singing children.

Over his career, Ray has remodeled, built additions to, or

fully constructed 81 churches in nine states for almost every major denomination, including numerous Brethren churches (see breakout). When designing a church or addition he has a licensed architect look over the plan and add a seal of approval; those have included Church of the Brethren architects Forest Groff and Arthur Dean.

Ray, today a member of Polo (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, hires local laborers whenever possible and supervises crews of 50 tradesmen at a time. Groundbreaking to project completion usually takes nine months—unless, as happened one time, Ray is working on five projects simultaneously.

The work isn't slowing down. He just completed a Presbyterian church project in Rochelle, Ill., in November, and he has a pair of Methodist projects in Illinois on the drawing board for 2005. He says he'd be glad to find some Church of the Brethren congregations who want to build, too.

"I'm going to keep going at it as long as the Lord will let me," Ray says. "I enjoy it, and I love working with people, and it's a challenge. I've never had two (projects) alike yet."

In Psalms 127:1 (RSV), it says, "Unless the Lord builds the house, those who build it labor in vain." Over the past 63 years, God has used the hands and skills of Ray Johnson and his workers to build God's houses, where people can gather together in praise and worship. 

Betty Hare lives in Mount Morris, Ill. She is a member of Polo Church of the Brethren.

# Blazing their own trail

Many young Christians are finding religion independent of parents

by Nancy Haught

**I**n Christianity, the image of the shepherd leading sheep is a powerful one. For generations, the same could be said of parents leading their children to their religion.

But for many young adults, that's beginning to change—and not in the way one might expect. To be sure, many people still practice religion (or don't practice it) the same way as their parents. But pastors and scholars are noticing something else happening, too.

Many young adults are moving away from their parents' example—but not toward a more secular life, as was the case for so many baby boomers in the 1960s and '70s. Instead, they are carving out their own faith, which often is more devout or more active than that of their parents.

These young people, especially those from Christian backgrounds, are both joining mainline churches and founding their own new spiritual communities. In part because their parents tend to be so secular, their impact is especially striking in the Pacific Northwest, which is the most unchurched part of the country according to several academic studies.

They vote their consciences, which is not to say they all vote the same way, either as each other or as their parents. They may or may not take part in the "culture wars." Some of them don't even want to be called

"Christian," a label they say is as loaded as they come.

So what is happening to twentysomethings that is making them turn away from their parents' religious background, or their lack thereof, and declare themselves a different kind of believer?

Ask them, and they're not sure. For starters, they often want a clear-cut idea of moral right and wrong, absolutes that weren't that important to their counter-culture-era parents. Talk to pastors, scholars, and other

observers and you come up with cultural reasons that might be part of it: a turning away from an increasingly technological, anything-goes, consumer-driven society.

"They are longing for a connection to the past in an age where we think history started yesterday with 'me,'" says Paul Metzger, a professor at Multnomah Biblical Seminary in Portland, Ore. He says young people are finding more comfort in old-style symbols and ceremony than in modern mega-churches. "There are many who want to return to Christian roots."

"They come looking for people of integrity," says the Rev. Melinda Wagner, co-pastor of First Immanuel Lutheran Church in northwest Portland. "They believe that people they meet at work can't be trusted, or that they have different values."

Sometimes it's a mark that, as young adults, they are settling down, she adds. "As one person put it, 'I got engaged. I got a dentist. I joined a church.'"

Colleen Carroll Campbell, who wrote a book about the phenomenon (*The New Faithful: Why Young Adults Are Embracing Christian Orthodoxy*), thinks it has to do with growing up in affluence and still feeling empty, a sort of early midlife crisis that has helped fuel increasing religiosity in the country.

"A lot of them have seen the best that secular life has to offer," she says. "Some have been raised without religion and indulged in a whole party lifestyle. Many have already done quite well in their careers and have more money than their parents had."

Their question, she says, is: Now what?

"This generation wants an integrated Christian faith. They detest compartmentalization," Campbell says. "They say, 'I don't want my faith to be something I do on Sunday. If it's not something that impacts every part of my life—my school work, my job, who I date, how I vote—if it doesn't transform my life, then it's not worth much.'"

That's where Emily Pearlman, 24, of Gresham, Ore., found herself three years ago. She had grown up in a household where her dad did not welcome religion. She would visit a church now and then with a friend, but it was in college, at Catholic University of Portland, that she first studied theology. It opened up to her the work of Jesus.

She defines that work in terms of feeding the hungry, healing the sick, funding insurance coverage for the poor, striving to end war and all its casualties.

A wife, mom, and medical receptionist, she is an active member of a church but doesn't like being called



Cindy Laprade

Brethren young adults experience worship in Taizé, France.



Jason Haldeman reflects at National Young Adult Conference.

Chris Detrick

a Christian, believing the label has been ruined by those who don't live out their faith.

"I am somebody who follows the mission of Christ daily—and if that makes me a Christian, so be it," she says. "But being a Christian is more than attending church on Sunday and having a fish decal on your car."

Josh Butler, 27, had a similar experience. He grew up in Salem-Keizer, Ore., with a mom who took him to a church occasionally and a dad who wasn't much interested in religion.

As a boy, Butler nurtured a fascination for the stories of J.R.R. Tolkien and the Bible. He saw God as vague and distant but still devoted to the outcast.

He tried an evangelical church in high school, but by college he thought the faith "closed him off" to others who didn't share it and to the culture at large.

These days, he's a graduate student in theology and a pastor of worship and the arts at Imago Dei Community, a 4-year-old Christian group that's grown from a core of 15 to almost 750 believers.

He says he's found a worshipping community that values art, beauty, and even uncertainty. They don't agree on every political point, but they are committed to living in community, even in tension. His challenge, he says, is to "live the essence of the Gospel," realizing that his understanding of it may change over time.

He teaches a Saturday morning class on theology

**"The more people are having virtual experiences, the more it stimulates the hunger for the real thing."**

—Theologian and author Leonard Sweet, on the search for authenticity in today's culture. Sweet says worship today must be experiential, participatory, image-driven, and connective.

and culture, trying to convince his students that the secular world may have something relevant to say, even on religious topics. A movie like *I (Heart) Huckabees*, for example, asks timeless questions about the meaning of life and of relationships, he says.

For young adults, following their parents' lead may still be the most common path to religious faith. But a group of religious "free agents" are finding their own way. Colleen Carroll Campbell says she thinks they may end up changing the Christian faith.

Only time will tell who is leading whom. **W**

Nancy Haight writes about religion for *The Oregonian* in Portland, Ore. This article was distributed through Religion News Service.

**YOUNG ADULT CONFERENCE**

The 2005 Church of the Brethren Young Adult Conference will take place May 27-29 at Camp Woodland Altars near Peebles, Ohio. The theme is "Provoking Love and Good Deeds," based on Hebrews 10:24.

The event, open to young adults ages 18-35, will focus on music and worship this year. Cost is \$80 per person. For additional details, visit [www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/YoungAdult.htm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/yya/YoungAdult.htm).

**RESOURCES**

• *The Church on the Other Side: Doing Ministry in the Postmodern Matrix* (list price: \$12.99) and other titles by Brian McLaren. The General Board Congregational Life Ministries office will feature McLaren, founding pastor of Cedar Ridge Community Church, Spencerville, Md., as keynote speaker at its 2005 Annual Conference dinner and in two insight sessions. Conference is July 2-6, Peoria, Ill.

- *What Would I Believe If I Didn't Believe Anything?: A Handbook for Spiritual Orphans*, by Kent Groff. List price: \$19.95.
- *Post-Modern Pilgrims: First Century Passion for the 21st Century World*, by Leonard Sweet. List price: \$19.99.

Please see related article by David Witkovsky in "YouthLife," page 25.

Detail of *Guernica* (1937) by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973)



# I saw the face of war

Experience of growing up in present-day  
Zimbabwe is still haunting

by Ivy Manhamo

**I**n the 1960s a civil war erupted in what is now **Zimbabwe**. Known as the Second *Chimurenga*, it was a struggle in which black Zimbabweans voiced their discontent with colonialism and racism. They had been driven out of their land and wanted it back. They also considered the war to be a quest for the dignity and legacy they lost to imperialism, a war between the privileged and the commoner, between oppressor and the oppressed. It took place in cities and in villages, in the bush and in people's backyards.

I was born a decade into the war. My childhood memories are filled with grim events from those days. Even as a toddler, I recall days spent in the fields and forests with my mother, hiding from Rhodesian forces. My mother would grab my youngest brother,

hoist him onto her back, then my second youngest brother with her left hand and me with her right, and we would dash for cover in the forests or fields, depending on the time of year. Sometimes we went without food or water because there was no time for preparation. It was war. We starved for days on end, roaming open country that was home to mosquitoes and snakes.

I had many questions for my mother: Why did we live in fields without food or water? Why did we sleep in the open without covers and not in the comfort of our beds? But she could not provide answers; she did not have any. I wanted to know where my older brother and sisters were. I had two older brothers but knew only one. Calvin, the eldest, was in ninth grade at a boarding school. My parents had expected him home for the holidays

when they received a message to come and collect his belongings. Calvin had been abducted from his school and forced to join the liberation army. He had no choice in the matter. Nobody ever had a choice. Either one joined the war or faced death.

My parents, also, had countless questions that were never answered. There was no one to ask. The school's headmaster was forbidden to speak except to say that the children had followed the "big brothers," meaning the freedom fighters.

I only came to know Calvin after the war in 1981, when he returned home one afternoon. I was outside playing with my two younger brothers when he arrived. I did not recognize him, nor did I care about this stranger in our midst. We had assumed Calvin dead for so long that my parents had already given his name to my youngest brother. I only took notice of him when my mother and father started crying.

We had a myriad of questions for Calvin. My father sometimes asked, "Calvin, what did you experience out there?" My brother refused to talk about it and always walked out of the house. Still, the fear, anger, and pain in his eyes painted a vivid picture of his life on the battlefield. Even now, more than 20 years later, he remains silent on the issue. He actively discourages my other siblings from joining the army, now that they have a choice.

Another incident occurred when my cousin Aeneas was captured by freedom fighters. Aeneas had fought on the other side with the enemy. Our entire community was ordered to attend a meeting at the base, regardless of age. While everybody watched, including Aeneas' family, they beat him with logs until he passed out, only to be revived with water. When he regained consciousness, they clubbed him mercilessly until he passed out again. No one was permitted to cry, show emotion, or produce a sound. It was war, they said. Although Aeneas lived, he never was normal again.

Then there was Gift. Gift was born to a teenage girl named Chiedza, gang-raped by Rhodesian soldiers. Her plans to become a teacher were shattered when she became pregnant at 13 as a result of the rape. The soldiers who raped her did not care that she was only a little girl; they did it in the name of war.

The vast majority who have never experienced war think it is only about guns, grenades, bombs, tanks, and uniforms. They believe it brings about peace. Nothing could be further from the truth. War brings devastating changes to people's cultures plus hatred, fear, and pain. War steals the joy of living and jeopardizes futures. It left Chiedza a distraught mother carrying the burden of an unwanted child, ridicule in her tribal group, and lifelong suffering.

In recent years, I asked Chiedza how she felt two decades after the fact. "You know our culture," she said. "A child has a right to know his identity. If he marries someday, what will he tell his children? That he doesn't know who he is? That he has no totem, no paternal clan name? The war took from us a part of our lives and left a hole we will never be able to fill," she said, breaking into tears.

When war is on your soil and in your lives, you have no freedom. Making plans for tomorrow becomes a dream that may never come true. War almost always drives people from their homes, forcing them to live in the woods, surviving on berries and wild fruits for indefinite periods of time. At least, that is the effect war had on my family when I experienced it as a young girl. If we remained in our home, white soldiers came

and asked questions impossible to answer. These questions were difficult not because we did not know the answers, but because those asking them would not accept our answers.

"Where are the *gandangas*?" they asked. *Gandangas* in Shona means freedom fighters. If we pled ignorant, which was generally the truth, they accused us of lying and struck us with guns. If we told them where they hid, they struck us, accusing us of conspiracy. The only solution was to flee. However, even running did not help, because when soldiers found our homes unoccupied, they burned them, leaving us bereft of food and clothing so we could not give them to the freedom fighters. They shot our cattle, goats, everything we owned, including dogs and cats.

There is a difference between talking about war and actually living through it. When war is experienced firsthand, it leaves a mark on our lives difficult to erase and graphic memories that never fade. War deprives its victims of the peaceful co-existence we all are entitled to. I know because it happened to me. I had firsthand experience of war. I never had a chance to be a little girl; childhood was a luxury none of us could afford.

The war destroyed our schools, our hospitals, our roads. It destroyed our homes, and it destroyed our lives. Life was reduced to an ugly game of hide-and-seek in the bushes. The concept of home existed only in the inner chambers of our memories. Whether cold, hot, or rainy, even when ill, I hid in the woods to save my life. There was no time for taking a nap or "listening to my body." War stole from me a part of myself that I can never reclaim.

When faced with the prospect of death at the hands of violent men for a crime he had not committed, Jesus would not allow his disciples to defend his life with the sword. We who follow Christ must take a stance against war and say, just as Jesus said, "No more of this!" ❧

Ivy Manhamo is a full-time nontraditional student at McPherson (Kan.) College. She originally wrote this piece for a class taught by McPherson professor Jeanne Jacoby Smith. Ivy and her husband, Kenny, live in McPherson. They are parents of a 5-year-old daughter, Claire.

## 'ALL WAR IS SIN'

The following is part of the "Statement of the Church of the Brethren on War" as amended by the 1970 Annual Conference:

"The Church of the Brethren, since its beginning in 1708, has repeatedly declared its position against war. Our understanding of the life and the teachings of Christ as revealed in the New

Testament led our Annual Conference to state in 1785 that we should not 'submit to the higher powers so as to make ourselves their instruments to shed human blood.'

In 1918 at our Annual Conference we stated that 'we believe that war or any participation in war is wrong and incompatible with the spirit, example and teachings of Jesus Christ.' Again in 1934 Annual Conference resolved 'that all war is sin. We, therefore, cannot encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad. We cannot, in the event of war, accept military service or support the military machine in any capacity.' (See the full statement at [www.brethren.org/ac/ac\\_statements/70War.htm](http://www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements/70War.htm))



## Exodus: *The heart of Jewish faith*

**W**hile every book of the Bible plays an important role, many would say—with good reason—that Exodus lies at the heart of the Jewish faith.

Little wonder. Look at what is found there! It starts with the early story of Moses (1:18-2:25), floating in a basket and rescued by a daughter of the Pharaoh. Though raised as a prince, Moses is forced to flee Egypt to the land of Midian, where at a constantly burning bush he encounters the living God—a God who reveals the divine name: “I am (Jahweh)” (3:1-4:7).

From the bush, God calls on Moses to release the Hebrew people from slavery in Egypt. Moses returns to Egypt, but Pharaoh refuses to “let the people go.” So Moses presents the hardhearted Pharaoh with 10 plagues. Finally, Moses does indeed gain the permission of the reluctant Pharaoh to take the enslaved people from Egypt to the Promised Land (4:18-14:31).

Before the Hebrew people leave, however, they celebrate God’s gracious action that will lead them to a life of freedom. That celebration, the Passover (12:1-13:16), consisted of unleavened bread (because of the haste in leaving), and a lamb (for the blood placed on the lintel as a signal for the 10th plague, the death of all firstborn, to pass them over).

Finished with the celebration, Moses leads the people to the sea that separates Egypt from the Sinai Peninsula. In a dramatic narrative, the Pharaoh changes his mind and sends his army to retrieve the Hebrews. Moses lifts his hand; the water parts. The Exodus! He lowers his arm and the army of Pharaoh drowns. It is a key moment in Judeo-Christian history. The Hebrew people left the old life of slavery, escaped through water, and

start a new life (a symbol of baptism, 1 Cor. 10:1-5).

After crossing the Red Sea, the Hebrew people wander in the wilderness of Sin on the Sinai Peninsula (16:1-19:25). The wandering people need food, so God sends a divine miracle: quail and manna every day except the Sabbath (16:1-36). Though fed by God, still there were so many people that Moses begins to become weary. His father-in-law, Jethro, a priest of Midian, comes to the rescue. In order to ease the administrative overload he suggests an organization of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens (18:13-27).

In addition to organization, the people need a constitution, a guide for their religious and moral life together. So the Lord appears in a cloud over Mount Sinai. With Moses on top of the

mountain and the people at the foot, the Lord articulates both the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue) and the Book of the Covenant.

The Ten Commandments became the basic guide for Jews and the Western world. It consisted of four religious commands and six ethical. The Book of the Covenant expanded the meaning of the commandments (21:2-23:13), and described in detail the ritual life of the Hebrew people (23:14-19; also 25:1-31:18).

While Christians consider the Ten Commandments essential to their faith, for the most part they do not consider the Book of the Covenant a necessary guide. But the Hebrew people “ratified” the total covenant at the foot of Sinai. Moses reads it to them, and they seal the covenant with sacrificial blood cast

*Moses Receiving the Ten Commandments*, engraving by Julius Schnorr-von Carolsfeld (1851-60).





by Graydon F. Snyder

**God does indeed show mercy to Moses. When he returns to the top of Sinai, Moses is given a new set of two tablets . . . strengthened with tribal organizations and with a constitution or covenant document, the Hebrew people begin the journey.**

on all the people.

Moses then returns to the top of Mount Sinai to receive from the Lord the Ten Commandments written in stone (31:18-32:35). He is gone for 40 days and 40 nights.

While he is gone, the people become restless. Guided by Aaron, the brother of Moses, they build a golden calf as the center of their worship together. The calf probably was intended to carry the Lord on its back, just as the ark carried the Bread of the presence and therefore the divine power on the “mercy seat” (25:23-20). In any case, using an animal to hold the divine presence was strictly forbidden. In contrast

to the golden calf, the Ark of the Covenant, with God’s presence, led the Hebrew people for centuries.

When Moses returns from the top of Mount Sinai he first thinks the shouting people are preparing for battle. To his dismay, he discovers they are involved in a lascivious party (32:6). He breaks the stone tablets and destroys the golden calf. Moses confesses the sin of the people and pleads to God for a new start—otherwise he wished to “be blotted out of the book of life” (32:32).

God does indeed show mercy to Moses. When he returns to the top of Sinai, Moses is given a new set of two tablets with the commandments chis-

eled on them (34:4). Now, strengthened with tribal organizations and with a constitution or covenant document, the Hebrew people begin the journey. They erect a tabernacle to contain the Ark of the Covenant. And when the cloud and fire move, they move closer to the Promised Land (40:34-38) **■**

Graydon F. Snyder, a former Bethany Theological Seminary professor and author of numerous books, lives in Chicago. He is a member of Chicago First Church of the Brethren.

*MESSENGER’s “Journey through the Word” series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in March: Leviticus, by Bob Neff.*

## EXODUS: A CLOSER LOOK

**When written:** Exodus came primarily from a tradition that first took form about 1000 BCE. We are not certain when Exodus was written (in Hebrew), but we do know the Torah was read aloud to the people after they returned from the Exile (Nehemiah 8:1). The Torah, including Exodus, must have become canonical for the Jews about 400 BCE.

**Famous stories:** Most of the world knows Exodus because of the famous Ten Commandments that begin with the exodus affirmation: “I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (20:2). The book also includes Moses being found in the bullrushes, the burning bush, the 10 plagues, parting the Red Sea, the golden calf, and construction of the tabernacle.

**Well-known verses:** The Ten Commandments, the first of which is, “You shall have no other gods before me” (20:3-17); “‘Do not come any closer,’ God said. ‘Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground’ ” (3:5).

**Other notes:** Exodus comes second in the “Pentateuch,” or first five books of the Hebrew Scriptures. Jewish people consider the Pentateuch, known as the Torah or Law, the basis of their faith. The first five books consist of very ancient oral traditions.



Three members of Igreja da Irmandade pray together during the Brazilian church's fourth Annual Conference in November.

### Church of the Brethren in Brazil holds fourth Annual Conference

Igreja da Irmandade (Church of the Brethren in Brazil) celebrated its fourth Annual Conference Nov. 13-14, focusing on Jesus' words, "My peace I leave you" (John 14:27). More than 50 people participated, with representation from every congregation and fellowship.

It was evident throughout the conference that business was secondary to worship and fellowship. Worship jointly led by national directors Marcos and Suely Inhauser was filled with meaningful sermons, joyous congregational singing, and testimonies from members. Sermons were delivered by pastors preaching on peace of and through Jesus Christ, social and political peace and discipleship, and peace in the congregation and community.

Much like Annual Conference in the US, the Brazilian conference gave members from different congregations a chance to reunite with brothers and sisters and to meet new ones, as well as share stories. The sharing was highlighted by testimonies from all of the congregations. A member of the Indaiatuba congregation shared that she "looked 40 years for a church like this. It's been a blessing in my life." A member at Campinas explained how she came to know about her congregation via Marcos Inhauser's weekly column in the city newspaper. Through the columns she learned about a congregation that was doing things in a different way, became interested, and eventually joined.

The highlight of the conference was celebration

of new life in Christ via four baptisms. After pastor Nelson Gervoni of the Indaiatuba congregation baptized and welcomed the new members into the church, he exclaimed, "Nothing gives me greater joy in pastoring!"

A light-hearted but intentional emphasis on community was punctuated by worship, communal meals, and afternoons to simply be together. Soccer games, swimming, playing with children, and a lot of conversation were shared. In the conference journal, Marcos Inhauser underscored the importance of times to build community. "We need to be together, to talk, to open our hearts, to understand the scriptures, in order to be a body, a community," he wrote.

The motto of Igreja da Irmandade, "A different kind of church doing things differently," was reflected as the church shed

the weight of business to celebrate new life in Christ, invigorating worship, and meaningful fellowship as nothing less than the body of Christ.

—Greg Davidson Laszakovits

### Church agencies begin Welcome Home Project

A Welcome Home Project for soldiers is being coordinated by On Earth Peace and the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC).

The project began when it was recognized that military personnel returning home from combat zones "should experience a loving, compassionate response from the church to help them re-acclimate and heal from their experiences," reported ABC communications director Mary Dulabaum. As part of the project an insight session, "Receiving People Returning from Military Service," will be held at this summer's Annual Conference.

Family members of the military also need care and support, Dulabaum said. "Participants of the Welcome Home Project believe that as a peace church, the Church of the Brethren is called to respond with care, compassion, and service to their neighbors who are experiencing hardship, fear, and possibly grief while their loved ones are gone."

Stories from people or churches supporting military personnel returning from combat zones and their families are being sought for the project. Send them to Darlene Johnson at On Earth Peace, [djohnson\\_oepe@brethren.org](mailto:djohnson_oepe@brethren.org).

## Church staff meet with Selective Service

Staff directors of the General Board met with staff of Selective Service at the agency's office in Arlington, Va., Dec. 2. The meeting followed an unannounced visit to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., on Oct. 8 by Cassandra Costley, director of the Alternative Service Division of Selective Service.

"We went into this meeting with a clear agenda of opening a conversation with Selective Service in an effort to better understand why this visit to New Windsor occurred, and how we as a church could make clear our historic and active voice as a people of peace and nonviolence," reported Phil Jones, director of the Brethren Witness/Washington (D.C.) Office. Also in the meeting were Brethren Volunteer Service director Dan McFadden and Brethren Service Center executive director Roy Winter.

The meeting lasted well into three hours, Jones reported. The group asked whether the New Windsor visit was an indication that Selective Service was gearing up for a military conscription program. "The answer is no, according to Costley, and her immediate supervisor, Richard Flahavan," Jones said. Costley, Flahavan, and newly installed director of Selective Service William Chatfield, who joined the meeting briefly, all indicated that their work was in regards to preparedness only. The New Windsor visit was made because Costley was in the area for other business and took the opportunity to make an outreach visit.

Flahavan went on to explain that there is no

draft and that none is coming, as indicated by statements from the White House and Pentagon in recent months, Jones reported. "The gearing up for a draft and the sheer amount of funding and staff increases that would be necessary are reasons enough to indicate there will be no draft," Flahavan stated, indicating that a draft would cost in excess of \$500 million to initiate. Most of the meeting was spent learning more about Selective Service and how its alternative service program would operate if there were a draft.

"The fact that they were asking us a lot of questions shows that one of the things we have developed as a peace church is a lot of respect for our position," said Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board. Within a week of the meeting, Noffsinger and Annual Conference moderator Jim Hardenbrook reported on it to the Council of Moderators and Secretaries of the Anabaptist Churches. The council also includes officers of Mennonite Church USA, the Brethren in Christ, the Conservative Mennonite Church, Mennonite Central Committee US, and Mennonite Brethren USA.

Planning is under way for an Anabaptist churches Consultation on Alternative Service at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill. McFadden will represent the Church of the Brethren on the planning committee along with Noffsinger. "Now's the time to talk about the issues of alternative service and its future," Noffsinger said. "To me that's the value" of the conversation with Selective Service, he added.

## Faith Expedition to Guatemala celebrates Brethren stove project

Tom Benevento, General Board program volunteer for Latin America and the Caribbean, and his wife, Margot, led a Faith Expedition to Guatemala Oct. 28-Nov. 5, sponsored by the Brethren Witness/Washington Office and Global Mission Partnerships. The 14-member delegation spent time in Union Victoria and the community development projects of San Lucas Toliman, exploring the culture, history, and development of indigenous people while considering issues of peace, justice, and human rights.

A highlight of the trip was a celebration of a Church of the Brethren-sponsored stove project. "Tom Benevento was recognized for his efforts of over 10 years in developing a fuel-efficient stove that is now used throughout the Union Victoria community and is growing in its use throughout Guatemala," Brethren Witness/Washington Office director Phil Jones said. "The unique baffling system of this stove reduces wood consumption by more than 75 percent and provides a healthier, safer environment for the family in its use."

The group also participated in celebrations of All Saints Day and the Day of the Dead, important holidays of the Guatemalan people, Jones said.

Phil Jones



General Board program volunteer Tom Benevento led a group of 14 on a Faith Expedition to Guatemala in October and November. During the trip, he was honored for his work to develop a fuel-efficient stove.

# SOUTH ASIA TSUNAMI



Paul Jeffrey/ACT International

*A woman salvages a few of her belongings from the ruins of her house, smashed by the tsunami when it hit the town of Moratuwa, south of Colombo on the island nation of Sri Lanka.*

The Church of the Brethren has been supporting Church World Service (CWS) disaster relief work in South Asia following the earthquake and tsunami of Dec. 26. "As the numbers of victims of the earthquake and tidal wave continue to climb, the Church of the Brethren is actively making a substantial response," reported Roy Winter, director of Emergency Response for the General Board. The tsunami relief effort "will likely be the largest relief effort in history as the destruction is spread over such a large geographic area," he said.

Enormous tidal waves swept across the Indian Ocean, striking coastal regions of at least 12 surrounding countries. Estimates of the death toll from the disaster exceeded 150,000 as of early January.

"The Church of the Brethren was part of an immediate response" through its partnership with CWS and church organizations in the affected countries, Winter told pastors and church leaders in a mailing sent in early January. The mailing provided congregations with information about the need for disaster relief and how to witness to the survivors of the tragedy.

"While other relief organizations are trying to mobilize staff, our local partners are responding, meeting the needs of survivors and assessing unmet needs," Winter said, calling it an "amazing level of response. . . . All these efforts are supervised by monitors and local CWS staff. This way we can ensure that our relief supplies are being distributed properly and used as intended."

The day after the disaster, work began at the Brethren Service Center warehouses in New Windsor, Md., to send material aid on behalf of CWS and Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA). Nine members of the center's staff worked on assembling and packing the three shipments of supplies that had been sent as of Jan. 5, reported Loretta Wolf, director of the General Board's Service Ministries program. The shipments included 75 IMA Medicine

Boxes—providing basic medicines and antibiotics to 75,000 survivors for a period of three months—as well as 9,000 CWS Gift of the Heart Health Kits for Sri Lanka; and 5,000 light-weight blankets and 35,000 health kits for Indonesia.

In addition, 12 IMA Medicine Boxes were prepared for shipment to Thailand in a matter of hours by Wolf and her staff following a request from CWS. The Embassy of Thailand was shipping a container of materials for the disaster survivors, and IMA was able to make the medicine boxes available as part of that shipment. The request came in at noon, and Embassy personnel picked up the boxes at 4:30 that afternoon.

Total cost of materials and shipping was about \$50,000 per 40-foot container, Winter said.

"Each of these containers has the potential of providing \$500,000 worth of supplies, which will help thousands of survivors. This shows how we are able to multiply the value of these donations 10 times," he added.

As of Jan. 5, the Brethren response had also included \$70,000 from the board's Emergency Disaster Fund to support the shipments and provide tents for family shelters, emergency food rations, and medical care. Additional grants will be provided as needed, Winter said, and other affected countries may be added as the response expands.

The CWS effort was supported by many Christian denominations. It initially focused in Indonesia on areas of Aceh, North Sumatra, Lokseumawe, and Nias; in India on assisting 50,000 families in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, and Tamil Nadu; and in Sri Lanka on immediate assistance to 25,000 families that lost homes.

"A year ago we were focused on the earthquake in Bam, Iran," which also occurred on Dec. 26, Winter said. This response differs significantly from that of the previous year, said Wolf. The tsunami response is "a much larger, quicker response, because there's such a devastating loss and such a concern for health problems," she said.

The disaster prompted increased giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund. Ten days after the tsunami hit, specific giving already totalled \$18,165, according to LeAnn Wine, director of Financial Operations. In addition, "It seems the volume of EDF donations coming in is higher than normal."

**More information** about the Brethren tsunami response and information on how to give toward the response is available at [www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/).

## BBT makes new requirement to save Brethren Medical Plan

A financial crisis in the Brethren Medical Plan has prompted Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) to initiate a new requirement for the denomination's 23 districts.

Each district will need to have at least 75 percent of its congregations committed to participating in the plan by Aug. 31, 2006. A district that does not meet the requirement will, along with its pastors and church employees, be ineligible for the plan after Dec. 31, 2006. The requirement will not be applied to retirees, congregations whose employees work fewer than 20 hours per week, or congregations whose employees are insured through spouses' employer group plans.

The Brethren Medical Plan is a denominational health insurance plan for pastors and employees of congregations, districts, and Annual Conference agencies. The plan was put into place more than 50 years ago and is administered by BBT.

In exchange for working toward the requirement, congregations received a reduction in the increase for 2005 plan rates, which BBT recently reported to plan members through its "Insurance Update" newsletter.

The new requirement, the result of a BBT board decision in July 2004, was at the top of the board's agenda again in November. Board members engaged in an extended conversation about the Brethren Medical Plan with about 30 pastors and church board chairs from Northern Indiana and South/Central Indiana districts at Nov. 19-20 meetings in Middlebury, Ind. Two members of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee also were present.

The Brethren Medical Plan is in a "death spiral" created by greater numbers of high-risk participants, BBT president Wil Nolen said in October 2004 when he updated the General Board on the plan's status. Pastors and other church employees have not been signing on in great enough numbers to maintain a good spread of risk, he said. A high number of pastors in the plan are considered high-risk and "aren't insurable anywhere else," Nolen added.

Claims have exceeded premiums in 2003 and 2004, forcing BBT to spend \$1.3 million from its insurance reserves to subsidize the plan. As a result, premium costs have risen. BBT also found that no commercial insurance carriers will fully insure the plan because of its aging membership and poor claims history.

Six years ago BBT ended its long-time practice of self-insuring the plan, deeming it not fiscally responsible to retain all liability for claims, the BBT newsletter report said. BBT then offered coverage through for-profit medical insurance companies MAMSI and Blue Cross/Blue Shield. Two years ago BBT moved back to a self-funded model, through the Congregational Employee Plan administered by Mennonite Mutual Aid.

BBT hopes that the new requirement for districts will revitalize the Brethren Medical Plan, noting

that Mennonite Church USA stabilized its denominational medical plan through a similar 75-percent participation requirement for districts. BBT is highlighting the key components of mutuality and "guaranteed issue," which means that employees of Church of the Brethren congregations, districts, and agencies, along with their spouses and children, are automatically eligible for coverage.

"My hope is that no districts and no pastors are cut off," Nolen said, emphasizing that he was confident districts will be able to meet the requirement. He expressed understanding for small congregations that feel unable to pay for health insurance for pastors, as well as pastors in districts that are not well represented and therefore in danger of losing insurance. Defending the requirement as "not an unrealistic objective," he reported that three districts already have met it, and several others are close. "This is the church plan," Nolen said. "Each district has to own it as its plan. All the entities of the church have to own it to make it successful."

## Personnel moves

• **David A. Steele** has accepted a call to become executive minister of Middle Pennsylvania District, effective March 1. He has served as co-pastor of Memorial Church of the Brethren in Martinsburg, Pa., since 1996. Previously he served Bakersfield (Calif.) Church of the Brethren. He has been active in youth ministry at district and denominational levels. Steele is a graduate of McPherson (Kan.) College and has a master of divinity degree from Bethany Theological Seminary.

• Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) and Mutual Aid Association (MAA) have hired **Peg and Randy Yoder** of Huntingdon, Pa., to a joint position as field representatives shared between the organizations. The Yoders began Jan. 2 working half-time for BBT and one-fourth time for MAA. They will represent both organizations at congregational, district, and denominational events, working with current and potential members and clients. Peg Yoder retired in June 2004 from teaching high school English. Randy Yoder retired at the end of 2004 after serving as executive of Middle Pennsylvania District for 20 years.

• **Jan King**, General Board Congregational Life Team (CLT) coordinator for Area 1 (Northeast), has accepted a half-time position as chaplain at The Village at Morrison's Cove, a Church of the Brethren retirement center in Martinsburg, Pa. She will continue in the CLT role half-time. The change is effective Feb. 1. The board's Human Resources office said services provided by the Area 1 team will be accomplished in a different manner but will not be reduced. The coordinator position's change to half-time was not prompted by budget constraints, the office said; consultants may be used to continue the current level of services. King has worked for the board since 1997.

## UPCOMINGEVENTS

**March 1-31 Mental Retardation Awareness Month**

**March 4 World Day of Prayer**

**March 4-6 On Earth Peace** 30th anniversary event, Modesto and La Verne, Calif.

**March 4-6 Regional Youth Conference**, McPherson (Kan.) College

**March 5 Christian Education for Today event**, North Manchester, Ind.

**March 6 Brethren Press spring curriculum** quarter begins

**March 11-13 Eastern Regional Youth Conference**, Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa.

**March 12-14 General Board meeting**, Elgin, Ill.

**March 13 One Great Hour of Sharing** offering emphasis

**March 14-18 Brethren Volunteer Service** spring retreat, Newark, Ill.

**March 18-20 Association of Brethren Caregivers** board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

# 'Walking in the footprints of giants'

Colleges' first female president begins at Manchester

by Jeri S. Kornegay and Wendi Hutchinson



Dr. Jo Young Switzer became the first woman to lead a Church of the Brethren college when she stepped into the Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) president's office on Dec. 1.

A 1969 graduate of Manchester, and former vice president and dean for academic affairs, Switzer brings many gifts to her new position. Most importantly, she brings a deep love for the college and a strong desire to promote a Church of the Brethren education. Here she shares some reflections on her new calling:

### **Can you put into words what it means to be called to serve as president of Manchester?**

I am honored and humbled at the call to serve as president. I feel like I'm walking in the footprints of giants—Otho Winger, Vernon Schwalm, A. Blair Helman. I am also surprised and genuinely affirmed because the people who selected me know me deeply, ... and they selected me, knowing my weaknesses as well as my gifts. I am touched by their confidence.

### **Are there particular aspects from your Church of the Brethren background that you will draw from as you take on this role?**

There are many! My family roots are so extensive in the

ways, my growing up enhanced all of my gifts, not just those associated with women's roles.

In graduate school and in my academic career, I studied gender issues and completed research on women who worked in "men's jobs." In all that, I learned that there are some differences between how men and women lead, but that there are even more differences among individuals. So, I approach this job from my understanding of who I am. I will do my best. ... The fact that I'm a woman probably means that I will do this with a different style than my predecessors, but they all had different styles, too.

### **How can Manchester address the declining enrollment of Church of the Brethren students?**

The more important question is how the church and its colleges address the decline in membership on both fronts. We need more Brethren students in our colleges, and we need more members of the Church of the Brethren.

We are living in a complex time when people are drawn to churches and colleges that promise clear-cut, black-and-white answers to complex questions. I have always had enormous respect for the Church of the Brethren and its members' abilities to hold fast to their own beliefs and simultaneously to respect the beliefs of others, even when they differed in significant ways. ... My faith tells me that we don't always get exactly the same message. Despite that, God loves us all.

The challenge for the church and the colleges is to interpret this message more clearly. At Manchester, we recruit students and let them know that their faith journeys will be

nurtured here at the college, but we won't dictate the exact content of that journey.

### **How do you perceive the role of the Brethren colleges in developing church leaders?**

We are very proud at Manchester College that so many strong Church of the Brethren leaders studied here. Our denomination is enriched by leaders and members who have studied at our colleges. Most of our colleges place special emphasis on our religion majors, with a goal to nurture those who are called to church vocations. We also are enriched by those who come to seminary and to our congregations from other college experiences.

Right now at Manchester, all members of the cabinet (the college's vice presidents and president) graduated from Church of the Brethren colleges—Bridgewater, Elizabethtown, and Manchester. This suggests that our colleges are educating leaders for the church as well as leaders for the colleges that the church supports. ■

Jeri S. Kornegay is director of media relations for Manchester College; Wendi Hutchinson is director of church relations.

**I approach this job from my understanding of who I am. The fact that I'm a woman probably means that I will do this with a different style than my predecessors, but they all had different styles, too.**

church that I have an extra blessing. Already as I meet people on donor visits, lunches, and alumni/ae gatherings, I find that many of them know my aunt or have church connections. This familiarity can be negative when it makes persons who grew up in different traditions feel excluded, but they are terrific for a new president.

My childhood congregation, the Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, was filled with members who valued and respected people from other countries and people from other religions. When I was elementary-school age, our church and the Mennonite church co-hosted summer Bible school. In those days, it was amazing to cooperate like that, and we all benefited from it.

### **As the first woman to lead a Church of the Brethren college, how have you prepared for this?**

This is not an easy question because my leadership always has been as a woman—I don't know anything different! I grew up in a family of four daughters and learned the stereotypically feminine skills of cooking, music, and care for the home. I also learned early on to mow the yard, speak up for what I believe, set goals. So, in many

## ONCAMPUS



### Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Stephan Milo of Staunton, Va., received the college's 2004 Don Glick Volunteer of the Year Award. A 1983 honors graduate of Bridgewater, Milo is managing partner with the law firm of Wharton Aldhizer & Weaver and coordinator for the firm's internship program.



### Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

The college book store and a student group dedicated to campus and community outreach sent 60 stuffed puppy dogs to patients at Penn State Children's Hospital in Hershey, Pa., in December. The book store donated the stuffed animals to patrons who spent at least \$125, and customers could either keep them or donate the bears to the hospital.



### Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata's chapter of the Society of Physics Students recently received its region's Outstanding Chapter Award. It was the sixth year in a row Juniata won the honor. Advised by James Borgardt, associate professor of physics, the club competed for the honor in Zone 3, which includes colleges and universities from all of Pennsylvania and parts of Delaware and New Jersey.



### University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

La Verne this fall ended its program in Athens, Greece, after the site was unable to meet its financial obligations. About 600 students were affected by the closure; some were accommodated at the University of Indianapolis Athens. La Verne had contracted locally to run the campus for more than 10 years, according to La Verne's *Campus Times*.



### Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

New president Jo Young Switzer reported in January that the search for a vice president and dean for academic affairs had proceeded to a final review of applications. Interviews of the top applicants was scheduled to take place in early February.



### McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

Marcia Smith began Dec. 1 as the college's director of alumni development and events coordination. Smith, herself a McPherson alumna, will work with the community and alumni to strengthen their ties with the college, foster church relations, and provide leadership for campus and community events.

## College supports searching students

David Witkovsky, campus chaplain for Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., says Nancy Haught's article on young adults' search for authenticity in faith (see pp. 14-15 of this issue) rings true in his local setting, as well. "The quotations from Nancy Haught's article could just as easily have come from Brethren young adults in Pennsylvania as from the Northwest," Witkovsky says. He offers the following reflection:

Stone Church of the Brethren (Huntingdon, Pa.) has seen a resurgence of students from Juniata College attending worship and other activities of the church over the past few years. They come from Church of the Brethren congregations around the country, but they represent an increasingly diverse group as well.

Their backgrounds are Catholic, Protestant, and even some with no church experience. They come because they are searching for something, something that they cannot always even describe.

Juniata's Office of Campus Ministry has been working closely with area churches, trying to attend to this need in a positive and creative manner. Through such programs as the "Church Search" (visiting area congregations) and the annual Common Ground Dinner, students are given opportunities to meet and interact with people from local congregations to help students find a church that welcomes them and addresses their needs while in college.

The one thing that is becoming evident is that they are no longer content to simply assume the faith of their parents in an unquestioning way. Parents are still one of the strongest influences in shaping the faith of young people, but as they leave home they are asking serious questions of their faith. They are spiritually hungry but not willing to settle for simple religious answers to the complex issues facing them in the world. When the church of their childhood is unable or unwilling to help them in their struggles, they are more than willing to search elsewhere.

Are these young adults simply savvy consumers, or are we experiencing a generation of people determined to live a faith that is deeply personal and which speaks to the often overwhelming needs that they experience daily? Only an open heart and genuine listening ear will help us find out.—David Witkovsky

## Bits and pieces

• **Emily Tyler** of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren has been named as the third coordinator for the National Youth Conference (NYC) 2006. As a Brethren Volunteer Service worker, she will serve with Beth Rhodes and Cindy Laprade to plan NYC. More than 4,500 youth and advisors are expected to attend the event July 22-27, 2006, in Fort Collins, Colo. Tyler will begin in the position on June 1.



Plans are well under way for this summer's offerings at the denomination's camps, and registration opens soon for many of them. Directors and staff from the camps gathered for the annual Outdoor Ministries Association retreat in November; at left, they take a tour of the 2004 host site, Camp Bethel near Fincastle, Va.

## Shrek: Ogre-whelmed by grace

**W**hen I first saw *Shrek*, I laughed my head off—especially at the talking donkey, played by Eddie Murphy. “Look!” I shouted. “The donkey moves and acts just like our beagle, Krispyn.”



FRANK RAMIREZ

My adult kids also went into hysterics. “Look!” they shouted. “The donkey is just like you, Dad. He never stops singing to himself, and he never shuts up!”

A good film holds up a mirror to life—and to us—and tells us something we sort of knew and never claimed. For one thing, it can tell us that we’re good enough just the way we are.

The world, through advertising, entertainment, and attitude, is telling us we don’t measure up. The movies *Shrek* and *Shrek 2* suggest that, thanks to grace, all of us ogres are good enough, just the way we are.

The characters are loosely based on William Steig’s children’s book *Shrek!*, but this is one of those occasions, like *The Wizard of Oz* and *Eddie and the Cruisers*, where the movie is much better than the book. Shrek is a belching, scratching, green ogre, voiced by Mike Myers, who loves living alone in the swamp, content to frighten off

**The world ... is telling us we don’t measure up. The movies *Shrek* and *Shrek 2* suggest that, thanks to grace, all of us ogres are good enough, just the way we are.**

the occasional group of torch-carrying peasants but not concerned enough to do them any physical harm. We come to learn, however, of his frustration with people who will not look beyond the surface to discover what’s beneath. Shrek is frightening and even a little disgusting, but he wouldn’t harm a fly.

Like any good fairy tale, kissing an enchanted princess or frog removes the spell and turns us into who we really are, but both films have a grand twist that makes these happier-ever-afters a lot more believable—and enduring.

I’m not going to wax poetic about the absolutely marvelous computer animation. All the bells and whistles in the world aren’t worth anything if they’re not wrapped

around a story with heart. Whether it’s kids wearing bathrobes to play Joseph and Mary in a Christmas pageant or a multi-million dollar production from a major studio, it still comes down to stories and characters.

In the first film a local prince attempts to create a racially pure kingdom and turns Shrek’s swamp into an internment camp for the fairy-tale creatures he despises. Shrek goes on a quest to rescue a princess for the prince to wed, in order to regain his privacy. With the help of that annoying talking donkey, Shrek rescues the princess from the dragon. In the end, though, Shrek discovers he has a heart, and the princess learns what true beauty means.

In the second film Shrek discovers once again that he and those he loves do not meet the expectations of others. Once again a long journey leads not beyond but within, to the place where we learn to love and accept ourselves.

Both movies are delightful for children but an even greater joy for adults who catch a lot of the jokes that we hope kids miss.

We live in a world where people use simple things, like make-up and dress, and heavy-duty things like surgery, or even suffer from conditions such as bulimia or anorexia, in an attempt to make themselves worthy of love. Nowhere in the Gospels, however, do we read that we need to get thinner, fatter, fuller, taller, or shorter to merit God’s love. We are all fearfully and wonderfully made.

The gospel calls us to turn around, and look away from ourselves and towards Jesus. The Greek word *metanoia*, translated as “repentance,”

doesn’t refer to a makeover, but a do-over, when we change the way we look at our world. It’s a new way of looking at things—God’s way of looking at things.

Philip Yancey, in his book *Amazing Grace*, says the essence of grace is that there is nothing we can do to make God love us more, and nothing we could do to make God love us less. I like stories like *Shrek* and *Shrek 2*, which encourage us to get comfortable in our own skins rather than someone else’s, and to love ourselves and each other the way God has loved us from the beginning. **W**

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



**ABOUT THE MOVIES:** *Shrek*, “the greatest fairy tale never told,” was released in 2001; the sequel, *Shrek 2*, was released in May 2004, both by DreamWorks SKG studios. Each film is rated PG, and each is about an hour and a half long.

**ABOUT THE DVD:** The *Shrek 2* DVD hit stores Nov. 5 with numerous bonus features (list price \$29.99). The original *Shrek* is also available on DVD, alone or in a set with both movies.

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## Nursing Scholarships

The Association of Brethren Caregivers offers scholarships to nurses in established nursing programs. Candidates must be members of the Church of the Brethren and accepted into a LPN, RN or nursing graduate program. More information about eligibility and application forms are available from the Association of Brethren Caregivers at [www.brethren.org/abc/](http://www.brethren.org/abc/). Applications submitted by April 1 will be considered for the Fall 2005 academic year.

Annually Brethren Homes accrue \$14 million in uncompensated care expenses.\*\*

## Health Promotion Sunday, May 15

“Exploring the Impact of Uncompensated Care on the Church”

Uncompensated care is unreimbursed care that Brethren-affiliated retirement communities provide to residents who are no longer able to pay their expenses. For this year's observance of Health Promotion Sunday, the Association of Brethren Caregivers will provide worship and study materials to explore the impact of uncompensated care on the church. These free resources will be available March 1 at ABC's at [www.brethren.org/abc/](http://www.brethren.org/abc/). Printed copies will be available upon request.



\* According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics published in the February 2004 Monthly Labor Review.

\*\*According to "The Burden of Uncompensated Care in Brethren Retirement Centers and the Church," published by the Fellowship of Brethren Homes, a ministry of ABC.



Association of  
Brethren Caregivers

For information about these Health Ministries, call the Association of Brethren Caregivers at (800) 323-8039 or visit [www.brethren.org/abc/](http://www.brethren.org/abc/).

## Pontius' Puddle



### Don't shut eyes to science

The Church of the Brethren still clings to concepts of God and uses theological terminology developed 2,000 to 4,000 years ago when an anthropomorphic god sat on a throne in the heavens above the bowl of the sky that covered a flat world.

Fortunately the earth is no longer considered flat or the center of the universe. However, Catholicism made itself look foolish by failing to recognize Copernicus' findings. Then when Galileo in the early 17th century supported Copernicus' finding in the fact that the Earth revolves around the sun, the pope had Galileo arrested, sentenced to house arrest; and banned Copernicus' writings for 200 more years. This left the unquestioning faithful believers stunted in their thinking, and the questioning faithful to be labeled heretical and persecutable.

Other concepts have changed. Disease is no longer considered to be inflicted by God for punishment of sin. Because of her early training, Mother believed going to movies was a sin. When Dad did persuade her to go, if one of us children got a cold, etc., within a two-month period, she was convinced this was God's punishment. It ruined my parents' evening out and strained their relationship.

Unfortunately the church has not been able to understand or grasp newer concepts of animal and human sexuality,

*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.*

embryology, or sexual development.

Studies indicate that some homosexuality may be inborn and not a choice. The blanket condemnation of homosexuals does not contribute to our understanding of human sexuality and its expression.

The Church of the Brethren statement on homosexuality places it in the same category of 17th-century Catholicism—wrong and willing to destroy lives because its own eyes and minds are shut. I do not want to be a part of that persecution [September, November 2004 Letters]. I support gay and lesbian presence at Annual Conference.

**Marvin E. Blough**  
Nampa, Idaho

We now have a task before us! Let's work for more creative and meaningful ways to raise the level of quality worship time and meet the various needs of all who worship. Let's keep on teaching and practicing our Brethren beliefs to our children, grandchildren, and future generations. What a challenge has been given to our denomination and each local church through that one worship hour!

**Doris Dibert**  
Everett, Pa.

### We can rejoice with Heifer

It was with much interest that I read the several great articles on Heifer International in the December MESSENGER. Earlier I had seen similar items in the Heifer magazine, *World Ark*. It is a wonderful way to celebrate Heifer's 60th birthday.

However, in all the generous coverage, I have been disappointed to have seen no mention of the several hundred heifers sent to Italy during the very early days by what we called the Heifer Project Committee (HPC). In the years of 1946, 1947, and 1948, I was part of a Church of the Brethren volunteer team that did relief

**We now have a task before us! Let's work for more creative and meaningful ways to raise the level of quality worship time and meet the various needs of all who worship.**

### One wonderful hour of worship

The Christmas Eve service televised over CBS, planned by the Church of the Brethren, was one wonderful hour of beautiful music, inspiration, symbolism, scripture, and the spoken word! All who participated in the planning and the service are to be commended for the creative use of so many instruments, voices, types of music, individuals, and variety of ways to portray the theme, "Enter the Light of Life."

We may find new visitors and perhaps even new members in our churches as a result of that program. What will they find and experience when they worship and study with us? Will they find us really committed to continuing the work of Jesus through our emphasis on compassion, service towards others, peacemaking, and simplicity of life?

work in Italy. One of my assignments was to represent HPC in that country. In an article which I wrote for the July 3, 1948, *Gospel Messenger* entitled "Six Questions and Answers About Relief Heifers in Italy," I indicated that 640 heifers had been received in Italy by the time I left.

We have since kept in contact with Heifer, having visited their headquarters both while they were in New Windsor, Md., and then in Little Rock, Ark., and the farm near Perryville. We have seen, with mixed emotions, Heifer Project come of age. Yes, the Brethren no longer control the organization. Its program and budget have far outgrown that of its founding church. But, is it not the genius of our church to plant seeds which spread and grow? It was long before the presidency of Ronald Reagan that I used to hear Dan West and M.R. Zigler

admonish us in similar words: "There is no limit to what we can accomplish when we don't care who gets the credit." I think Dan West, whom I knew personally, would give his approval to the continuing philosophy of the Heifer "Cornerstones for Just and Sustainable Development," which is an enlargement of his original idea.

As I view our Church of the Brethren, I see it as a tree giving birth to many branches. These branches have included such ecumenical organizations as Church World Service, CROP, International Christian Youth Exchange, Council on Student Travel, SERRV, as well as Heifer. Other branches became familiar agencies like On Earth Peace, the Association of Brethren Caregivers, Brethren Benefit Trust, and the Brethren Service Center. We could also add our colleges, camps, and seminary.

Many of these have become separate entities with varying degrees of affiliation with the Church of the Brethren that initiated them. Few of us support all of these, nor is it necessary or good stewardship to do so. I do believe it is essential to support the trunk of this tree that has given life to these many branches, for without the trunk we cannot maintain branches. I think of the General Board, the church districts, and the local churches as the trunk of the tree. Sometimes it has seemed more exciting to give our



### Don't Forget the 2005 MESSENGER Youth Essay Contest

Anyone age 13-18 during the current school year is eligible. Just answer the question, "What do you like best about the Church of the Brethren?" in 300 words or less and send it to messenger@brethren.org or to 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 by March 31. Include name, address, age, phone number, e-mail, and home congregation. Up to five entries will be published in the July/August 2005 issue, and the writer of the top entry will be invited to share his or her essay at the 2005 MESSENGER dinner at Annual Conference.

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(July 26 - August 1)

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Heather Dean from the introduction

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## When branches become mature, like children who grow, we should encourage them to go it on their own, which permits the trunk to expand its roots and grow new branches.

financial gifts to the branches than to an old trunk that has held them.

When branches become mature, like children who grow, we should encourage them to go it on their own, which permits the trunk to expand its roots and grow new branches. It is exciting to see that Heifer has reached its 60th birthday and has expanded into a large world humanitarian organization. As Brethren we can rejoice in having given it birth, helped it to grow, and wish it godspeed for years to come.

**Eugene Lichty**  
McPherson, Kan.

### Votes don't reflect values

In 1988 I was talking about the upcoming election in a high school government class in Buena Vista, Colo., where I lived.

One of the students asked me what I thought about a president who does some strange sexual things and then lies about it. I admitted it could be a problem, but our country would face a much greater moral dilemma if a president were to lie and take us to war for no good reason. I suggested if this were to happen we the people would most surely put him out of office.

Today we have a president who did; we didn't. I was wrong. What is there about moral values that half of the country and maybe even half of the Brethren do not understand?

**Elvin Frantz**  
Topeka, Kan.

### Article brings back memories

As soon as the MESSENGER arrives, I read it from cover to cover. In the November issue ["In Touch"], it was so very thrilling to see an article along with a picture of the Antelope Valley Church of the Brethren from the Southern Plains District. It looks as

it did several years ago, except due to all of the wonderful help from so many wonderful people, it is gleaming white again.

I was privileged to spend several years, especially the weekends and vacation time, going there from Chicago while I was working for Sears. While there one time, one of the sisters showed me a lovely quilt the women had made for relief purposes. It is very doubtful if anyone would still know me. But one thing about being among Brethren folks—you are never a stranger.

These trips were thrilling experiences for me since I hadn't been in this part of the country since BVS days in Texas in 1955. Although this was a small congregation, I thought I was with God's people, who truly blessed my life when I was with them.

**Patricia Brate Connell**  
Sandwich, Ill.

## Messenger on Tape

MESSENGER is available on audio tape for persons with visual impairments. Each double-cassette issue contains all articles, letters and editorials. Volunteers of the Church and Persons with Disabilities Network, a ministry of ABC, provide this service.

Recommended donation is \$10 (if you return the tapes to be recycled or \$25 (if you keep the tapes).

To receive MESSENGER ON TAPE, please send your name, address, phone number and check (payable to ABC) to:



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### 2005 Ecumenical Citation

The Committee on Interchurch Relations is seeking stories of youth/young adults (ages 14-35) involved in ecumenical interfaith or community peacemaking.

Nominate someone online:

- Go to [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org), keyword CIR/Ecumenical
- Click '2005 Citation Nomination'
- Fill in the form and you're done!

*Deadline is March 15, 2005*

### CLASSIFIED ADS

**Travel with Joan and Wendell Bohrer to the Greek Isles, June 5, 2005.** 12 days. Visit Capri, Dubrovnik, Mykonos, Rhodes, Rome, Athens, Naples, and much more. Contact BOHRER TOURS: Wendell and Joan Bohrer, 3651 US Hwy 27S, #589, Sebring, Florida, 33870 Tel/fax 863-382-9371 e-mail [rdwboh@aol.com](mailto:rdwboh@aol.com).

**Brethren Retirement Community Seeks CEO/President.** Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, seeks President/CEO. BRC, a CCRC facility, has grown over its 100-year history to become one of the largest and most well-regarded providers of senior care in Ohio. BRC serves 450 residents in Independent Living (now expanding at a satellite site), Residential, Assisted Living, and Nursing Care including a specialized dementia care unit. The CEO will play a pivotal role in guiding BRC through its current five-year strategic planning and assisting the Board in long-range planning.

Expectations require a proven record of successful financial and operational management in a CCRC setting, demonstrated leadership and effective communication skills. A strategic planning approach combined with goal setting and accountability will ensure the growth of the Brethren Retirement Community. An NHA is required. Contact Ralph McFadden, 352 Shiloh Ct., Elgin, IL 60120. Phone 847.622.1677. Email: [Hikermac@aol.com](mailto:Hikermac@aol.com).

**ANNUAL CONFERENCE** Travel with us on air-conditioned coach to Peoria, IL, July 1-7, 2005. Pick-ups at Elizabethtown and selected sites along PA Turnpike and I-70. Trip includes room while at Conference. Please contact J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or [kreiderk@etown.edu](mailto:kreiderk@etown.edu)

**PANAMA CANAL** Cruise one of the man-made wonders of the world, and enjoy the tropical flowers, birds, and exotic wildlife of the jungle, November 11-21, 2005. Also visit Costa Rica, Aruba, and Curacao. For information please contact J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or [kreiderk@etown.edu](mailto:kreiderk@etown.edu).

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

## New Members

**Chambersburg, Pa.:** Howard Witter, Geraldine Witter, Gladys Diaz, Camille New, Pamela King, Frank V. Jest, Joshua Redding, Heather Redding, Jeffrey Redding, Jeremy Redding, Joel Redding, Tom Kristoff, Mary Wertner, Bill Bricker, Ginger Bricker, Billie Dean, Shepherd Dean, Heather Sites, Douglas Bitner, Brandy Bitner, Amanda Ney West, Nicholas Wingert, Charles Hatch, Sabanzi Hatch, Scott Wakeland, Katie Wakeland, Wayne Violet, Jeanette Violet, Richard Forsythe

**Charlottesville, Va.:** Tim Brown, Jane Brown, Evan Brown

**Chiques, Manheim, Pa.:** Corey Fisher, Jessie Shenk, Joanna Yeater, Crystal Sherer, Mitchell Gingrich, Alison Brandt, Tasha Flory, Christian Welsh, Matthew Wise, Angela Kauffman, David Hickernell, Kailah Ginder, Connie Kopp

**Copper Hill, Va.:** Damon Robertson, Melissa Robertson, Travis Terry, Whitey Barton, Pat Barton, Katherine Tanner, Joshua Lucas, Rita Dalton, Keshia Nichols, Ashley Tanner, Paul Douglas Weaver, II, Mitchell Hayth, Andrew Thomas

**Curryville, Pa.:** Billie Hoover, Courtney Fedesco, Tom Fedesco, Sr.

**Dixon, Ill.:** Bryant Samuel

**Drexel Hill, Pa.:** Michelle Kudenko

**Ephrata, Pa.:** Harriet Nock, Jeremy Jones, Valerie Gill, Lorie Olsen, Jennifer Eshelman, Patty Leach, Phil Ross, Angie Ross, Steve Tuck

**Eversole, New Lebanon, Ohio:** Helen Peters, Darryl Peters

**Holidaysburg, Pa.:** Shayleen Eastburn, Caleb Merritts, Angel Wahl, Jay Hinish, Shari Hinish, Robert Beatty, Tina Beatty, Shirley Onkst, Marlys Hershberger

**Kokomo, Ind.:** Cheryl Lytle, Andrew Dzierla

**Manassas, Va.:** Adam Bullock, Amy Bullock, Margaret Bowman, Brian House

**Manor, Boonsboro, Md.:** Monica Neff, Betty Otto, Amy Lepp

**Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.:** Lauren Brewer, Alayna Patterson, Daniel Zambanini

**Meadow Branch, Westminster,**

**Md.:** Betty Ford

**Oak Grove, Lowpoint, Ill.:** Debra Gebel, Dale Reynolds, Christine Murdock, Rebecca Sadler, Joe Sadler

**Olathe, Kan.:** Paul Coffman

**Peach Blossom, Easton, Md.:** Kelly Lyons, Todd Lyons, Julie Griep

**Red Oak Grove, Floyd, Va.:** Curtis Huff, Brenda Huff

**Saint Petersburg, Fla.:** Martha C. Donaldson

**Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio:** Dixie McCormick, Laurel Ann Fleischman

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Baugh, Lloyd and Joann,** Uniontown, Pa., 50

**Baughman, G. Daniel and Elfrieda,** Paradise, Pa., 55

**Brookins, Wilbur and Fern,** Goshen, Ind., 65

**Fisher, Herb and Helen,** Cabool, Mo., 60

**Garrison, Howard and Mary** Elizabeth, Mount Morris, Ill., 60

**Hosler, Galen and Alta,** Manheim, Pa., 60

**Jarrels, John and Helen,** Harrisonburg, Va., 50

**Koons, Glenn and Lorraine,** Chambersburg, Pa., 60

**Lehman, Elmer and Margaret,** Salem, Ohio, 60

**Matson, Nolan and Ursula,** Cloverdale, Ohio, 50

**Petry, Larry and Alice,** Lakemore, Ohio, 50

**Tritt, Ray and June,** Sycamore, Ill., 50

**Wampler, Charles and Wovie,** Cambridge City, Ind., 50

## Deaths

**Albright, Lloyd,** 95, Lancaster, Pa., Dec. 1

**Bare, Jean M.,** 75, Linville, Va., Oct. 13

**Bassett, Margaret,** 96, Johnstown, Pa., June 7

**Beck, Ruth,** 101, Cando, N.D., Nov. 13

**Beckner, Avis,** 76, Roanoke, Va., Nov. 18

**Beidel, Ernest W.,** 85, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 27, 2004

**Bible, Ora Catherine Bergdoll,** 85, Maysville, W.Va., Nov. 23

**Blakeman, Delta,** 90, Salem, Ohio, Nov. 17

**Brechbill, Anna May,** 92, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 11, 2004

**Burkholder, Clarence,** 90, Chambersburg, Pa., Sept. 10

**Byrd, Jack D.,** 77, North Canton, Ohio, Oct. 28

**Carper, Ann,** 85, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 8

**Combs, Marvin Dow,** 77, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 28

**Cope, Elmer D.,** 78, Columbiana, Ohio, Oct. 11

**Coy, Ray W.,** 88, Salem, Ohio, Nov. 8

**Crawford, John Ernest,** 73, Lanham, Md., Nov. 1

**Cripe, Vernon L.,** 94, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 26

**Cutman, George,** 78, Annville, Pa., Oct. 22

**Daniels, Ida,** 92, Palmyra, April 23

**DeMent, Zera,** 86, Springfield, Ohio, Nov. 6

**Dennis, Marie,** 90, Richmond, Ind., Oct. 24

**Echard, Catherine Lam,** 84, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 25

**Ensminger, Opal,** 99, Palmyra, Pa., April 19

**Epley, Joseph Clyde, Jr.,** 90, Broadway, Va., Nov. 9

**Ganger, Gladys,** 98, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 12

**Gingrich, Henry,** 87, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 13

**Gonzalez, Mabel R.,** 90, Hartsville, Ohio, Aug. 22

**Gregory, Flora Slifer,** 94, Boonsboro, Md., Nov. 5

**Habron, Arthur Lemuel,** 81, Stanley, Va., Nov. 24

**Hodgden, Esther,** 85, Galesburg, Kan., Aug. 8

**Hoffer, Mabel,** 93, Palmyra, Pa., Nov. 11

**Hoffer, Ruthanna,** 67, Hershey, Pa., March 22

**Holderread, Arlene G.,** 79, Louisville, Ohio, Sept. 9

**Holderread, Arno M.,** 83, Louisville, Ohio, July 23

**Hooker, Jonathan,** 16, Russiaville, Ind., Nov. 21

**Huddleston, Dick,** 89, Cambridge City, Ind., Oct. 18

**Huntsbury, Barbara,** 65, Fairplay, Md., Sept. 30

**Hykes, Charles S., Jr.,** 85, Martinsburg, W.Va., Dec. 8

**Hykes, Louise,** 82, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 12

**Kiser, Almeda Aomia Waugh,** 80, Weyers Cave, Va., Oct. 26

**Knupp, Kammie Edna,** 92, Fulks Run, Va., Dec. 5

**Kull, S. Margaret,** 92, Goshen, Ind., Sept. 30

**Lehman, Charles,** 80, Ronks, Pa., Nov. 26

**Light, Viola,** 98, Palmyra, Pa., March 6

**McNett, Carl Nelson,** 70, Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 30

**Meyers, Grace,** 85, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 14, 2004

**Miller, Clyde,** 88, Hartville, Ohio, Sept. 28

**Miller, Mary Lincoln Elizabeth,** 81, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 10

**Miller, Roger Dwight,** 70, Lorton, Va., Oct. 15

**Miller, Ruth,** 98, Lancaster, Pa., Oct. 4

**Mowery, Jack Dempsey,** 81, Moorefield, W.Va., Oct. 22

**Morphew, Noble,** 86, Kokomo, Ind., Aug. 8

**Moyers, Retha Gladys VanPelt,** 96, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 2

**Mundy, Claude Harrison, Jr.,** 79, Pineville, Va., Nov. 24

**Neff, Martha E.,** 84, Salem, Va., Nov. 1

**Nugent, Betty,** 80, Johnstown, Pa., Sept. 22

**Orndorff, Ruth Marcella Foltz,** 79, Toms Brook, Va., Nov. 16

**Raish, Dorothea Lee Bowman,** 76, Dayton, Va., Nov. 14

**Reigle, Ruth,** 71, Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 13

**Reinke, J. Herman,** 91, Gainesville, Fla., Dec. 1

**Rhodes, Ralph W.,** 95, Johnstown, Pa., Sept. 8

**Ridinger, David H.,** 67, Gettysburg, Pa., Nov. 20

**Rissler, Matthew,** 20, Stevens, Pa., Oct. 25

**Rolston, Volney,** 67, Sheldon, Iowa, Nov. 14

**Rosen, Maxine Neff Good,** 78, New Market, Va., Nov. 17

**Ruthrauff, Esther A.,** 104, Gainesville, Mo., Nov. 13

**Sager, Retta Virginia,** 95, Mathias, W.Va., Nov. 15

**Salyards, Ruby Virginia,** 94, New Market, Va., Nov. 16

**Sheffer, Paul Coolidge,** 80, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 6

**Shelly, Esther,** 89, Manheim, Pa., Oct. 2

**Shingleton, Eldon G.,** 68, Ravenswood, W.Va., Sept. 15

**Smith, Edith,** 95, Palmyra, Pa., Oct. 8

**Smith, Shirley,** 65, Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 7

**Snowden, Armon C.,** 75, Elizabethtown, Pa., Nov. 6

**Stine, Marie Elizabeth Long,** 93, Timberville, Va., Dec. 4

**Strawderman, Edna Bell,** 87, Mathias, W.Va., Nov. 27

**Strickler, Nadean Virginia,** 75, Broadway, Va., Nov. 4

**Swick, Rebecca L.,** 96, Johnstown, Pa., Nov. 12

**Swope, Glenn,** 67, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 4, 2004

**Thomas, Violet Turner,** 95, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 21

**Townsend, Garnet,** 94, Kalamazoo, Mich., Nov. 28

**Turner, Janet Roene Wittig,** 72, Criders, Va., Dec. 5

**Wade, Barry R.,** 61, Johnstown, Pa., April 15

**Wagner, Martha Bucher,** 94, Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 16

**Wagner, Orval Calvin,** 97, McPherson, Kan., Nov. 11

**White, Nancy,** 64, Indian Head, Pa., Dec. 2

**Wilfong, Irma Virginia,** 84, Harrisonburg, Va., Nov. 25

**Williams, Dorothy Frances,** 80, Quicksburg, Va., Nov. 17

**Williar, Frank Atwell,** 74,

Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 17

**Wise, Roy P.,** 97, North Canton, Ohio, Nov. 24

**Witter, Gail,** 88, Chambersburg, Pa., Oct. 5

**Wolford, Owen Eugene,** 84, Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 21

**Young, Lucy,** 92, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 21

## Licensings

**Adams, Philip L.,** W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), Nov. 21

**Derck, Randy,** Atl. N.E. Dist. (West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa.), Oct. 10

**Fox, Denny,** N. Ohio Dist. (Water Street, Kent, Ohio), Nov. 21

**House, William D.,** S/C Ind. Dist. (Nettle Creek, Hagerstown, Ind.), Nov. 14

**Johnson, Reba B.,** W. Pa. Dist. (Indiana, Pa.), Dec. 5

**Rabenstein, Traci Lynn,** S. Pa. Dist. (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), Feb. 15, 2004

**Rivera, Eduardo,** Atl. N.E. Dist. (Lebanon, Pa.), Nov. 7

**Said, Samuel,** Atl. N.E. Dist. (Brooklyn, First, Brooklyn, N.Y.), Nov. 7

**Tackett, Allen,** Southeastern Dist. (Mount Airy, First, Mount Airy, N.C.), Nov. 14

## Ordinations

**Herder, Rebecca,** Pac. S.W. Dist. (La Verne, Calif.), Oct. 10

**Jantzi, John,** Shen. Dist. (Mount Bethel, Dayton, Va.), Oct. 17

**Sparks, Sharon,** Pac. S.W. Dist. (Glendora, Calif.), Oct. 29

## Placements

**Fox, Denny,** pastor, Water Street, Kent, Ohio, Sept. 1

**Fralin, R. Thomas, Jr.,** from interim associate to associate pastor, Frederick, Md., Sept. 1

**Hartwell, Jerry Lee,** pastor, Jacksonville, Fla., Sept. 1

**Hoover, Christine,** from team interim to team pastor, Flower Hill, Gaithersburg Md., Nov. 14

**Hoover, Donald,** from team interim to team pastor, Flower Hill, Gaithersburg, Md., Nov. 14

**Kinnick, Carl Scott,** pastor, Cedar Grove, Rogersville, Tenn., Aug. 22

**Messler, Brian P.,** from associate pastor, Happy Corner, Clayton, Ohio to pastor of special ministries, Frederick, Md., Aug. 30

**Rivera, Eduardo,** pastor, Lirio de los Valles, Lebanon, Pa., Nov. 7

**Teets, Charles L.,** pastor, Markleysburg, Pa., Nov. 1

## Mutually agreeable?

**T**he news has caught many districts and congregations off-guard: Have 75 percent of congregations in the district enrolled in the Brethren Medical Plan by August 2006, or the district will be dropped from the plan. Pastors would then have to look elsewhere for insurance [see details in news report, page 23].

This new requirement could have deep implications for our denominational life, particularly in issues of pastoral placement and compensation. As of this past fall, only three of the 23 districts would be in compliance.



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

Brethren Benefit Trust president Wil Nolen described the problem as “a death spiral” of liability exceeding income. What is driving this spiral? On top of an overarching national health-care crisis, the Brethren group needing insurance is top-heavy with older members and those with health

problems. There aren’t enough “good insurance risks” to balance out the high-risk members who would have difficulty obtaining insurance elsewhere.

Nolen says it boils down to a “participation problem.” Many younger pastors and their congregations find they can get cheaper health insurance independently, so they leave the Brethren Medical Plan behind. The remaining group is one that few insurance companies want to touch, and those that do carry high premiums with large annual increases.

Virlina District executive David Shumate addressed this concern at the conference for his district, one of those that would not yet be in compliance, this past fall. “So many of our decisions are made not on what is good for the church,” he said, “but rather on the basis of what is good for my pocketbook today.” He called it a “siren song of ‘Can we get it cheap? Can we get it easier?’”

The medical insurance is the latest flashpoint, but it can extend to other areas like using Brethren bulletins in worship, Brethren curriculum in Sunday schools, and other Brethren programs.

It’s an old concept that Brethren call “mutuality”: sharing the load, bearing one another’s burden. The onus is on Brethren organizations to offer high-quality, cost-efficient, biblically sound products, which they largely do, but they cannot continue to do that if their main audience, Brethren, regularly turn elsewhere. There’s nothing wrong with supporting other groups and efforts, but that support must be above and beyond if our fragile denominational latticework is to survive.

A recent art display sponsored by the *Chicago Tribune* at O’Hare airport explored the theme of “sanctuary” around the world, places where people feel safe and at peace amid turmoil. The reporters involved noted that, “At the heart of nearly every home were strong connections—whether with family members or with people living in the communities just outside their doors.”

Author Mitch Albom picked up this same theme in his book *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*, one of the best books I’ve read in the past year. “You can no more separate one life from another than you can separate a breeze from the wind,” Albom writes. “The human spirit knows, deep down, that all lives intersect.”

Community and relationships have always been important to Brethren, but the real test of value comes when those connections are framed in dollars and cents. How much is it worth to us to live out the “Together” part of our tagline?

As the Reformed Church in America (RCA) wrestled with a similar medical plan issue over the past year, RCA

**Community and relationships have always been important to Brethren, but the real test of value comes when those connections are framed in dollars and cents.**

general secretary Wesley Granberg-Michaelson wrote, “Sometimes our theology has very practical consequences. If we believe in covenant and say we belong to one another, then we’ll preserve health insurance for RCA pastors and their families. We have a good plan. We can make it better by simply agreeing to do so together.”

Do the needs of the many outweigh the needs of the few? Or is mutuality moot? An African proverb says, “Sticks in a bundle are unbreakable.” It’s hard to put a price tag on such wholeness.—Ed. 

**COMING NEXT MONTH:** Experiencing communion in the Church of the Brethren, reflections on Lent, a look at Leviticus, Sudan connections, music review, and more.

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*Photos of 2003 Assembly were taken by  
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*Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren*



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*Program materials will be sent to each church  
this spring. For individual copies, call ABC  
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Church of the Brethren General Board

# One great hour of sharing.

**It's remarkable what your gift will do.** Together, we can reach out to the world, helping to restore communities, rebuild lives, and share God's healing love.

**On March 13** (suggested offering date), join with others around the world in

**one great hour of sharing.**

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When was it that we saw  
you a stranger...?"

—Matthew 25:38

Church of the Brethren General Board,  
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