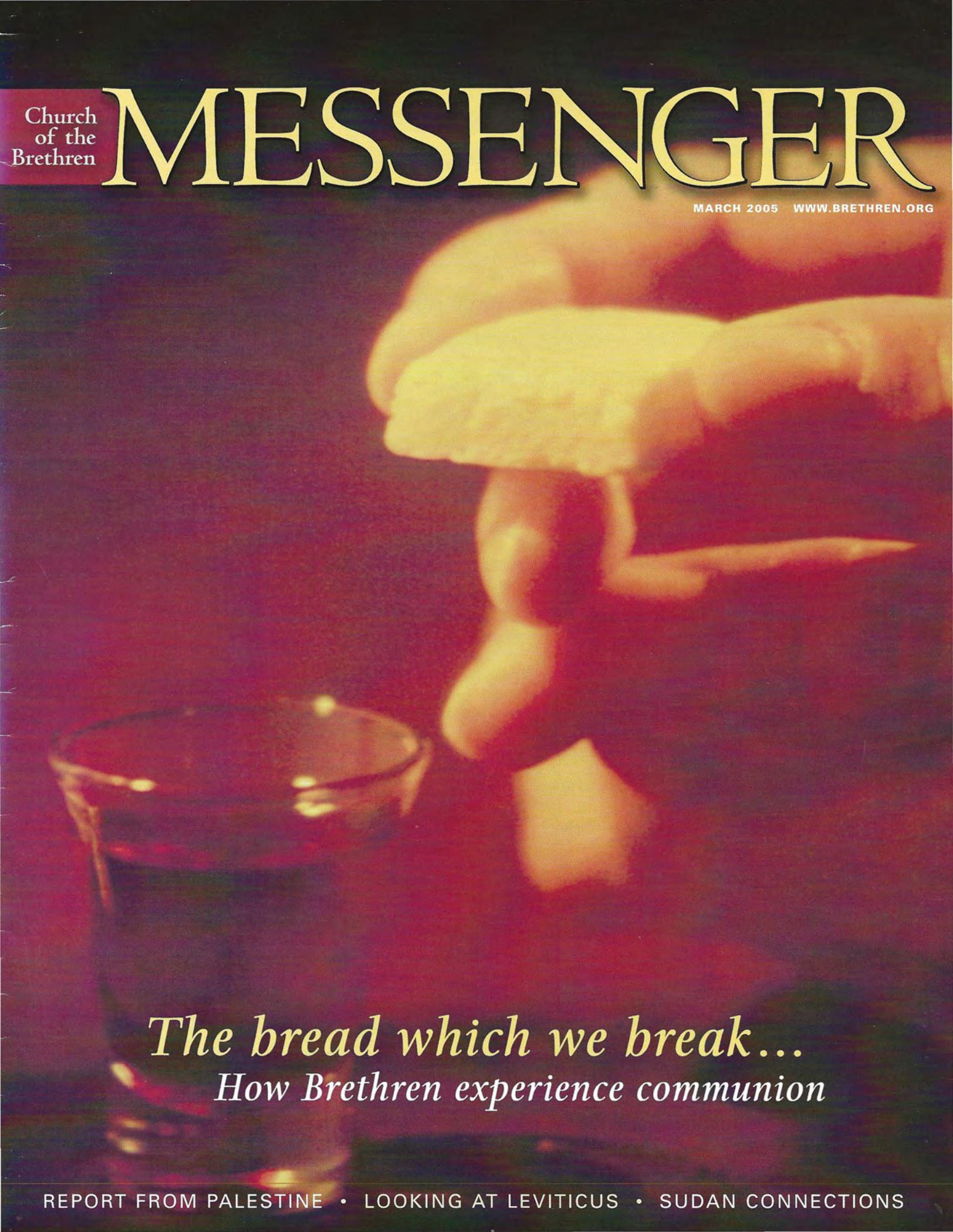


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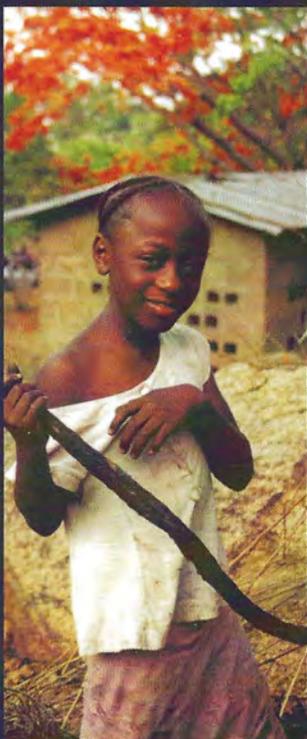
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*The bread which we break...
How Brethren experience communion*

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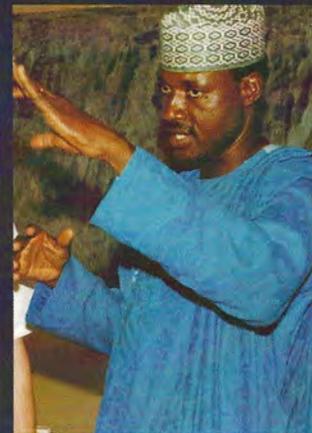
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MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER

The words are familiar to most Brethren: “The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ.” “The cup which we bless is the communion of the blood of Christ.” They are the words we share in observing the eucharist, remembering the Last Supper and Jesus’ death on the cross. As the calendar moves toward Holy Week, Christians around the world will be joining in this observance while looking toward the Easter promise of resurrection. Cover photo is by Phil Grout.

8 The bread which we break . . .

How do Brethren understand communion? Christopher Bowman looks at this ordinance as both “symbol and substance” of faith, walking through the service itself, the themes present there, and the renewal that occurs. A sidebar shares glimpses from denominational history.

12 Message in a bottle

A century ago, some Kansas Brethren were causing dissension in the ranks. It seems they had a surplus of empty beer bottles, and they were using them to hold the wine for communion. Frank Ramirez says the way Annual Meeting handled the issue in 1902 is a model for community today.

14 The gift of unexpected love

In a Lenten reflection, Allen McGrew of the Beavercreek congregation in Ohio reflects on the meaning of complete and total love. It was a love he first saw exemplified by his grandmother, one which made real the ultimate love shared and lived by Jesus Christ.

16 Seeking a ‘viable’ peace

A Christian Peacemaker Teams delegation that included six Brethren traveled to the Middle East in November, seeking to learn more about the long-running conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. Changes in the area have opened windows of opportunity, but different groups are looking through different windows.

18 Leviticus: Blessed desire for holiness (order)

The “Journey through the Word” continues this month with a book that is less read and less known than some: the book of Leviticus. Robert Neff helps readers understand the reams of laws and codes in the larger context of creating order and symmetry as a means to holiness.

20 Oh, for grace to trust him more

Sudanese Christians demonstrate a deep faith and trust in God amid adversity. This faith captivated the Idaho District, which has made a major commitment of relationship with and support for their brothers and sisters in Sudan.

DEPARTMENTS

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Years ago my husband taught me a game called "Greatness I Have Touched." You play it when you're sitting around shooting the breeze with friends. Everyone swaps stories about the times they've been up close and personal with someone famous. For example, my husband cites the time he was in a restaurant and noticed that Pete Rose was dining nearby.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

My list is pretty short. I can tell about climbing a fence to get a glimpse of Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter as they walked down Pennsylvania Avenue on Inauguration Day. Better yet is the time a couple of years later when I actually shook hands with Rosalynn at the American embassy in Quito, Ecuador. Or there's the electric time I was in the crowd when Nelson Mandela was speaking, but that almost doesn't count because I was pretty far away.

My closest and favorite brush with fame is the time I wouldn't let Jesse Jackson use the bathroom.

It was many years ago. I was very young and didn't recognize this emerging political leader. A lowly assistant with a newspaper, I had just been reminded that I wasn't to let visitors borrow our company key to the bathroom down the hall. I learned that day that rules aren't absolutes. (And that in Washington who you are usually gets you where you want to go.)

In the Church of the Brethren we don't put much stock in fame, of course, but we do have our own version of greatness. We recall with fondness the heroes we have known—M. R. Zigler, Dan West, Anna Mow, Ted Studebaker—and sometimes wonder why we no longer produce these larger-than-life figures. Do such leaders no longer exist, or do we not allow them to flourish? Do the times not lend themselves to leadership of this sort? Are we too fragmented today to embrace the same heroes? Or are we too jaded and suspicious to refrain from knocking them down? Do we know too much about their frailties?

And then we remember that most of those heroes in the Bible were no more perfect than we are. Some were considerably less so. A few would have made the front page of the paper for their criminal activity, scandal, and unscrupulous behavior. How did they get their names in the Holy Scriptures?

Apparently being a hero isn't necessarily because of how great we are. It's about God choosing us. It's about *whose* greatness we have touched.

Wendy McFadden

How to reach us

MESSENGER
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

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

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

Editorial:
messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 263
Fax: 847-742-6103

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AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: A "Ministry Rest & Renewal" event will take place April 27 at Elizabethtown College. Author Kirk Byron Jones will speak on the topic "Without the Rest, There is No Music."

Atlantic Southeast: The annual Venture Fun(d) Day at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., is planned for March 12. Proceeds will benefit a new church start in Arecibo, Puerto Rico.

Idaho: The Fruitland congregation held its 55th annual "Ground Hog Feed" Feb. 5 at the church. The all-you-can-eat event is offered for much of the day, with a \$25 maximum per family.

Illinois/Wisconsin: The Pinecrest Community retirement complex in Mount Morris, Ill., is planning a new 20-acre development designed for "independent active adults." A clubhouse and 40 to 60 cottage units are planned.

Michigan: Camp Brethren Heights administrators Roy and Tara Wise were planning to move onsite this winter. Volunteers from the district have been helping to renovate a house at the camp.

Mid-Atlantic: The annual winter youth retreat took place Jan. 28-30 at Hashawha Environmental Appreciation Center in Westminster, Md., with keynote leadership by Brian and Amy Messler.

Middle Pennsylvania: Donna Rhodes is leading a series of classes on "Teaching and Learning in the Church" at the District Center in Huntingdon in March and April.

Missouri/Arkansas: The district women's retreat and spring rally are being combined this year, for a weekend of celebration April 15-16 in Peace Valley, Mo. The rally will feature lay people giving three-minute "mini sermons."

Northern Indiana: The Elkhart City congregation has changed its name to Creekside Church of the Brethren, better reflecting the location of the land it has purchased for a new church building.

Northern Ohio: The Christian education commission is sponsoring a Vacation Bible School materials and ideas "swap meet" March 19 at Chippewa Church of the Brethren in Creston.

Northern Plains: English River Church of the Brethren (South English, Iowa) is helping develop leadership in rural communities through its Rural Life Scholarship Fund. Two English River members received scholarships in 2004.

Oregon/Washington: Covington Community Church of the Brethren, Kent, Wash., focused on Heifer International over the second half of 2004, raising \$1,706 through a recipe sale and other events.

Pacific Southwest: A retreat for licensed ministers and their spouses was held Feb. 4-6 near Fresno, Calif. General Board Congregational Life Ministries executive director Del Keeney provided guest leadership.

Shenandoah: The district's Christian Growth Institute presented a class on "Preaching and Worship" in January and February at Waynesboro (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

South/Central Indiana: Muslim peace activist Ibrahim Malik Abdil-Mu'id Ramey, who coordinates the Peace and Disarmament program of the Fellowship of Reconciliation, spoke at Manchester Church of the Brethren Feb. 6 and Manchester College Feb. 7.

Southeastern: The district gave \$6,000 to the Haywood Center in Clyde, N.C., to help purchase appliances for hurricane victims just now getting back in their homes, and \$3,000 to neighboring Atlantic Southeast District to help with hurricane repairs there.

Southern Ohio: The Outdoor Ministries Commission sponsored a free Sugar Maple Festival Feb. 26 at a maple farm in West Milton, complete with a pancakes and sausage lunch.

Southern Pennsylvania: Chambersburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren hosted the city's annual Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Service on Jan. 17. Pastor Manny Diaz was also on a panel of pastors at nearby Shippensburg University as part of the university's celebration of King.

Southern Plains: The district's winter board retreat and rally took place Feb. 18-19 in Lake Charles, La. The agenda included an envisioning session led by Elsie Holderread.

Virginia: The district men's fellowship sponsored a bowling tournament Jan. 29 in Vinton, Va. . . . Junior high youth had a retreat titled "Looking back, looking beyond!" Feb. 18-20 at Camp Bethel.

West Marva: The stewards commission has purchased an LCD projector to use for Powerpoint presentations and other audiovisual needs. Several gifts made the \$925 purchase possible.



Blast from the past: Keyser (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren's 80th anniversary celebration included a Sunday in which some members of the congregation wore the "plain clothes" of their ancestors. Among those participating in this Dunkard worship service were, front row (seated), "elder" Harold Statler and preacher Steve Wilson; back row, Luetta Miller, Ruth Statler, Dwight Ramsey, Mary Rothreck, and Edith Ludwick.

Western Pennsylvania: Bear Run Church of the Brethren, Mill Run, Pa., contributed \$410 to a local "Give-a-Christmas" drive in Uniontown. The drive—headed by "Sparkle," an animated Christmas star mascot—aimed to raise \$35,000 for the work of the Salvation Army.

Western Plains: After deciding to close, Rocky Ford (Colo.) Church of the Brethren directed 30 percent of the proceeds from the sale of its parsonage and church building to Camp Colorado, with instructions that it be used to accomplish the mission of the camp.



Members of the Hiner congregation's pastoral ministry team took part in a joyous baptism service in Virginia on Aug. 22.

'Little church by the river' grows through outreach

In 1996, members feared that the small Hiner Church of the Brethren (Mt. Sidney, Va.) was going to close. With only 12 to 14 regular members, the financial demands were too great.

The sanctuary, heating system (two oil stoves), and one very small restroom needed major renovations. The part-time ministerial services were depleting the limited church budget. The discouraged congregation voiced their concern: "We can't keep the doors open much longer."

Now, in 2005, fear has turned to sounds of joy. The sanctuary has new stained glass windows and carpet. A new furnace and air conditioning system are in place, along with a new kitchen and Sunday school/multipurpose room with a new restroom. And the building is now handicap-accessible, which is appreciated by both visitors and older members of the congregation.

The church received these "blessings" due to its local community outreach programs. Several members of the congregation helped organize a community-wide drive for funds to raise money for a liver transplant for one of our members. Other activities include preparing and serving many meals; giving funds and labor to special needs like repairing burned homes, cutting and delivering firewood to those unable to heat their homes; and visiting shut-ins.

Over time, people began to ask questions about "that little church beside the river," and a few began to visit and become involved in our outreach activities. On the morning of Aug. 22, 2004, we received 14 new members by baptism and letter. The average attendance is now 32 and growing.

—Garold W. Senger Jr.

To Chicago, with love: A district's quilt ministry

Since 1986, the Missouri/Arkansas District Women's Fellowship has been making and sending baby quilts to Bethany Hospital in Chicago.

Most of the babies at the hospital are born premature and underweight, and the quilt may be the only gift the new parents will receive for their newborn. Some of the women knit layettes, and some sew burial shrouds, too.

The women from the district's nearly 20 small churches work hard all year making quilts. They bring them to district conference to show, then gather them up for the long trip to Chicago. One year they had to rent a trailer.

The most prolific quilter is Laura Richardson, who makes about 20 percent of the quilts that go out in any given year. Richardson, a member of Broadwater Church of the Brethren in southeastern Missouri for about 15 years,

says this is her ministry.

How much time does she spend on the quilts? "I don't count the time, I just do it," she says.—Stephanie Sappington

Michigan church makes 'war toy' public witness

A third annual War Toy Public Witness was co-sponsored by Skyridge Church of the Brethren and Kalamazoo Friends Meeting in Kalamazoo, Mich., Dec. 5. The witness was held along the region's main retail corridor, according to a story in the *Kalamazoo Gazette*.

The 13 people participating in the witness included seven Brethren. Ineke Way, a social worker and Skyridge's outreach committee co-chair, told the paper she was concerned that war toys teach children to glorify war and settle their conflicts with violence. "Some shoppers appreciated the presence of the demonstrators," the paper reported.



Stephanie Sappington



Pastor Paul Leatherman Jr. was happy to oblige when 12-year-old Alicia Gardner asked for an outdoor baptism.

Outdoor baptism adds to a memorable year

For Paul Leatherman Jr., pastor of the Sam's Creek and Edgewood congregations near New Windsor, Md., 2004 was "the year of baptisms." All 16 immersions were significant, but one was particularly memorable.

Last fall, when Alicia Gardner, a 12-year-old at Edgewood, requested an "open-water" baptism, Pastor Paul joyfully obliged. So on a balmy, breezy Sunday afternoon, Oct. 31, Pastor Paul and Alicia descended the banks of Sam's Creek. About 40 family members and friends observed the special ceremony. In addition, some curious onlookers approached the opposite creek bank: Several horses took time out from their munching to check out this unusual happening in "their" pasture!

As Alicia and Pastor Paul arose from the baptismal waters, Pastor Paul exclaimed that despite clinging-wet garments, his body did not feel chilled. Alicia, meanwhile, was protectively wrapped in a sleeping bag by her mother.—Lois Duble

Laura Richardson of Broadwater Church of the Brethren makes about 20 percent of the quilts for Missouri/Arkansas District's annual outreach ministry.

Wichita shares surplus to help tsunami relief

It was the first Sunday in January, just after the news of the tsunami disaster had spread across the globe. It was soon suggested that the members of Wichita (Kan.) First Church of the Brethren consider responding to this need.

During the morning worship, members were challenged to think how much money might be committed to assist with this emergency. It was pointed out that the congregation had a sizeable balance to begin the year, and that members consider making a significant gift out of this balance, to be decided upon

during the following Sunday's scheduled council meeting.

On Jan. 9, the outreach committee made a recommendation to provide funding for this purpose. Then a specific motion from the floor was made to "give \$25,000 to Emergency Response/Service Ministries." The size of the gift surprised some, but after additional discussion the motion passed with a substantial majority vote.

Having been blessed with an excess of funds to begin 2005, the money was available. Being without a pastor the preceding 18 months had left the congregation with a healthy balance, as the pulpit was filled on a rotating basis

primarily by congregational members. But in responding to this call to care for the broken, many members recognized that the congregation, now beginning 2005 with a new pastor, would need to stand by and even increase their pledges in the year ahead to make this gift possible. It was a decision the congregation was willing to make.—Treva Mathur

(Numerous congregations and other Brethren groups have been involved in the relief effort. A roundup can be found at www.brethren.org/genbd/newsline/2005/jan2105.htm. For more details on denominational response to the tsunami, see the News section.)

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

- **Jim Renz** was honored on the 65th anniversary of his ordination to ministry Jan. 23 at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill. Renz was initially licensed by Greenville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren in January 1939. He was ordained the following year while a student at Manchester College in Indiana. He has pastored several congregations, served on the denominational staff as director of Social Welfare, and later became director of Community Concern for Alcoholism in Elgin. He has served on the board of the Pinecrest Community retirement home for 45 years.

- **Earle Fike Jr.**, a member of Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren, was featured on the cover of *The Shenandoah Journal* in January with his new book, *The Something Else Lady*. The book tells the story of former Brethren missionary and leader Anna Mow, who was once Fike's teacher in seminary. Fike was later Mow's pastor at Chicago First Church of the Brethren.

- **Ruth Greenawalt**, director of Bridgewater (Va.) College's Alexander Mack Memorial Library since 1983, and director of the Reuel B. Pritchett Museum on the campus since 1995, retired in December. She had a total of 45 years experience as a librarian.

- The *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News* featured

Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren member **Victor Thomas and his wife, Marcy** (a Church of God member), in a Jan. 2 cover article. It highlighted the couple's unique wedding, at which guests donated hats, mittens, and gloves to needy children rather than bringing wedding gifts. The couple also included a feet-washing service in their ceremony.

- A Jan. 3 Harrisonburg, Va., *Daily News-Record* cover feature marked **Phil Stone's** 10-year anniversary as president of Bridgewater College. Stone, 62, said he plans to stay in the job another three to five years. "There's no way I could exaggerate his accomplishments," board of trustees chair James Keeler said in the article. "Phil Stone is very much a visionary." Stone is a member of Sunrise Church of the Brethren in Harrisonburg.

- **Free Spring Church of the Brethren**, Mifflintown, Pa., dedicated a new sanctuary and fellowship hall this past fall. Several former ministers and those called into ministry by the congregation participated in the service.

- **Loyal Vanderveer** of Williamsport, Md., was among those inducted into the Maryland Senior Citizens Hall of Fame for 2004. He was honored for his 15 years of service as volunteer chaplain for Hospice of Washington County Inc.

Redeeming Martha

"Martha and Mary in one life.
Make up the perfect vicar's wife."

—Ditty written by a Reformation-era pastor

Mary and Martha. You know the story. Two biblical sisters (Luke 10:38-42) who didn't seem to get along.

I grew up with three sisters, so I can understand that. But Jesus said Mary "has chosen the better part," lolling at his feet while Martha is trying to stir the gravy, watch



MARILYN LERCH

the meringue in the oven, and set the table all at the same time—just being a good hostess, a good servant. So Mary knew what was important? Sitting at Jesus' feet is more godly than basting the roast for his dinner? Contemplation is more holy than service?

Why then, growing up in the Church of the Brethren, was I encouraged to walk in Martha's footsteps, not Mary's? Oh, I was supposed to listen to Jesus, but at

the same time become only a little less capable a homemaker than Martha . . . Stewart. How do we reconcile these words of Jesus with our favorite love feast passage, John 13, where we are told to become a servant Jesus-style?

There is fascinating disagreement about the interpretation of the Martha/Mary story. Some would point out that Mary's activity was, in her day, an activity only men engaged in. Thus Jesus becomes a liberator, allowing a woman to be in what was normally a man's position, prais-

So Mary knew what was important? Sitting at Jesus' feet is more godly than basting the roast for his dinner?

Contemplation is more holy than service?

ing her for it. If you agree, then Mary becomes a patron saint of sorts for women who go to seminary. But what about Martha? Where does that leave those who believe deeply that service to others is vital and Christ-directed?

St. Martha. In the church she has become a character larger than life complete with legends. Some say that after the crucifixion, during a time of persecution of Christians, Martha, Lazarus, and Mary were put into a boat with no food, no rudder, and no oars. Miraculously they managed to float to the shore of southern France. There Martha formed a community of women who served others.

St. Martha is often pictured with a dragon on a leash. She tamed the dragon and saved a frightened village. They say she resuscitated a man who fell into a river as he was trying to get closer to hear her preach, and that Jesus

Christ himself officiated at her funeral. Such stories only develop when people's hearts have been deeply touched.

A painting by Fra Angelico shows Martha and Mary with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane: Jesus with hands lifted in prayer, the male disciples asleep, Mary reading with downcast eyes, Martha with hands also lifted in prayer, sharing the concerns of her friend and Lord in his dark hour.

Luke's little interaction in Martha's house has become a lightning rod for those who want to argue faith versus works, for those who want to dispute the relative importance of the life of contemplation versus the life of activism, for those who want to keep women in their place and for those who want biblical proof that women can move into any place in the church. St. Martha: the patron saint for domestics and activists.

If we do a casual, literal reading of Luke 10, it would appear our service-minded church has been bold to disagree with Jesus in his seeming judgment of Martha. But for serious Christians, a casual, literal reading of scripture is never sufficient.

From the squabbling sister story in Luke, let's take a look at John 11, where Jesus comes to Martha's home once again. The story of the resurrection of Lazarus is familiar to many. By the time Jesus gets to Bethany, Lazarus has died. Martha, bold woman that she is, leaves the house and goes to meet Jesus. At the end of a rather frank conversation, Martha confesses her faith. "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world."

Bible scholars call this the central, strongest confession of faith in the Gospel of John. Meister Eckhart, the 13th-century mystic, suggests Martha is much further along the spiritual path than her sister Mary. Martha realizes a life of faith produces a life of faithful activism.

John gives us one more glimpse of this family. Right before what we call Holy Week, Jesus comes again to the home of the three friends for dinner. Mary pours expensive ointment over the feet of Jesus on that occasion. Only two words

describe Martha: "Martha served." Hasn't she learned anything? Well, at least she's not complaining.

But wait a minute: This is just a few days before Jesus washes the feet of his disciples. Could Jesus have been inspired by watching Martha?

Maybe imitating Martha wasn't such a bad thing for me to have been taught. "... You also should do as I have done to you." If Jesus could learn from those around him, what might we be able to learn of God if we approached others with the same curiosity? Who changed—Martha? Jesus? Both? Hmm. What a lot to think about at love feast this year. 

Marilyn Lerch is pastor of Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren, Blacksburg, Va., and Training in Ministry (TRIM) coordinator for the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership.

The bread which we break...

by Christopher Bowman

Holy communion is both symbol and substance of faith

One of the most meaningful experiences for many Brethren is sharing the bread and wine of holy communion (the eucharist). In addition to its use as part of the love feast, in some congregations it has become an important, if occasional, part of a wide variety of occasions including morning worship, weddings, and even Christmas Eve services.

By including communion—this visible manifestation of the word of God—in our worship times, the church provides an invitation to both Brethren and non-Brethren. It is an invitation unique in its substance and meaning.

The service

While the significance and meaning of the service are profound, the procedure is fairly straightforward. One pattern Brethren often follow is outlined in the pastors' manual *For All Who Minister*. Generally, anyone who has made a confession of faith as part of the body of Christ, Brethren or non-Brethren, may participate.

First, an invitation is made:

"All who are in love and fellowship (peace) with their Brothers and Sisters, who do truly and earnestly repent of your sins, who humbly put your trust in Christ and desire his help that you may walk in newness of life, are invited to draw nigh to God and receive this holy communion to your comfort, through Jesus Christ our Lord."

The prayerful study of each of these carefully chosen words will encourage pastors not to skip over this invitation. In fact, some pastors use the invitation as a teach-

able moment in which to deepen the congregation's reflection on the community of faith, the need for grace, the centrality of Christ, and the strength that comes in new life as we give ourselves to God.

For Brethren, being in "love and peace with your Brothers and Sisters" is a pre-condition to receiving communion. "For all who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ, eat and drink judgment against themselves" (1 Cor. 11:29). We are saying in this service, as an early brother wrote, that we have a common union with each other and with Christ. It is especially important to do a bit of education concerning this test of

MESSENGER file photo





community when communion is served without the benefit of the intimacy of the full love feast. A loving community, even when it includes a strained or uneasy peace, actively reminds its members of the hope toward which it points.

After the invitation, and following the example of Jesus, a prayer of thanksgiving is raised and the bread is distributed to all who will partake. Together we share the blessing: "The bread which we break is the communion of the body of Christ." Brethren have no restriction on the type of bread used, but most provide a simple, unleavened bread.

Likewise, the wine is distributed following a prayer of thanks. Usually shared in small, individual cups of unfermented grape juice, the wine is blessed saying, "The cup which we share is the communion of the blood of Christ." The service concludes, in most cases, with a prayer.

Often, in keeping with our Brethren priority of community (*koinonia*), instructions will be given to wait until all are served before we partake of the bread and wine. In this way, we follow the admonition of Paul concerning the bread and cup: "My brethren, when ye come together to eat, tarry one

for another" (1 Cor. 11:33). Words of instruction (either spoken or written) concerning this "tarrying" can serve as a sort of spiritual direction and education for new and old alike concerning community in times of change and conflict.

This simple yet profound communion service is shared in varying forms by almost all Christian denominations. It can bridge the gap between different Christian perspectives. Visiting internationally, for example, one is struck by how welcomed, included, and comfortable one feels at communion. Whether part of a full Brethren love feast or receiving the eucharist alone, one feels as though one is stepping into an experience that overcomes all differences and boundaries.

Breaking the bread, drinking the blood-red juice, and hearing the words of institution cause us to remember the costly love raised up on the cross and confirmed in the heart of each of us as God's adopted children.

Communion themes

Communion is fully Christ-centered. The service calls for and creates a common union in Christ. As we break the bread and drink the cup, the communion of the body and blood of our Lord, we participate, in and through our faith in Jesus Christ, in four themes: remembering, confessing, anticipating, and strengthening.

Woven throughout the service is a thanksgiving



The communion is a joyous experience of the risen Lord and a glad invitation of his return. It speaks of a time when we will no longer receive the bread and wine of communion because the Bread of Life himself will sit at the table with us at the wedding feast of the Lamb.

(*eucharist*) for the gift of Christ on the cross. It serves as a remembrance or memorial celebration (*anamnesis*) of our Lord. Breaking the bread, drinking the blood-red juice, and hearing the words of institution cause us to remember the costly love raised up on the cross and confirmed in the heart of each of us as God's adopted children. It is a memorial celebration of the person and the action of Jesus. In hundreds of Brethren congregations, the communion table at the front of the sanctuary is marked with the eucharistic words of institution, "Do this in remembrance of me."

A second theme of the communion service is that of confession and pardon. As we come to the communion table, we come recognizing our need to be forgiven and made right with God. In the mystery of God's wisdom, this "at-one-ment" is found through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ that is being reflected and received in the bread and wine. In the communion service, we hear the words of Jesus, "Take, eat, this is my body which is broken *for you*. Drink. This is my blood poured out *for you*."

A third theme of the communion celebration is one of



An evolving understanding

Serving communion outside the confines of love feast is a relatively recent option for Brethren. Less than 50 years ago the 1957 Annual Conference "Statement on Church Extension" invited churches to provide communion services in addition to the full love feast. Prior to that time, Brethren expected to receive communion only as part of love feast (feet washing, agapé meal, and communion).

The church clearly stated that these additional communion services were not to replace the love feast. In fact, it said that the emphasis will remain "focused on the threefold love feast as a means of grace" (AC Minutes 1957, p. 71). Yet in many Brethren congregations, participation in love feast has dwindled to the point where a minority of members see love feast as the church's essential "means of grace."

Brethren might lament this loss of focus on the love feast. It is laudable, however, that the motivation for this development was to become more inviting and inclusive to those outside the Brethren tradition. The service provides an invitation for Brethren to renew their faith in, and commitment to, Jesus Christ in a less exclusive manner.

Furthermore, the opportunity to celebrate the eucharist more frequently is also an opportunity for Brethren to think more deeply about the meaning behind the bread and cup so that they might receive these elements "to their comfort in Jesus Christ."—**Christopher Bowman**

Phil Grout



anticipation. "As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again," says Paul. Thus it is more than a reminder of past events; the communion is a joyous experience of the risen Lord and a glad invitation of his return. It speaks of a time when we will no longer receive the bread and wine of communion because the Bread of Life himself will sit at the table with us at the wedding feast of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9).

Finally, in the service of communion there is a real sense of being strengthened. As we renew our participation in the new creation, the new covenant, we are giving ourselves to God at the same time God is giving himself to us. Brother Jim McKinnell has elsewhere pointed out that "the two movements, properly understood, are not really two, but one. . . . The very giving of ourselves to God is a receiving of Him, and the very receiving of Him is already a giving of ourselves" (*Brethren Life and Thought*, vol. 7, no. 2 (Spring 1962), p. 46).

There is real and absolute strength in spiritually ingesting the gift of God's Son. It strengthens and encourages us. Like a blood transfusion for an anemic person, it heals and revives our failing lives. At the core, receiving the gift of Christ, in substance and spirit, body and blood, re-arranges our DNA like a stem-cell transplant of the highest order.

Commitment and renewal

As we partake of the bread and the cup we are pledging allegiance to God in a personal way. It is a kind of resistance to the various allegiances enticed from us by the powers and principalities of our everyday existence. As the community of faith and individually, the com-

munion serves as a moment of utter allegiance when our differences fade into the background as Christ is lifted high.

When we as a community of believers observe communion at love feast, morning worship, weddings, or Christmas Eve services, we are confessing more than the humble service

and love of our Lord. Together we are remembering with thanksgiving, we are being cleansed from sin, we are anticipating the returning King, and we are strengthened as we give ourselves to God as God gives himself to us.

In my local congregation, we recently received communion as part of our Christmas Eve service. Along with the meaningful singing of "Silent Night" and the lighting of hand-held candles, we received a true means of grace.

When we as a community of believers observe communion, we are confessing more than the humble service and love of our Lord. Together we are remembering with thanksgiving, we are being cleansed from sin, we are anticipating the returning King, and we are strengthened as we give ourselves to God as God gives himself to us.

Sharing the bread and cup of communion stressed the presence and power of the living Christ in a way that can transform our service from a birthday celebration into a Kingdom-claiming renewal.

This is the difference between observing and participating in the incarnation. It is the difference between being an audience and congregation—between watching the worship and becoming the Body of Christ. ❧

Christopher Bowman is pastor of Oakton (Va.) Church of the Brethren.



Message in a bottle

A 1902 communion flap demonstrates
meaning of community

by Frank Ramirez

When the Brethren met for the 1902 Annual Meeting in Harrisburg, Pa., they faced the usual varied batch of issues. There was a query about a change of denominational name to avoid confusion in the public mind. There were also questions about dress, insurance, methods of reporting Annual Meeting decisions, as well as the number of delegates sent to Standing Committee.

One of the most complex came from the mission field, where there was concern whether polygamists in India could be baptized. The delegates recognized that India wasn't Pennsylvania, and that a person's past wasn't nearly as important as their present and future behavior, and advised that polygamists could be baptized, provided they were willing to live according to church order.

But there was laughter when the clerk read aloud a paper from Northeastern Kansas on the subject of communion. "Inasmuch as many of the churches place on the Lord's table beer bottles containing the communion wine, which we think savors of the appearance of evil, therefore the Kansas City church petitions Annual Meeting, through District Meeting, to advise that all churches use pitchers or other appropriate vessel."

In a way, the whole matter isn't surprising. Brethren are thrifty people. They saved money when they washed out beer bottles and used them for the communion wine. Evidently it was a common enough practice in both Kansas and Indiana that we have two references to it, and because the question made it to Annual Conference we can also assume that the folks from Kansas were unable to settle the question at the district level. This might mean that it had been done often enough in the past that some took exception to those who wanted to change the practice of

putting communion wine in the beer bottles.

I'm certain another reason the wine was put into beer bottles is that many Brethren, then as now, drink an occasional beer. Our German ancestors brewed their own beer and wine at home, and they drank it—in moderation I'm sure. Brethren were latecomers to the Temperance movement. It was the effect of strong drink when abused in an industrial society that led Brethren to adopt a stance of abstinence. One piece of evidence that early Brethren drank alcoholic beverages is that one of the reasons the Old Orders bolted in 1881 was they objected to the use of grape juice in communion.

In any case, the answer recommended by Standing Committee was terse: "We decide brethren shall not use beer bottles." The moderator added, "Brethren, this is entirely too serious a matter to create levity. It does strike us as being a matter of gravity when we approach the table of the Lord, that the question involving our communion service should create any levity."

These were no lightweights who took up the matter. The moderator was none other than D.L. Miller, the globetrotting Dunker whose "magic lantern" slides brought the world into Brethren meeting houses and led to a good number of them rushing out into the mission field. Then there was George Falkenstein, a respected educator and historian. He was instrumental in founding Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, and his history of the denomination is a neglected classic. Missionary Wilbur Stover also weighed in on the issue. He was a pioneer in urban ministries and a vibrant evangelist. Samuel F. Sanger was himself an Annual Conference moderator, instrumental in drawing Brethren to California. And J.H. Moore advanced the causes of Sunday schools, the mission-

ary movement, and higher education. Self-educated, he was a popular writer and editor of *Gospel Messenger*.

Stover attempted to ground the response in scripture, suggesting that “the teaching of 1 Thessalonians 5:22 and 1 Corinthians 10:32 would be especially applicable in cases such as the one referred to.”

But the real problem for most of the speakers was that the subject of beer bottles was ever mentioned at all. This created terrible embarrassment. I.B. Trout, who edited Sunday school materials for the denomination for nearly two decades, got to the heart of the objections when he said, “I am opposed to the answer of the Standing Committee because we will have an answer on our Minutes to a question concerning communion service with the name beer bottle in it, and I don’t like to read such things.” Moore added, “I am opposed to this going on our Minutes in any form, and I wish I did not have to put it in the MESSENGER that it is here.”

Falkenstein envisioned a media feeding frenzy when he rose and said, “The daily papers will spread this matter from one end of the country to the other in regard to the beer bottles on the table during the communion service, and I move as a substitute that this paper be respectfully returned to the district from which it came.”

By contrast, while G.L. Studebaker deplored “that there was a necessity of such a paper being brought before our Annual Conference,” he admitted as well that this had been going on in his own state of Indiana and that it had been noticed “by my little boy.” He thought it would be better to go on record publicly against the practice.

L.T. Holsinger, who was the first board chair of Manchester College and would himself serve as Annual Conference moderator, agreed and added that it would be far worse if it were made public that the Brethren wouldn’t talk about the issue. He noted: “The public press will say that the Annual Conference was afraid to grapple with it and didn’t give it any answer, which they would have a perfect right to say.”

His argument was “a Bible answer,” and it carried the day. The answer of Standing Committee, with Stover’s added scripture references, was passed and printed in the minutes.

The biblical answers given by Stover are worth examining. Paul reminds the Thessalonians, “Abstain from every form of evil” (1 Th. 5:22). Beer bottles are not intrinsically evil, but the Brethren elders were suggesting that even the appearance of the beer bottles at communion might give the wrong impression.

More to the point, the Corinthian passage makes it clear that even if there’s nothing wrong with the way we do things, if they offend others we ought to consider altering our practices because of the “weakness” of others.

In Paul’s case he was talking about meat offered to idols. In many cities of the Roman Empire the only meat available for sale technically had been offered to a god at a temple in a ritual largely devoid of religious meaning and smacking far more of meat inspection than introspection. However, these perfunctory

rites might offend those whose strict monotheistic background would preclude even the appearance of idol worship. Better to go without and get along, Paul says. We’re part of a community of believers. Stover wanted the beer bottle communicants from the Plains and Midwest to go easy on the eastern Brethren who were possibly drinking in private rather than in public.

Today we remain a body of believers who must take each others’ feelings into account. There is nothing embarrassing about talking about such issues in the public eye. More important, we should at least consider our sisters’ and brothers’ weakness and take the opportunity to serve joyfully by deferring. Conversely, in our own weakness others might serve us, and bear us along for a while. If in our heated discussions over honestly held passions we take time to get off our high horses long enough to bend the knee and wash each others’ feet, we might forget our public embarrassments and make our love for each other even more public by our gathering together.

The delegates to the 1902 Annual Meeting were annoyed

The delegates were annoyed that they received a query that spoke of beer bottles. They were embarrassed that it would appear in the minutes. They worried what others would think.

that they received a query that spoke of beer bottles. They were embarrassed that it would appear in the minutes. They worried what others would think.

Christians are nonconformists. Our number includes folks who put brown glass in the recycling bins, and some who smoke, and folks who scratch when they itch. If we’re going to get embarrassed about each other we might as well not get together at all. And if we allowed ourselves to be embarrassed about each other, we’d never celebrate the love feast. That’s too high a price to pay.

On the night when he was betrayed, our Lord and Savior Jesus embarrassed the disciples when he girded a towel around his waist and performed the menial task of feetwashing. Knowing he was going to die, the King of Kings said, “By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

There’s no room for embarrassment in a fellowship of that nature. It is a privilege to kneel with each other in the presence of Jesus. We come together, not always in agreement about politics, prayer, or belief, but we are one in practice. Jesus said to do this. We’re doing it.

In the end, it’s no use worrying about what outsiders—or insiders—might think, whether it’s our feetwashing, our insistence that Jesus meant what he said about peace, or our flatheaded rejection of human authority in favor of God’s authority as revealed through group Bible study. No matter what we do, we’re out of step with the world. We might as well love each other, serve each other, die for each other as Jesus died for us. 

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

The gift of unexpected love

by Allen McGrew

Grandmother's witness reflected actions of Jesus

I recall sitting in the lunch room one day when one of my friends suddenly burst out laughing and exclaimed, "Look at that old lady hobbling across the cafeteria. What's she doing here?"

I turned my head and saw to my dismay that there across the lunchroom was my frail, white-haired grandmother returning her tray. I really didn't know what to say. I knew what Grandma was doing there: She was tutoring children who had somehow gotten to seventh grade without ever learning to read. But in a larger sense I really did not understand what she was doing there, or why.

Oh, I suppose I had known for a couple years that she volunteered at the seventh-grade building, but until I got there myself it was just a vague, nice, grandmotherly kind of thing that she was doing, and I really didn't think too much about it. But when I got to seventh grade I began to have a different and (I flattered myself to think) more seasoned view of things.

It was the first time I had been thrown into the same school with kids from that "other" side of town, quite literally "the wrong side of the tracks," and frankly I was a bit shocked by them. They wore dirty blue-jean jackets to school and, at the age of 12 or 13, they already tended to congregate at one end of the parking lot where they smoked and occasionally broke into bitter fights. Frankly, they kind of scared me. These were kids who had learned from a very young age that above all else in this world you never want to be soft.

And these were the very same kids my grandmother worked with.

What was she thinking? Was she crazy? How could my little, frail, white-haired old grandmother control these kids? You have to be able to command the respect of kids like these. I had seen some of these kids get into really scary confrontations with even the young male teachers. But that was my grandmother all over: so naïve. To hear her talk about those kids you would have thought she was working with children of God.

So you can imagine my concern when one day I looked up and there, glaring straight at me, was one of these kids. He sort of set his jaw hard and then marched right up to me, and

I thought to myself, "This guy is going to knock my block off." Then he thrust his index finger right into my chest and said, "I just found out that you're Emily McGrew's grandson, and I want to tell you that she is one classy lady."

I guess he imagined that just because I had a loving grandmother I might be his friend. Boy, was he mistaken. I think I almost ran away from him. I couldn't have been more shocked if he had hauled off and slugged me.

On another occasion I recall Grandma being overwrought at the end of a school day. Someone had stolen her pocketbook. It had to be one of her students, but she just couldn't bring herself to believe any of them would do such a thing. "Imagine that!" I thought to myself "Well, at least maybe now she'll wise up to the kind of kids that she's dealing with."

But the lesson was destroyed the next Monday when a tearful girl brought the purse back to her, explaining that some friends had dared her to take it, and she had caved in to the peer pressure. My grandmother just forgave her, of course, and Grandma went right on volunteering at the school until she eventually fell and broke her hip a few years later at age 80.

All those years ago—why do those stories still stick in my mind? Looking back on it now, it seems to me that Grandma was teaching me something as well, though I did not appreciate it at the time. She was teaching me about the redeeming power of love—a love that is offered freely and fully to unexpected, maybe even undeserving people, in unexpected places without reason or justification: people, in other words, just like us.

Sometimes, when I turn to the cross, I think about that kind of love and I wonder, "Why did Jesus throw in his lot with the likes of us? Didn't he know how dangerous that could be?"

But my grandmother's story does not end there, as Jesus' does not end on the cross. Though she lived a few more years, Grandma's broken hip was followed by a stroke. She never walked unassisted again, and speaking became a struggle for her. The woman who for years taught children to read found that she had trouble reading herself. So sometimes, in the evenings I would read to her. But she never lost her capacity to love.



When my family next gathered together for dinner, she was gone, but I still remember how my father suddenly broke into sobs and said, "She kissed my hand last night," and how I suddenly realized that she had kissed my hand, too, and how I felt strangely consecrated by that action.

I especially recall one Sunday when my family gathered together for dinner at my grandmother's home, as we often did, and in the clatter of cleaning up at the end of the meal, my grandmother suddenly did a rather peculiar and symbolic thing. She reached out and took my father's hand and kissed it. And then she took my hand, and she kissed it.

When my family next gathered together for dinner, she was gone, but I still remember how my father suddenly broke into sobs and said, "She kissed my hand last night," and how I suddenly realized that she had kissed my hand, too, and how I felt strangely consecrated by that action.

Is not all love a kind of consecration? I realize now that all love radiates from the one sun of Love, and so it is perhaps not vain if my grandmother's last act calls to mind for me the strangely symbolic actions of our Lord at his Last Supper. "This is my body, broken for you. This cup is my blood, poured out for you."

So long as we and the ones we love continue to live and love, that story has not yet ended. **W**

Allen McGrew is a geology professor at the University of Dayton. He is Quaker by background but is active in Beavercreek (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. This meditation was originally given as a Lenten message at the Beavercreek congregation.

Love feast breaks down barriers

by Duane Grady

Last summer, my 16-year-old daughter Anna and I were on a canoe trip in the boundary waters of northern Minnesota. The trip provided us the opportunity to discuss many topics, including the 2004 Annual Conference held in Charleston, W.Va., where Anna served as a delegate for the first time.

Canoeing in the wilderness is hard work and requires a spirit of cooperation. Early in our trip, Anna raised the possibility that the Church of the Brethren might benefit if people who hold differing perspectives took such a canoe trip together. It's an intriguing idea.

For example, paddling in the same direction is always helpful. A key component of such cooperation is the ability to listen to one another. The decision of delegates at the 2004 Annual Conference to name the barriers that prevent the church from becoming more ethnically diverse and listen to all our members is a good step toward a

brighter future. The goal to be more ethnically diverse, no matter how worthy, cannot happen until we understand the barriers hindering its progress.

One thing we could do is follow the invitation of Tim Button-Harrison who, in his Annual Conference sermon, called us to share love feast with others beyond our own congregation. At one time in our history this was a common practice; it would be helpful for it to return among us again.

The power of the love feast is the mutual act of service and being served. Barriers of power and indifference dis-

appear. The Anderson (Ind.) congregation where I worship has held love feast with an African-American congregation in our community. Beyond the power of this event, ongoing relationships have been established. People who were once strangers now hug and talk when they meet each other in the local community beyond the church.

Brother Tim asked the provocative question, "How far will you go to love and serve your neighbor?" How far can sharing love feast together, especially across racial and ethnic divides, take us toward building a more cooperative spirit in the Church of the Brethren? How far might God lead us if we seek cooperation, learn to listen to one another, and humble ourselves to wash the feet of someone outside our own church family? Being willing to find out just might open doors and windows of hope and possibility.

Duane Grady is an area coordinator for the General Board Congregational Life Teams staff and a member of the pastoral team at Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren.

Regina Bryan





Seeking a 'viable' peace

by Rachel Peterson and Bob Gross

Delegation finds delicate hope amid Israeli-Palestinian conflict

(Above) Members of Christian Peacemaker Teams (www.cpt.org) escort Palestinian children to school in Hebron, due to the difficulties of military checkpoints and the danger of harassment by Israeli settlers.

"...And if a stranger sojourn with you in your land, you shall not wrong him. But the stranger that dwells with you shall be to you as one born among you, and you shall love him as thyself. . . ." *Leviticus 19:33-34 (Jewish Torah)*

On Jan. 9, Palestinians elected a new leader, **Mahmud Abbas**, following the Nov. 11 death of Yasser Arafat—seen by some as an obstacle to any peace agreement between Israel and Palestine. This new election, combined with the pledges by international leaders like Tony Blair of Great Britain to commit to Middle East peace, has inspired renewed attention to the possibility.

Twenty-six small West Bank municipalities participated in their first democratic elections since 1976 on Dec. 23. Fatah, the leftist party of the late Arafat, won the majority of seats, followed strongly by Hamas. Though often seen in a negative light, Hamas has a large social service network (clinics, shelters, etc.) in Palestine, which widens the group's appeal to Palestinians. But even with their strong local showing in December, Hamas boycotted the presidential election in January.

Abbas, who won the presidential race, was Arafat's temporary replacement and is a Fatah member. The Israeli government seems more disposed to deal with Abbas than Arafat; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon personally called to congratulate him on his victory.

Already, Abbas has instituted new efforts to reduce Palestinian rocket attacks from Gaza, and overtures are being made from both Israel and Palestine to renew direct negotiations. It is unlikely, however, that Abbas will consent to a peace agreement that concedes key issues for Palestinians.

Security and occupation

Security, both of the state and people of Israel, is a major concern for Israelis. The Holocaust and other experiences of extreme persecution not only affected those who survived and helped form the nation of Israel, but lingers on in the national consciousness—the yearning to be free from victimization is a powerful drive.

Israel since its formation has fought to defend its legitimacy as a nation. Building an extensive military complex has been a means of defending this sovereignty. Any moves toward peace enacted by the government of Israel must take into account the need of its citizens to feel protected. For Palestinians to have more autonomy, Israelis would have to feel that a Palestinian state would not be a threat.

For Palestinians, the greatest obstacle to building a lasting peace is the Israeli military occupation of Palestine—both the West Bank and Gaza. As long as the occupation continues, Palestine is blocked from its national hopes and plans, and the daily life of Palestinians suffers as employment, transportation, education, health care, and other services are severely disrupted. This occupation is the root of most Palestinian resistance against Israel. History has shown that when Israel withdrew its troops and ended its occupation of sections of Lebanon and Egypt, attacks from those two nations virtually ended.

A letter from church leaders

In a full-page ad in the Jan. 21 national edition of the *New York Times*, leaders of Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Evangelical churches and institutions urged President George W. Bush to seize the opportunity and bring his leadership to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The 57 signers, including National Council of Churches USA general secretary Robert Edgar (who led an official NCC delegation to the Middle East Jan. 21-Feb. 4) and top leadership of a dozen NCC-member denominations, began with their concern for the security and freedom of Israelis and Palestinians, then added an appeal to the security and reputation of the US itself. The full text is at www.cmep.org/letters/2005Jan21_ChurchLeadersInauguralLettertoBush.htm.

Prime Minister Sharon has begun supporting the idea of a Palestinian state, but the construction of Israeli settlements and now the "separation wall" on Palestinian land, the occupation, and other policies remain unacceptable to the Palestinians. Success of the two-state solution would require a radical change in Israeli policy, Palestinian cooperation, and strong third-party support.

The one-state solution, in which Palestinians and Israelis would live together and draw up a constitution for a new state, is an alternative, but unlikely. Currently, only Jews are considered Israeli nationals, and many Palestinians believe that under such a system they would become second-class citizens in a merged state with the Israelis.

While Israelis generally support the two-state solution, the one-state plan is often seen as a threat to the security, as well as the Jewish identity, of the state of Israel.

The issues affecting the peace process are multi-faceted for both Palestinians and Israelis. No matter where one stands, however, the goal of viable peace is the hope of everyone—the tensions lie in the way to get there. **W**

Rachel Peterson, a former Brethren Volunteer Service worker with On Earth Peace, lives in Alpha, Ohio. She is a religion and English major at Wright State University, and a member of New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. Bob Gross is co-director of On Earth Peace. He lives in North Manchester, Ind.

'Right of return'

A second key issue is the "right of return" for Palestinians. Following the independence of Israel in 1948, many native Palestinians were forced to leave their ancestral homes in what had become a new state.

UN Resolution 194 gave Palestinians the right to return to their homes in Israel, but this was never enacted. The refugees remained displaced and without international support. Today, out of a population of 9.7 million Palestinians, an estimated 6 million are refugees.

Possible solutions

Israelis want their nation to have secure borders; Palestinians desire the same territorial integrity. Two possible scenarios for mutual security have been called the "two-state" and the "one-state" solutions.

As its name indicates, the two-state solution would recognize the autonomy of two separate nations: Palestine and Israel. This solution is supported by international law and accords, such as the original Partition Plan of 1947, UN Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as the Oslo Accords.

Amy Knickrehm



On Earth Peace co-director Bob Gross helps plant olive trees in At-Tuwani. The international delegation helped to replant the trees because an attack from Israeli settlers was more likely if the Palestinians did the work without international accompaniment, according to CPT. The trees were donated by the YMCAs of Israel and Jerusalem.

Delegation to Hebron

From Nov. 22 to Dec. 4, a delegation sponsored by On Earth Peace and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) visited Jerusalem and the West Bank. They met with both Israeli and Palestinian groups concerned with the Israeli occupation of Palestine.

Six of the 15 delegation members were from the Church of the Brethren. They were Bob Schnepf, Beaverton, Mich.; Rachel Peterson, Alpha,

Ohio; Neal Musselman, Roanoke, Va.; Val Knickrehm, Goshen, Ind.; Amy Knickrehm, Chicago; and Bob Gross, North Manchester, Ind.

Main sites visited by the group were Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron, and the small village of Tuwani, where olive trees were re-planted amid an Israeli military and settler presence.

More information on the delegation and related peacemaking activities can be found at www.brethren.org/oepa/CPT.

For further reading

• *Hebron Journal: Stories of Nonviolent Peacemaking*, written by Church of the Brethren member Art Gish and published by Herald Press, gives a personal account of Gish's experiences with Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) in the West Bank from 1995 to 2001. Cost is \$17.99. To order, contact Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.

• Significant background on

the region and the ongoing conflict can be found at the website of Churches for Middle East Peace, www.cmep.org. (The organization is joining the Church of the Brethren General Board Witness/Washington Office and many others to plan an advocacy days event March 11-14 in Washington, D.C.)

• Church of the Brethren statements related to the Middle East are among those posted at www.brethren.org/ac/ac_statements.



Leviticus:

Blessed desire for holiness (order)

by Robert Neff

Leviticus is called the third book of Moses, the third book of the Bible. Its Hebrew title is *waiqra*, “And He called.” However, the title that we find in our Bibles bears the Latin Vulgate translation of the Greek title from the Septuagint that meant, in essence, “The Levitical Book” or in Latin, Leviticus.

In later Jewish writings Leviticus was referred to as the “priests’ book” or “law of the offerings” in recognition of the first seven chapters of the book. In actual fact, Leviticus contains both civil and religious law, and the early chapters—contrary to religious writings of other societies—relates to the laity and their behaviors in reference to preparation of an offering.

The book is meant not only for priests, but for all members of the Israelite community. This sets this writing apart from the understanding that religious life is the sole propriety of the priests who work and act apart from the people, guarding the mysteries of

God. One might say that the underlying principle is the priesthood of an entire people who are to present themselves as holy before God.

Organization of the book divides neatly into two major sections: a Priestly Code (Lev. 1-16), which deals with sacrifice (1-7), the priesthood (8-10), laws of purification (11-15), and concluding with the Day of Atonement (16); and the Holiness Code (Lev. 17-26), containing laws on sexual and hygienic behavior, sacred calendar, and sacrifice, and concluding with the Jubilee year (25) and with exhortations for obedience (26). The book ends with an appendix (27) on the redemption of vows.

At the beginning of the 20th century, scholars thought that these laws were reflective of a much later period in Israel’s life, the concoction of post-exilic times. The recent discovery of many texts from the 18th to 12th centuries BCE assists in explaining many of the terms, not fully understood before these discoveries. So the tendency in this generation of scholars is to date many

of the laws to an earlier period and from two sources, priestly and communal law.

Mary Douglas in her book *Purity and Danger* has been most helpful to me in understanding the concepts of order and holiness. She states, “Rituals of purity and impurity create unity in experience. So far from being aberrations of the central project of religion, they are positive contributions to atonement. By their means, symbolic patterns are worked out and publicly displayed.”

When we read the laws about the clean and the unclean animals (Lev. 11), there is a clear delineation between what may be eaten and what may not. Thus pigs, rabbits, camels, and rock badgers are unclean because they do not have the necessary prerequisites of cleanness: chewing the cud and cloven hooves. This division gives symmetry to life, not on hygienic grounds but on a principle of order.

At first this may be a difficult concept to grasp because we lack such symmetry in our lives. A simple example may



suffice: Suppose you came into my home and you went to the bathroom and discovered dirty dishes from the kitchen in the bathroom sink. I believe you would have a sense of outrage that dishes belonging somewhere else were found in this location. Hygienic considerations might come into play. I suspect you would think that something is definitely wrong in this household.

For the traditions of holiness, there is a clear demarcation between clean and unclean, holy and unholy. The basic meaning of holiness is to separate and to be separate. Thus the obedient citizen does not mix fabrics, seeding of fields, types of food. Life is ordered and symmetrical—in other words, holy.

Clearly there is an emphasis on cultic behaviors, but Leviticus 19 is one of the highest ethical chapters in the Bible and contains the second half of Jesus sum-

mation of the law and the prophets, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18; see Matt. 22:39, Mark 12:31, and Luke 10:27).

Israel has become a people of holiness Leviticus defines holiness as the property of a people, not the priesthood alone. This is a revolutionary concept. The purpose of such holiness is that, “I will place my dwelling in your midst.”

The chapter on the Jubilee year (25) addresses the disadvantages that arise over time, poverty, and dislocation (see Luke 4:19), and seeks to build equilibrium in society. The concept of holiness applies to the nation of Israelites so that the concern is with public purity, as in the rite of atonement.

Israel has become a people of holiness, not unlike the words of 1 Peter, “You are a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people” (2:9). Leviticus defines

holiness as the property of a people, not the priesthood alone. This is a revolutionary concept. The purpose of such holiness is that “I will place my dwelling

in your midst, . . . and I will walk among you and will be your God, and you shall be my people” (Lev. 26:11-12). **LU**

Robert Neff has served as a Bethany Theological Seminary faculty member, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren General Board, and president of Juniata College. He is presently chaplain for The Village at Morrisons Cove in Martinsburg, Pa. He lives in Alexandria, Pa.

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 April: Numbers, by Harold Martin.

LEVITICUS: A CLOSER LOOK

When written: Oral tradition from 1500 BCE and later.

Famous concepts: The Day of Atonement, the Year of Jubilee, a worship manual for the laity, compassion for the dispossessed and disabled.

Well-known verses: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (19:18); “For I am the Lord who brought you up from the land of Egypt, to be your God; you shall be holy, for I am holy” (11:45).

Other notes: Leviticus is the third book of what is known as the “Pentateuch,” the five books of Moses. These books are known in Jewish tradition as the “Torah” or the law.

Suggestions for reading: Chapters 11, 16, 19, and 25. Note also that the first six chapters are a “Worship Manual for the Laity,” and in that sense provide a companion volume on ritual to the songs of the Psalter.

Oh, for grace to trust him more

Small Idaho District enjoys blessings of commitment to Sudan

by Jim Hardenbrook

We were seated in the first two rows of the Episcopal Cathedral of Meridi in south Sudan. Our party consisted of 10 men and women traveling on a Church of the Brethren General Board "Faith Expedition." To reach this village, we had traveled the rutted roads of south Sudan for several days. Now we were celebrating the Lord's Day in

that meeting house, seated on backless concrete benches.

During the eucharist, several hundred Sudanese Episcopalians came forward. As I sneaked glances toward the aisle, I didn't look at faces. I looked at the feet that carried these Christian sisters and brothers to receive the bread, the cup, and the blessing.

Some feet were cov-

ered with shoes much like mine, most wore flip-flops or sandals, but a good portion of those feet were bare.

As we sang, a worshiper would lead out and we would follow. Some hymns were sung in the local dialect and a few in English. Of all the songs we sang, one stands out in my memory: "Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him, how I've proved him o'er and o'er! Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus! Oh, for grace to trust him more!"

Recognizing the song, I couldn't help but think of all the ways those Sudanese Christians had "proved him o'er and o'er." And I couldn't imagine how they could possibly "trust him more." After all, many had never experienced peace in their country. I am confident that each of them had buried at least one child who died because of disease or deprivation. Although the civil war had touched these brothers and sisters in many harsh ways, the love of Jesus had also touched them.

I began to think of the events that brought me to south Sudan. My congregation, Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren, had been praying about and looking for an overseas mission connection. Nampa is a generous congregation, giving to the various Church of the Brethren ministries. Several local ministries also receive its monthly support. However, a personal connection with some Christian work beyond US borders was missing.

After some research about Church of the Brethren work in several countries, the congregation decided to take a serious look at Sudan. Our denomination's history in

Sudan, the strong relationship between the General Board and the New Sudan Council of Churches, the significant human needs, and an ongoing civil war were intriguing aspects of a partnership with this nation. So, the church board and ministerial committee asked me to go to Sudan to investigate a partnership in God's work there.

The partnership was born and blossomed. Through official action, the Nampa church and then the entire Idaho District made a 10-year commitment to Sudan. That commitment has resulted in many blessings:

- One Idaho congregation sponsored a Sudanese refugee, and an adult Sunday school class has donated nearly \$7,000 to various projects in south Sudan.
- Every Idaho congregation has made some effort to connect with the Christians of Sudan.
- Several young people have written school papers about Sudan's history and its present situation.
- Church members lobbied the Idaho congressional delegation to pass the Sudan Peace Act.
- A vacation Bible school adopted a village school in south Sudan as its mission project. The students learned about Sudan and raised \$5,500 for the school.
- Continual and intentional prayer support is provided for the people of Sudan, for efforts toward peace as represented in the Comprehensive Sudan Peace Treaty negotiations, and for the growth of the church.
- Expressions of gratitude have been sent to local news outlets for reporting on Sudan.
- A host of informal and unintentional blessings have come from knowing more about Sudan's people and history.

For an extremely small district (six congregations), Idaho has made a significant commitment to Sudan. But we have received much more than we have given, because Sudanese Christians have taught us so many things:

- To make decisions based on faith, not fear.
- The gospel is "good news" that should be shared.
- To balance evangelism and social advocacy.
- To allow the "peace that passes all understanding (to) guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus."
- Peace comes when people begin to see all human beings as creatures deeply loved by God.

My imagination often transports me back to that worship service in Meridi. I can still see those feet. I can still hear that song, "Jesus, Jesus how I trust him." I can still hear my silent plea, "Dear sisters and brothers, teach me how to trust him more." ❧

Jim Hardenbrook is the 2005 Annual Conference moderator and pastor of Nampa Church of the Brethren.

Information on Church of the Brethren General Board Sudan ministries is available at www.brethren.org/genbd/global_mission/.



Janis Pyle

Jim Hardenbrook, wearing hat in foreground, joins other Brethren in walking with the Sudanese people on a 'Faith Expedition' trip.

Brethren continue relief efforts following south Asia tsunami

As estimates of the number of people killed by the tsunami in south Asia approached 250,000, the Church of the Brethren continued its efforts for survivors through support of Church World Service (CWS), the global humanitarian arm of the National Council of Churches.

Brethren relief efforts in mid- to late January included a third grant from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) for tsunami relief, more shipments of supplies from the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., and a call for Gift of the Heart School Kits. Many congregations and districts also collected relief supplies and gathered donations.

Brethren staff took part in a conference call with CWS denominational partners on Jan. 13, in which CWS director Rick Augsburg called in from Thailand. He referred to the destruction as "indescribable," said Jane Yount, disaster response coordinator for the General Board.

Augsburger reported that 500 family shelter kits had been distributed in Sri Lanka and another 1,000 had been requested. In Indonesia, CWS had two medical doctors working in Banda Aceh and four psychosocial care staff working, as well. CWS Indonesia staff participated in food distribution and identified communities still needing aid. A second airlift of CWS material resources had been made, and another major shipment of relief supplies was to be airlifted to Singapore. An additional 50,000 health kits had been requested, "And thanks to the generous response by the US churches, this order can be met," Yount said.

Donations to EDF supported the CWS response and the shipments of relief supplies from the Brethren Service Center. Shipments included 50 cartons of medical supplies to Indonesia on behalf of Lutheran World Relief, and 100 cartons of Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA) Medicine Boxes and three skids of dry food to Indonesia on behalf of IMA, CWS, and the Presbyterian Church. The shipments were combined on one flight with 1,512 relief kits from Mennonite Central Committee. General Board Service Ministries staff began packing another 50 IMA Medicine Boxes for Thailand.

On Jan. 12 a \$10,000 EDF grant was approved to aid the Church of North India's (CNI) tsunami relief in the Car Nicobar islands. "We wish to express our concern, support, and sympathies directly with the Church of North India as brothers and sisters in Christ," wrote Stan Noffsinger, the General Board's general secretary. The Church of the Brethren has had a relationship with CNI since Brethren churches in



Orla Clinton, Church of Sweden/ACT International

India joined with CNI in 1970. The area of India where most Brethren live was not affected by the tsunami.

CNI reported that the "Car Nicobar group of islands has been so completely devastated by tsunami that they would have to be built from scratch." The CNI disaster management committee is overseeing rescue and relief work in Port Blair and Car Nicobar, dispatching relief workers, and offering material aid such as food, tarps, medicine, clothing, and bleach powder. CNI is running two relief camps supporting 4,000 people. CNI itself suffered terrible losses. Eight of 52 CNI pastors in the affected diocese lost their lives. CNI's 33 buildings in the diocese also were either damaged or destroyed.

Emergency Response/Service Ministries also publicized an urgent request from CWS for more Gift of the Heart School Kits. For more information about the Church of the Brethren relief effort and for kit assembly instructions see www.brethren.org. For more information about CWS work see www.churchworldservice.org.

Counselors from Church World Service (CWS) are working with survivors of the tsunami in Indonesia. The Church of the Brethren is supporting the CWS relief work.



Mike DuBose, UMMS/ACT International

Relief supplies from around the world poured into the airport at Banda Aceh, Indonesia, following the Dec. 26 tsunami. The Church of the Brethren participated in the effort with shipments of relief supplies from the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., and through grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund.

HAITI

"We want a Haitian church to be strong in its Church of the Brethren understanding from the beginning," said pastor Ludovic St. Fleur of Eglise des Freres Haitiens, a Haitian congregation of the Church of the Brethren in Miami. St. Fleur was speaking of the new Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti, which received initial direction from a series of strategy meetings in the Dominican Republic (DR) in late November.

In October, the General Board gave its blessing for the Church of the Brethren to be planted in Haiti. The recommendation from the Mission and Ministries Planning Council (MMPC) came after several years of exploring Haiti ministry proposals, including holding a consultation last April in Miami to hear from Brethren congregations and individuals already reaching out to Haiti.

Haitian Brethren in the US and the DR who had pressed the question will partner in the mission to Haiti. MMPC noted that the energy for the mission had come from the Haitians themselves and had encouraged Haitians to lead the new work. General Board Global Mission Partnerships staff will provide some overall coordination and oversight.

"There has been keen interest from both the US and Dominican Haitians to take the Church of the Brethren to Haiti," said Merv Keeney, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships. "It is clear that Haitians in both the US and the DR



Haitian Brethren leaders discuss new Church of the Brethren mission in Haiti. From left are pastors Ernst Merisier, Anastacia Bueno Beltre, Isaias Santos Teña, and Ludovic St. Fleur.

have embraced Brethren identity as meaningful—especially the combination of spiritual and social dimensions of the gospel that are rooted in our Anabaptist-Pietist heritage."

Among those at the November meetings were St. Fleur, whose congregation is the largest in Atlantic Southeast District, as well as longtime Dominican Haitian leaders Anastacia Bueno Beltre, moderator of the Church of the Brethren in the DR; Isaias Santos Teña, pastor of the San Luis congregation; and Ernst Merisier, pastor of the largest Church of the Brethren congregation in the DR, which also is mainly Haitian. Former Dominican moderator Wilson Nova;



opment staff in the DR; and Keeney also participated.

Haiti was ravaged by Hurricane Jeanne in 2004, with 200,000 people homeless and more than 2,600 killed or missing, according to Church World Service. Political instability and unrest continue. In spite of these hardships and what looks like bad timing to some, Haitian leaders are eager to move forward with the mission to their homeland, and they see this action by the church as reflecting God at work in the midst of struggles, Keeney said. Merisier observed during the meetings, "God is always thinking of his children."

Haitian leaders called St. Fleur to coordinate and guide the mission, based on his long experience in the Church of the Brethren. St. Fleur not only has been successful in his own congregation but has been central in the formation of a new Haitian congregation in Orlando. St. Fleur also has been nurturing a new fellowship in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, giving leadership to the new effort from Miami.

Several Haitian leaders reported eagerness from friends and family in Haiti about the coming of a new church planting effort, which prompted considerable discussion, Keeney said. St. Fleur emphasized the need to build a solid foundation. The approach of the mission will be grassroots evangelism and church planting rather than inviting in existing congregations that have formed another denominational identity.

When asked how others can help at this early stage, St. Fleur responded, "What is needed most right now is prayer."—Janis Pyle

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$20,000 to SHARECircle for refugees in Angola
- \$20,000 to the General Board's Emergency Response ministry for a project in Poquoson, Va.
- \$15,000 to Emergency Response work following hurricanes in Florida
- \$15,000 to Church World Service for work with refugees in Afghanistan and Pakistan
- \$10,000 to Church of North India to support its tsunami disaster response
- \$1,535.11 to Emergency Response to close out a project in West Virginia

Recent grants from the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund

- \$14,000 to Guatemala for ongoing reforestation, wells, and stoves programs

Annual Conference Council works on strategic plan

The Annual Conference Council, which met Nov. 29-30 in New Windsor, Md., and by telephone conference call Dec. 10, has completed a draft of a first-ever strategic plan for Annual Conference. The document will guide the purpose and planning of the Church of the Brethren annual meeting, Annual Conference secretary Fred W. Swartz reported.

In the conference call the council also gave its endorsement to continued conversations between the General Board and Selective Service, and endorsed Church of the Brethren participation in an Anabaptist meeting on alternative service opportunities. The Consultation on Alternative Service will be held March 4-5 at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill.

The strategic plan consists of mission, vision, and core value statements, as well as objectives and strategy actions, and will be presented to the 2005 Standing Committee for approval. If accepted, sections will be shared with Conference delegates. The

plan is headed by the mission for Conference, which states, "The Church of the Brethren Annual Conference exists to unite, strengthen, and equip the Church of the Brethren to follow Jesus."

In other business, the council approved a grant of \$18,000 to help the 300th Anniversary Committee launch its plans for the commemorative year. The council acknowledged with gratitude in-kind support that has come to the committee from Brethren Press and Brethren Benefit Trust.

The council continues to work on a revision of the denomination's Manual of Organization and Polity, to be submitted to Standing Committee for recommendation to Conference, with a working draft to be completed by August 2005 and a print copy to be published by 2008. The council also continues to work at engaging denominational officials in forming answers to questions related to ministry issues raised by a 2002 query from Michigan District, and is monitoring implementation of Conference's answers to the 2004 queries on "Doing Church Business" and "Multi-Ethnic and Cross Cultural Ministries."



The Board of Trustees of Bethany Theological Seminary met in October in Richmond, Ind. On the agenda for the meeting was the seminary's accreditation self-study process and a strategic plan.

Bethany board participates in accreditation, strategic plan

Meeting Oct. 29-31 in Richmond, Ind., the Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees participated in the seminary's accreditation self-study process by completing an online survey, adopted three questions for use in developing Bethany's 2006 strategic plan, and approved a 4.4-percent tuition increase for 2005-2006.

The board also welcomed new members Charles Boyer of La Verne, Calif.; Jerry Davis, La Verne, Calif.; David Eller, Elizabethtown, Pa.; and John Miller, York, Pa.

Questions for the strategic plan were developed through surveys of representatives of the seminary's internal and external constituencies, done by the board's strategic planning committee. The questions adopted are: "How do we provide a cogent and coherent identity to each degree program and educational venue in our graduate curriculum? How can we revise our ministry education program to better prepare leadership for the church, taking seriously the issues identified by constituency? How can we respond to the urgent call to help the Church of the Brethren better discern its distinctive faith and calling?" The questions will engage the board, faculty, and staff for several years as the seminary identifies ways its programs may be revised.

In other business, the board learned that gifts for Bethany's financial campaign "Inspired by the Spirit—Educating for Ministry" exceed \$13 million, and that *Brethren Life and Thought*, the Church of the Brethren academic journal, has accepted a proposal from the American Theological Library Association (ATLA) to digitize all back issues. The journal will receive royalties from the sale of ATLA subscriptions and can offer free access to the electronic version to current subscribers. The journal will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2005.

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, Manchester Church of the Brethren, 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.

April 1-3 Bethany Theological Seminary board meeting Richmond, Ind.

April 1-3 Mission Alive 2005 Goshen, Ind.

Al Brightbill, a noted Brethren musician and seminary professor, did preliminary work to restore the Kurtz/Hartman organ in the 1960s with some General Board staff, after the organ arrived at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., in badly deteriorated condition. Because of their work, organ restorer John Brombaugh of Middletown, Ohio, required only two months to complete the job in 1976. Brombaugh, an organ restorer of Brethren background, had been trained in Europe. After its restoration, the organ was played at Annual Conference in 1976.



Courtesy of BHLA

Brethren pipe organ receives historical society award

The 1698 Johan Christoph Hartman pipe organ—known to Brethren as the “Kurtz organ”—located at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., has been awarded a citation by the Historic Organ Citations Committee of the Organ Historical Society. The small pipe organ is part of the collection of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives of the General Board.

Henry Kurtz, editor of the first Brethren periodical *Gospel Visiter*, owned the organ and probably brought it with him from Germany, archivist Ken Shaffer says. The organ is known to the Organ Historical Society by the name of its maker.

The Hartman organ is one of the two oldest organs in the US to receive the distinction, wrote Stephen Schnurr, chair of the committee, in a letter to Shaffer. Since the awarding of the first citation in 1975, some 330 organs in the US and Canada have received the honor. The society hopes to present the citation in a fall 2005 ceremony that may include a brief recital on the organ.

Personnel moves

Don Fecher resigned from Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) effective Feb. 18 to join the staff of the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC). He also plans to develop an independent financial consulting business.

Fecher has been director of BBT's Brethren Pension Plan and Employee Financial Services since 1998, when he also joined the

executive management team. He first came to BBT in 1995 as manager of accounting.

At ABC, Fecher will serve as director of the Fellowship of Brethren Homes. His responsibilities will include coordinating the Fellowship of Brethren Homes' Annual Forum, working with the Peace Church Purchasing Group and the Peace Church Risk Retention Group, and serving as liaison between the homes and the denomination. He will work on a part-time, contract basis from his home and the ABC offices in Elgin, Ill., where he is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren.

- On Earth Peace co-director **Barb Saylor** in February moved to the Louisville, Ky., area, where her husband, Mark, accepted a job as coordinator of The Presbyterian Church (USA) International Hunger and Development Program. Saylor will continue with On Earth Peace, working from their home in Kentucky and returning to the offices in New Windsor, Md., as needed for meetings and presentations. Her last day in New Windsor was Feb. 7. She can be contacted via e-mail at bsaylor_oepea@brethren.org.

- **Jacki Hartley** has resigned as coordinator of the Church and Persons with Disabilities Network, a ministry of the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC). Hartley joined ABC in May 2004 to serve in the part-time, contract position, then was hired for a full-time position with Hospice of Northeastern Illinois in July. With Hartley's departure, the Church and Persons with Disabilities Network will be staffed by ABC's executive director Kathy Reid, who also staffs the Whole-Person Health Ministry and the Denominational Deacon Ministry.

Pennsylvania society publishes Alexander Mack Jr. Day Book

A historic Brethren document, *The Day Book/Account Book of Alexander Mack, Jr.*, has been published by the Pennsylvania German Society.

“Mack's *Day Book/Account Book* is a valuable source of information about the colonial Brethren,” General Board archivist Ken Shaffer said. “It includes information about the Germantown congregation and other colonial Brethren, information about Mack's family, details about his weaving business, and poems he wrote on his birthdays.”

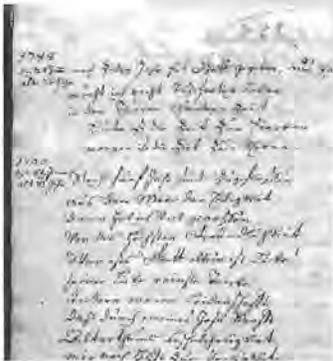
The publication contains a transcription of the contents of the book, a translation of the German by Edward E. Quinter, an index by Kate Mertes, and an introduction and more than 500 annotations by Brethren historian Donald F. Durnbaugh. The original document was handwritten, some in English but much of it in German, Shaffer said.

Mack (1712-1803) came with his father and brothers to America in 1729. After his father's death in 1735, he joined the Ephrata (Pa.) Cloister for several years and then spent a few years on the Virginia frontier. In the late 1740s he returned to Pennsylvania, married, and became an elder in the Germantown congregation. He earned a living as a weaver and is considered a major leader of the Brethren in second half of the 1700s.

The original document of the book was preserved by Abraham Harley Cassel, a Mack descendant, Shaffer said. It was purchased from Cassel by Martin Grove Brumbaugh, who later donated it to Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.).

“At some point it was removed from the college collection and ended up in the hands of collectors,” Shaffer said.

“Eventually it was purchased by the General Board and is now housed at the Brethren Historical Library and Archives in Elgin, Ill.” The book is available for \$20 plus shipping and handling from Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.



ONCAMPUS



Bridgewater College (*Bridgewater, Va.*)

Joe Rogers, former lieutenant governor of Colorado, presented "The Dream Alive Program" at a Feb. 3 convocation. Created by Rogers, The Dream Alive Program is an acclaimed dedication to the memory and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. and leaders of the civil rights movement.



Elizabethtown College (*Elizabethtown, Pa.*)

Carole Isaak, associate director of academic advising, was chosen as one of 10 Outstanding First-Year Student Advocates by the National Resource Center for The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition and Houghton Mifflin Publishing Company. Isaak was selected from 140 nominations submitted nationally for her role and impact on first-year college students.



Juniata College (*Huntingdon, Pa.*)

Chuck Knox, a former football star at Juniata who went on to coach in the National Football League, has donated \$1 million to his alma mater to endow the Dr. Charles R. and Shirley A. Knox Chair in History. Knox, who graduated from the college in 1954, was a history major.



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

The ULV President's Dinner Gala celebrated its 10th year as the university's premier fundraising event Jan. 29. Rob Fukuzaki, a university alumnus and lead sports anchor for KABC-TV Channel 7 in Los Angeles, was the evening's guest of honor. He received the President's Award, presented to individuals who have distinguished themselves in the community.



Manchester College (*North Manchester, Ind.*)

Manchester faculty members Dr. Ingrid Rogers, Dr. Kim Duchane, and Dr. Russell Coulter-Kern have each received \$3,000 scholarships from Indiana Campus Compact to promote service learning on college campuses. Rogers' grant will support an English as a Second Language program at the North Manchester Learn More Center.



McPherson College (*McPherson, Kan.*)

The SBC Foundation, the philanthropic arm of SBC Communications, in January announced a \$5,000 grant to the college. The grant was a matching gift made as a result of a gift made to the college by McPherson College president Ron Hovis, who is an SBC retiree. David Kerr, president of SBC Kansas, personally presented the grant at McPherson on Jan. 17.

Cabinet picks 'Come and See' as NYC 2006 theme

The 2005-2006 National Youth Cabinet held its first meeting Jan. 14-17 in Elgin, Ill., quickly getting to work on details for next year's National Youth Conference (NYC).

The initial meeting produced an NYC theme, "Come and See," based on John 1:39, where Jesus asks John's disciples what they are looking for, and then invites them to "come and see"—not to come and *hear* about Jesus' ministry, but to come and see for themselves what Jesus was doing. The cabinet also brainstormed on speakers, service projects, and other aspects of the conference. NYC will take place July 22-27, 2006, at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo.

Registration for NYC 2006 is expected to be between \$375 and \$400. Further details on the conference, held every four years for youth who have finish ninth grade through one year beyond high school, will be posted at www.nyc2006.org as they become available. It is one of the largest events in the denomination, with 4,000-5,000 people typically attending.

Youth serving on the cabinet are: Leigh-Anne Enders, Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Nick Kauffman, Goshen (Ind.) City; Zac Morgan, La Verne (Calif.); Rachel Stevens, McPherson (Kan.); and Erin Smith, Palmyra (Pa.). Adult advisors are Becky Ball-Miller, Union Center (Nappanee, Ind.), and Shawn Flory Replogle, McPherson (Kan.). General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry director Chris Douglas and NYC 2006 coordinators Cindy Laprade, Beth Rhodes, and Emily Tyler work with the group. The cabinet next meets in August in Colorado.



Walt Wiltschek

Serving on the 2005-2006 National Youth Cabinet are, from left: NYC coordinators Beth Rhodes, Cindy Laprade, and Emily Tyler; Leigh-Anne Enders, Nick Kauffman, Erin Smith; adult advisors Becky Ball-Miller and Shawn Flory Replogle; Zac Morgan; Chris Douglas, director of Youth/Young Adult Ministry; and Rachel Stevens.

Regional conference season ready to begin

Spring marks the time for Regional Youth Conferences to be held around the denomination. The following conferences are scheduled for senior high youth in the coming months (Western Regional Youth Conference is held only once every four years; it is next scheduled for 2008):

- **McPherson College Regional Youth Conference:** March 4-6, McPherson, Kan., for youth in the Plains districts and Missouri/Arkansas.
- **Eastern Regional Youth Conference:** March 11-13, Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa., for youth in the four Pennsylvania/Northeast districts.
- **Roundtable Regional Youth Conference:** April 8-10, Bridgewater (Va.) College, for youth in the Mid-Atlantic region and Southeast.
- **Manchester College Regional Youth Conference:** April 16-17, North Manchester, Ind., for youth in the Midwest.

When lightning strikes twice

Over the eons, the power of nature's might has evoked awe and reverence. Job paid homage to it. Psalmists and prophets saw storms as signs of both God's literal power and as metaphor. And more recently, in the



LANI WRIGHT

past 120 years, there has been a furor over the inspiration of two poets, both of whom were compelled to write in the midst of lightning and thunder.

You see where I'm going with this, right?—toward that not-so-old (comparatively) favorite, "How Great Thou Art," of course. We were all primed to find it in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* way back in 1992. Finally we could dispense with having to scour other

hymnals for this gem. Then, eclectic as the then-new hymnal was, "How Great Thou Art" still wasn't there! Some were sorely disappointed.

Years later, it appeared in the Praising/Adoring book (#2) of the *Hymnal Supplement* series, with the first verse in Swedish, which only a handful of us will sing.

What gives? The short, but not particularly illuminating answer: It's a question of copyright, complicated by perceived ethical considerations.

Here's a more comprehensive answer, and it comes to you as the next installment in a series providing background about supplement hymns.

Hymnal Supplement #1021, "How great thou art"
Tune: O STORE GUD; Swedish text: Carl Gustav Boberg (1859-1940), 1885; Sanningsvittnet, 1891; English lyrics by Stuart K. Hine (1899-1989), 1953
Music: Swedish folk melody, arranged by Stuart K. Hine, 1949

In 1885 a Swedish lay preacher named Carl Boberg was inspired to write poetry by his experience in a thunderstorm (a relatively rare meteorological phenomenon in Sweden) and its aftermath. As such things happen, someone began singing it years later to an old Swedish folk melody. A literal translation of Boberg's first stanza:

"O great God,
 when I consider the world you have
 created with your powerful word,
 how your wisdom guides the web of life,
 and all are fed at your table,
 then my soul breaks out in a song of praise,
 O great God, O great God."

Boberg's subsequent eight stanzas explicitly describe how the thunder, lightning, rain, and wind put him in mind of Bible stories about God's promises, grace, and

salvation. His poem was translated into German, then into Russian. Meanwhile, Boberg went on to edit the weekly *Sanningsvittnet* (Witness of the Truth), in which he published the poem, and served in the Swedish parliament. His works include several volumes of poetry and many hymns; he also helped compile the first two hymnals of the Swedish Covenant Church.

About 35 years after Boberg wrote his poem, Stuart K. Hine, an English missionary in Russia, learned of the Russian translation of Boberg's poem being sung to the Swedish melody. The story continues, as quoted in a letter from Hal Spencer, president of Manna Music, which controls copyright of "How Great Thou Art":

"Later, under inspiration (amidst a storm in the Carpathian mountains), Stuart K. Hine wrote original English words, and made his own arrangement of the Swedish melody." This is the version popularized by Bill Carle, Billy Graham, and Lawrence Welk, and owned by Manna Music.

Once they become very popular, or reach a certain age, songs (as well as children, athletes, and artists) sometimes become difficult to control. At first, Manna put a high price on use of its song, and that precluded its inclusion in most Brethren publications. But in the early 1990s it wasn't price that caused the hymnal committee to balk—it was Manna's insistence that Stuart K. Hine be given exclusive credit for creation of the song.

Knowing the story of the Swedish version, the committee decided that the issue was a matter of accuracy in attribution, and chose not to engage in what would likely involve costly litigation. While a direct translation of Boberg's poem was considered, the committee recognized that it would not be the version of "How Great Thou Art" that people knew and loved to sing.

Brethren clamored again for the song when suggestions for the supplement series were solicited. This time, a compromise was reached with Manna. Aiming for consistency with the hymnal (songs originating in non-English languages have the original language appear as the first stanza; for example, see Nos. 1020, 1080, 1097), the first stanza is the original Swedish that Boberg wrote. Then the supplement departs from the hymnal style of using the first line as the header, in deference to Manna's request that the header be "How Great Thou Art." Therefore, Boberg gets proper credit as the author of the Swedish words, Hine gets his due for his English poem, and those who use the *Hymnal Supplement* series get to have their souls "break out in a sound of praise."

May lightning strike as you sing—figuratively, of course! 

Lani Wright lives in Cottage Grove, Ore., and is a member of Springfield Church of the Brethren. She has assisted with several Brethren Press hymnal-related projects.

For more information on the *Hymnal Supplement*, call Brethren Press at 800-441-3712.

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More than one million new and replacement nurses will be needed by 2012.*



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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/. Applications submitted by April 1 will be considered for the Fall 2005 academic year.

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

Where do deacons find news and ideas about the kind of caregiving they provide?

Caregiving A Quarterly for Deacons and Pastors

Caregiving is a quarterly publication providing ideas and solutions to congregational caregivers in the Church of the Brethren. Each issue focuses on topics such as "Caregiving Can Be a Burden or Opportunity," "How Does Money Affect Caregiving?," "Reclaiming the Role of Elderhood" and "Making Gifts Meaningful." Also, department pages are dedicated to deacons, family life, health and older adults. Other regular sections include a meditation, book review, resource listing and caregiving news. Annual subscriptions are \$12 for individuals and \$6 for congregations — a special rate geared for deacon groups.



Association of
Brethren Caregivers

For information about these caring ministries, call the Association of Brethren Caregivers at (800) 323-8039 or visit www.brethren.org/abc/.

Pontius' Puddle



Go beyond Bible study

As announced in the December MESSENGER, for the next five years we Brethren will be "searching the scriptures" month by month. That's good, but not good enough! Let us learn from Jesus.

In John 5:39-40 Jesus says, "You search the scriptures, because you think in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

Even better than the five-year Bible study could be a five-year study of Jesus and Christian discipleship—coming to Him that we "may have life." For this series I suggest

that primary attention be given to the Great Commandment as recorded in Matthew 22:35-40 and the Great Commission as given in Matthew 28:18-20. I would call special attention to Jesus' statement, "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you." In five years, there could be a whole *new* Church of the Brethren!

Olden D. Mitchell
North Manchester, Ind.

More straight talk needed

Amen and amen to the very excellent letter, "Time to Say No," by Glenn Hassinger of

Myerstown. It's past time for the Christian church to take a firm stand on Christ's exhortation on sin and moral degradation.

Billy Graham said many years ago there would not be AIDS if people adhered to the biblical teaching and lived a life of purity instead of moral corruption and despicable deeds. Glenn is right: Our church says it's unacceptable and at the same time almost feels they are apologetic for having made that decision!

We need more straight talk from our pulpits on many issues confronting our nation and world, such as 4,000-plus abortions a day in America, gambling, alcohol and drug abuse, homosexuality, etc. Maybe then we'll gain in membership in America. It requires tough love, but it must be done.

Wilmer E. Grubb
Palmyra, Pa.

Is our faith too small?

I want to add something to the conversation by brother Glenn Hassinger in the December 2004 MESSENGER. There is a time to say "No." In the context of idolatry, promiscuity, adultery, or sexual violence we can find a few scriptures describing homosexual behavior as sin. Heterosexual behavior in such contexts is also sin (and is more widespread in our society). A poignant question needs to be asked: Where is sexual orientation addressed?

Furthermore, there are not just two views related to the complexities and wonders of sexuality (both heterosexual and homosexual), but a whole spectrum of perspectives and understanding. And if we "straights" think we can figure out the causes and dynamics of gays and lesbians without really relating deeply with them, then we truly are stuck in our blind spots and presumptions.

The reality is that we all know in part, and we are not of one mind; we would be more faithful to affirm conscientious and loyal

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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.

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Roger Eberly
Milford, Ind.

January issue was excellent

The January 2005 MESSENGER is the finest edition you have done. I was especially looking for information on the Christmas Eve service on CBS. Everyone who has heard the program agrees it was second to none. The article by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford did honors to a superb production. The editorials by Walt Wiltschek and Wendy McFadden also deserve great praise. Good job. Well done.

Jay L. Christner
Somerset, Pa.

'Amen' to Brazil letter

Amen to Stephen Newcomer's reminder [December 2004 Letters] that the "new mission" in Brazil is not a new effort.

It is true that Onaldo Alves Pereira and Stephen Newcomer and others worked very hard in the 1980s to "plant and nurture seeds of faith in that country." Regardless of the outcome of those efforts at that time, several people worked very faithfully and against

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many obstacles. Let us not, as Stephen indicates, "rewrite the history" of the Church of the Brethren efforts in Brazil.

Beverly Brubaker
Gratis, Ohio

A highlight of Christmas

The Christmas Eve service on CBS was so well done and inspirational. It was an honor for our beloved Church of the

Brethren to be chosen. Thank you to each who participated. I hope David Letterman tuned in!

As Christopher Bowman spoke, I thought of when he was a small boy, when his father, Bob, was our pastor. Then he was a "preacher's kid." He is to be congratulated. It was a highlight of my Christmas season.

Ann King Nies
Reinholds, Pa.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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

Looking ahead to travel in 2005, consider joining a MENNONITE YOUR WAY TOUR and "travel with a purpose." The new 2005 tour brochure is now available. Consider: RiverBarging the Mississippi, April 5-13—New Orleans to Memphis at the peak of spring flowers; Canadian Rockies & Northern Parks, June 16-July 7—Teton, Yellowstone, Glacier, Banff & Jasper (fly-in options); Heart of Europe, July 13-28—France, Germany, Austria & Switzerland with scenery & Anabaptist story; Alaska & Yukon Tour/Cruise, August 5-20; Maritime Provinces of Canada, September 6-17. Travel with brothers and sisters of the Anabaptist family. Complete 2005 tour brochure or specific tour itineraries: MYW TOURS, Box 425, Landisville, PA 17538; 717-653-1111 or 800-296-1991; e-mail: myw1525@aol.com; website: mywtours.com.

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Vacation Fundraiser: Be the first to make a single, one-time donation of \$2,500 or more to Camp Ithiel in Florida before March 31, 2005. The camp is owned and operated by Atlantic Southeast District of the Church of the Brethren. The funds are needed to pay off, in part, the construction debt on the Kramer Dining Hall. The first to call and make the donation will receive a prepaid vacation for one week at any one of over 20 Fairfield Resorts located in the USA, Hawaii, and Caribbean, with accommodations for up to four people. Diall 800-442-0183 on any phone, anywhere, and ask for Tom Nicholson to find out more about this vacation award and help feed the campers this summer. tomtom@kua.net.

On Earth Peace, the peace and reconciliation arm of the Church of the Brethren, seeks a Program Coordinator to oversee its peace education program. This includes planning, staffing, and leading educational events for all ages, particularly youth and young adults; coordinating peace education resources; interpreting On Earth Peace programs; and other responsibilities. Requires commitment to Christian peacemaking, experience with educational programming, strong communication skills and organizational ability, self-motivation. Send letter and resume with 3-4 references to On Earth Peace, PO Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776 or fax to 410-635-8707. Application deadline April 30. Position available August 1, 2005. Call 410-635-8704 or e-mail oepa_oepa@brethren.org for more information, including complete position description and announcement.

Heeeeeeeere's germination!

Of all the tributes to Johnny Carson shared following the comedian's death in late January, some of the most moving ones came from a long list of other comedians who got their "break" on his show.

Bill Cosby, one of those comedians who appeared on *The Tonight Show*, said in a statement: "Johnny was responsible for the beginning and the rise of success for more performers than anybody. I doubt if those numbers will ever be surpassed."



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Carson was a comic genius in his own right, but the obituary stories noted again and again his willingness to step aside and let others get the laugh. He was characterized as the perfect "straight man" who could feed someone just the right line.

Other aspects of his personal life might not be a model to follow, but the graciousness of his professional life stood out. He wasn't afraid to share the spotlight.

"He always brought the best out of every guest," comedian David Brenner said to MSNBC. "He put his ego in a drawer. . . . I can't think of anything I've had in my career that didn't spring from Johnny Carson, not a single thing."

Who wouldn't smile at hearing such words describe their legacy? The seeds we plant may well be one of the best measures of our time in this life.

As Christians, of course, we are called to plant seeds, too: encouraging children and youth as they seek out their vocation, helping other church members realize their own gifts, working in large and small ways to restore lives, speak for the voiceless, and improve the lot of the marginalized. It's a year-round calling, but seeds especially embody the Easter themes of resurrection and new life.

This month marks the 25th anniversary of the assassination of Archbishop Oscar Romero, who excelled at such sowing. Romero, a Catholic archbishop from El Salvador, became a hero and martyr

to the impoverished and oppressed people of that country and beyond.

He spoke out about the corruption of his government, the human rights violations, and the rampant inequality he saw, becoming the voice of the masses. He went right on speaking until he was gunned down by one of the "death squads" believed to be working in conjunction with the government.

Romero knew the enormity of the task he faced, and he held no illusions of achieving all his goals no matter how long he lived. He once wrote in a poem:

"This is what we are about: We plant seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development. We provide yeast that produces effects beyond our capabilities. . . .

"It may be incomplete, but it is a beginning, a step along the way, an opportunity for God's grace to enter and do the rest. . . . We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs. We are prophets of a future not our own."

I often marvel at my stepfather's ability to plant acres and acres of grains, knowing where to put the seeds, how to balance the crops to make the most of the soil and the conditions, and then caring for them in faith that the harvest will come.

It's a hard business, working without knowing whether one will ever see the end results, whether it's with real seeds or figurative ones. It can be risky to

The seeds we plant may well be one of the best measures of our time in this life.

give an opportunity to someone who's untested. It can be tiring to coax out someone's God-given potential. It can be scary, even dangerous, to shine the spotlight into dark corners.

So with all that against us, we still have to keep planting? We have to press on trusting that God will nurture those seedlings, and someday change will blossom and people will bloom?

As Carson sidekick Ed McMahon might say, "You are correct, sir."—Ed.

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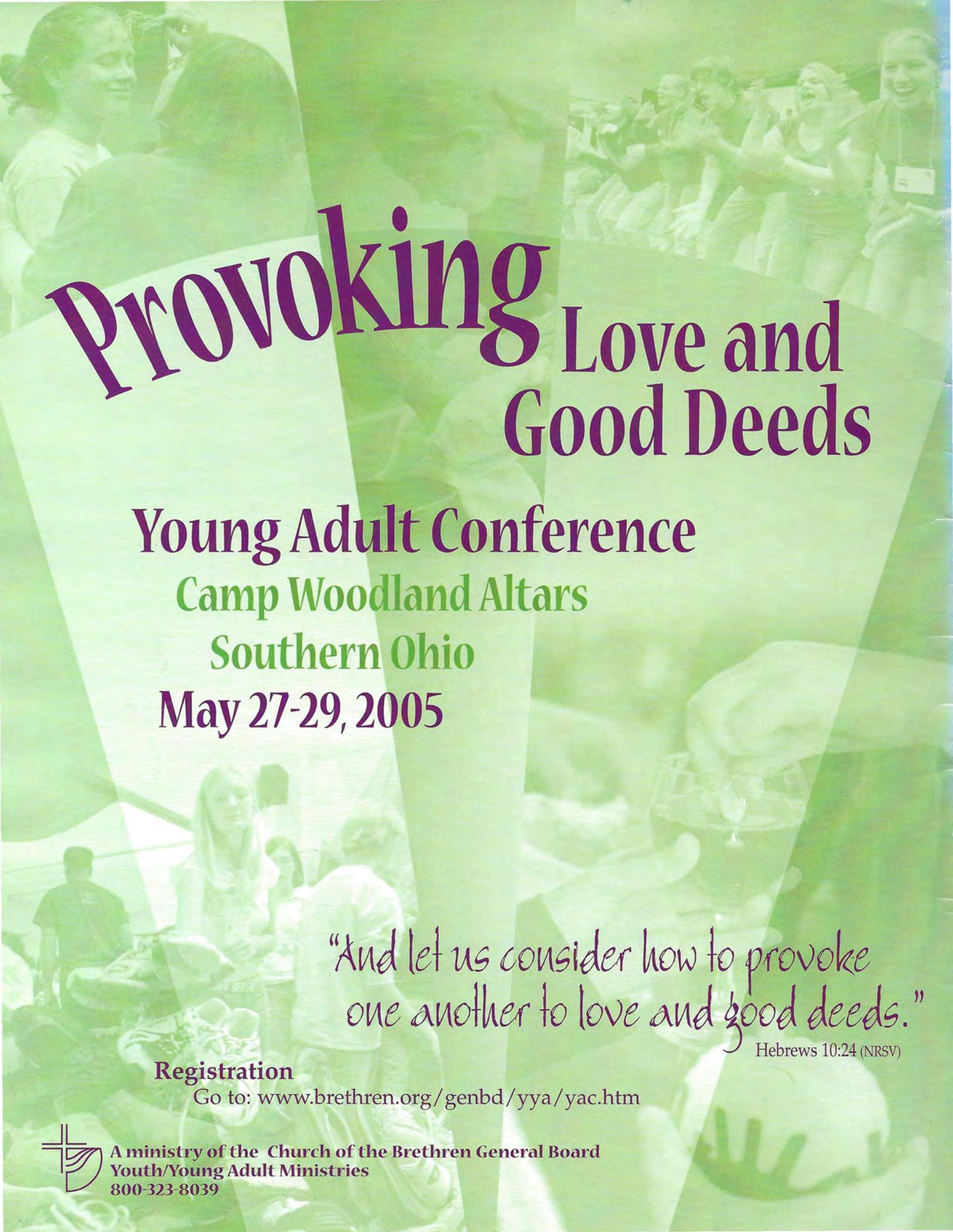


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