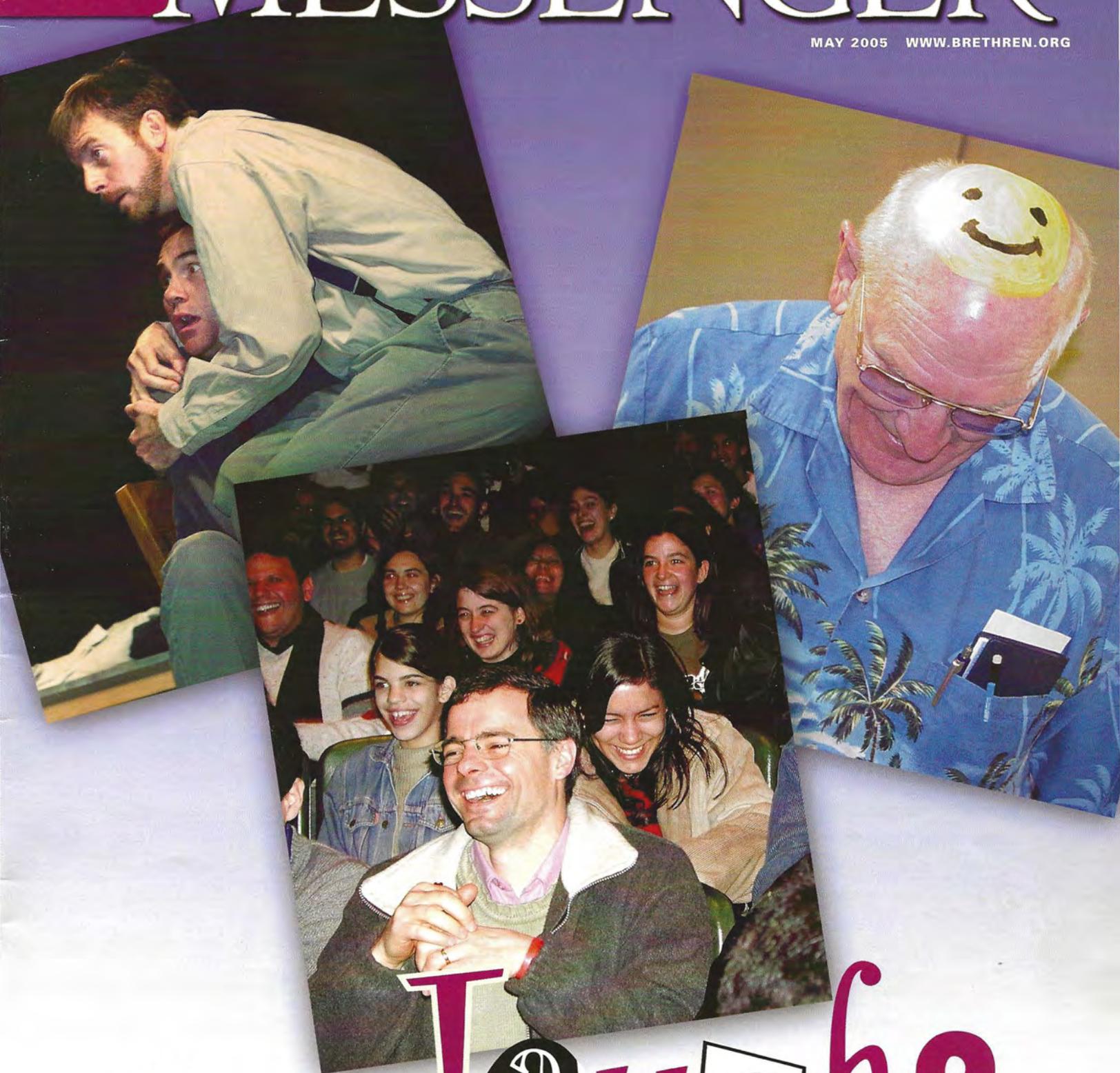


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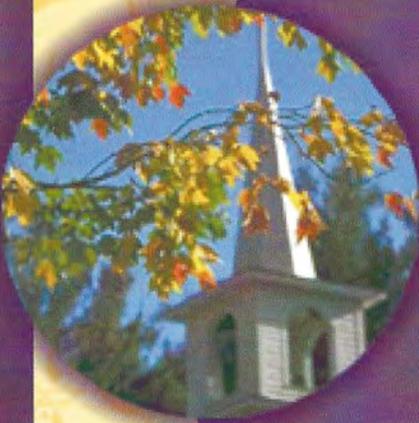
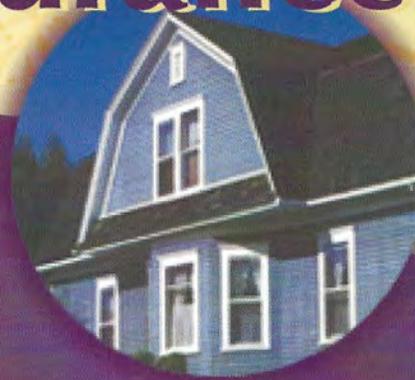
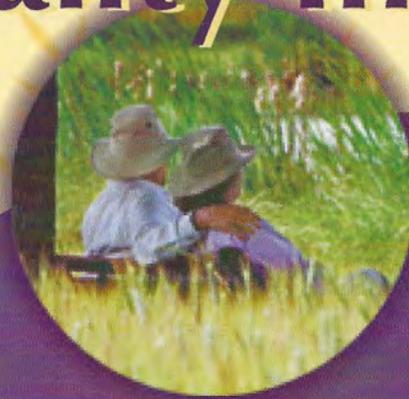


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“... publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works” (Psa. 26:7b KJV).

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MESSENGER

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ON THE COVER

Faith and laughter can, and should, intertwine, according to author Tom Mullen. “Laughing at ourselves, I think, is a moral necessity for Christians who take their faith seriously,” he says. In this month’s cover article, he explores how Christians can live “in fun.”

DEPARTMENTS

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8 Please, God, may we laugh?

The church has sometimes gained a rather dour reputation over the years, often deservedly so. Tom Mullen of Richmond, Ind., who has written several books on the subject, says that while humor must be used appropriately, those who take themselves too seriously are also missing out on the full picture of faith.

12 Ride ‘em, seagoing cowboy!

Due to some family connections, Peggy Reiff Miller became fascinated with the “seagoing cowboys” who were at the heart of post-World War II relief efforts in Europe. In recent years, she has begun gathering their stories. This month, she shares some of those inspiring tales.



16 Water, water not everywhere

People often treat water as if it’s an unlimited resource, but that’s not the case. In some areas, the world’s supplies are running dry, and a variety of dynamics are affecting water flow. Caring for this piece of God’s creation requires a response based on faith, not fear.

18 Do clothes make the worshiper?

Do you come to church in a three-piece suit or in a sweatshirt and jeans? How important is what we wear when we come to worship God? Observers say the trend is toward more casual attire for church, but some are holding on to more formal traditions.

19 Deuteronomy: God’s teaching at the boundaries of life

Deuteronomy, the last book of the Pentateuch, marks the end of an era for the Hebrew people while looking forward. Dawn Wilhelm outlines the book in terms of a set of boundaries, noting in this series of speeches and sermons how the people are struggling with God’s teaching for their lives.

In my family when I was growing up, we knew that death was not a topic to raise with our mother. The deaths of her parents when she was a young woman were a mystery that we knew not to explore.

It's not surprising, then, that our mother and father didn't have a will. As the years passed, my sister and I worried increasingly. We hinted; we suggested; we secured paperwork. Finally, when our parents reached their mid-80s, we made an appointment and drove them to the lawyer. It was a long, silent ride. But with loving pressure, we managed to complete the process of developing wills, powers of attorney, and advance directives.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

My father instructed that no extraordinary measures be taken to prolong his life. My mother instructed that every available measure be taken to prolong hers. Later that year, she suffered a stroke, and her mind is no longer capable of making those kinds of decisions.

As her power of attorney for health care, if the time comes I will carry out my mother's wishes to the best of my ability. But as one who lives in Christian hope, I will also fix my sights on the resurrection that awaits her.

That conviction can be found in the 1996 Annual Conference Statement on End-of-Life Decision-Making: "Brethren seriously and joyfully embrace the understanding that death is the door to eternal life with God."

While this assurance will not remove the agony of medical decisions, surely it must inform the decision-making and attitudes of those who claim the Christian faith. Why are some of us so afraid to die? The paper asks, "How do we accept human limitations and accept the goodness of God? Medical technology and expertise, though helpful, may not adequately address the spiritual, social, emotional, and relational dimensions of life and death. . . . Allowing death to occur is a faithful and humble acknowledgment of the power and goodness of God who gives healing beyond death."

That Annual Conference statement was the first in a series of resources made available to help Brethren navigate the increasingly complicated issues related to the end of life (see www.brethren.org/abc/ for the full series). When difficult questions related to death and dying recently seized the country's attention, Brethren could be grateful that we had engaged in this conversation years earlier, far removed from the politicized family tragedy that played itself out on national TV.

Our statement in 1996 began with this powerful affirmation: "We do not live to ourselves, and we do not die to ourselves. If we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord; so then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, so that he might be Lord of both the dead and the living" (Rom. 14:7-9).

And it ended with this: "Let us encourage one another with the assurance that—even in this age of technology—it is Jesus who is the Resurrection and the Life, Lord of both the living and the dead."

Wendy McFadden

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AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: The district board at its February meeting approved a recommendation to encourage congregations to have a district-wide "Invite a Friend Sunday" this fall.

Atlantic Southeast: Youth are collecting used computer cartridges as a fundraiser for next year's National Youth Conference. The youth get \$4 for each cartridge donated.

Idaho: Nampa pastor Jim Hardenbrook, serving this year as Annual Conference moderator, will preach the baccalaureate service at Northwest Nazarene University May 14 in Idaho Center.

Illinois/Wisconsin: The district's New Church Development Board has developed several workshops for use in congregations, with topics including servant evangelism and the power of coaching.

Michigan: Camp Brethren Heights, located near Rodney, is offering an open house May 21 with the theme "Explore God's Calling."

Mid-Atlantic: A fourth annual benefit dinner for the district's disaster response auction relief project occurred March 19 at Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren. Ed Riggan provided music.

Middle Pennsylvania: A welcoming reception for new district minister David Steele will take place May 15 in the Ellis Hall ballroom of Juniata College, Huntingdon, Pa.

Missouri/Arkansas: A task force has been assessing and sorting district historical archives this spring following a directive from last year's district conference. The task force will eventually bring a recommendation for a permanent location for the collection.

Northern Indiana: A district celebration with the theme "Celebrate Community!" from Acts 2:42-47 is being planned for June 12 at Bethany Church of the Brethren in New Paris.

Northern Ohio: Spring area clergy meetings focused on an introduction to Percept Group Inc., which provides demographic resources to help congregations better engage their communities.

Atlantic Southeast District's annual Venture Fun(d) Day March 12 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla., was "a huge success," according to district executive Martha Beach. More than 200 people attended the day of music, food, fun competitions, and fundraisers. At right, Beach and Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren (Bradenton, Fla.) pastor Don White enjoy some homemade pies. Proceeds benefited a new Brethren fellowship in Arecibo, Puerto Rico; more than \$3,000 was raised.



Northern Plains: The district board approved the sale of the former Camp Mon-Dak property in North Dakota for a price of \$65,000 plus closing costs.

Oregon/Washington: A new website seeks to provide historical information for past and present congregations, including photos and written histories. It is at <http://orwahist.rothweb.com/>.

Pacific Southwest: A "Let's Celebrate Camp Peaceful Pines" fundraising dinner was planned for April 30 at the district's northern camp, located in the Sierras near Dardanelle, Calif. Joseph Helfrich presented a musical program.

Shenandoah: Camp Brethren Woods' annual spring festival and yard sale was scheduled for April 30. It included a pancake breakfast, fishing contest, dunking booth, auction, and other events.

South/Central Indiana: A workshop held April 30 in Silver Lake looked at "Redefining Normal," taking a fresh look at ministry in the small membership/rural church setting.

Southeastern: An April 2 workshop on "Child Abuse and Neglect" was held April 2 at Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren in Jonesborough, Tenn. Scott Hollenbeck led the sessions.

Southern Ohio: A mini-conference for small membership congregations was scheduled for April 23 at Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren in Tipp City with a focus on pastoral ministry.

Southern Pennsylvania: A faith dinner to benefit disaster relief was held April 2 at York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. It included a family-style meal and music by the Miracles Gospel Quintet.

Southern Plains: Prayer-partner relationships have been formed between district congregations, with 11 congregations and the district office participating. The partnerships will continue for one year.

Virginia: The Virginia urban ministry and peace affairs committees are sponsoring a May 14 workshop titled "On Earth as in Heaven: Race Relations Then & Now." It will be led by the denomination's Anti-Racism Training Committee and held at Camp Bethel.

West Marva: The 11th annual spring auction for disaster relief is planned for May 7 at Barbour County (W.Va.) Fairgrounds. The day includes a flea market as well as the main auction.

Western Pennsylvania: Youth will participate in an all-day district volleyball tournament May 7 at Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren in Johnstown, Pa. Funds benefit district youth programs.

Western Plains: A series of four one-hour workshops on Christian education was planned for April 30 at McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren. McPherson covered the cost for all those attending.

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.

Pennsylvania congregation fries up 5,000 fastnachts

Greencastle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren continued a tradition in February, with about 30 people making almost 5,000 fastnachts for Fastnacht Day (also known as Shrove Tuesday). The heavy doughnuts are fried in hot lard and eaten the day before Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent.

The observance is popular in Pennsylvania German heritage, according to a feature in *The Morning Herald* of Hagerstown, Md. Greencastle pastor Leon Yoder told the paper that the day is “the last fling before Lent starts, when we want to eliminate such things as fatty foods and goodies.” He also admitted that Brethren are “better at fellowship meals than we are at fasting.”

Greencastle’s fastnacht project begins at midnight and continues into the next morning. After the frying process, the fastnachts are cooled and powdered in sugar. Greencastle member Twyla Strite told the paper it takes about 90 minutes per batch from start to finish.

Strite’s mother, Esther Mae Metcalfe, was part of a Sunday school class that started the fastnacht project in the early 1990s, the feature said. It noted that the project has grown from about 200



Hagerstown Herald Mail / Kevin G. Gilbert

Nelson Strite, right, dumps a load of fresh fastnachts to be powdered by Susie Myers. Greencastle Church of the Brethren members made more than 400 dozen doughnuts for the pre-Lenten observance.

dozen fastnachts then to an all-church event double that size. Proceeds from sales of the fastnachts, at \$4 per dozen, go to a variety of mission outreach, building projects, and other needs.

Ron Fahrney, front, Jim “Sparky” Starliper, center, and Ed Bricker fry fastnachts at Greencastle Church of the Brethren on Fastnacht Day.



Debby Rager



Heidi the goat receives a kiss on the nose from Pleasant Hill pastor Phillip King while Dawn Craft, left, and Annie Cekada (who lives at the farm where Heidi came from) look on.

Not baaaaaad: Pastor kisses goat to raise funds

Heidi the goat visited the 10:30 a.m. worship service of Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren (Johnstown, Pa.) on Dec. 19 to help pastor Phillip King make good on a promise.

Earlier in the year, the Thursday evening prayer group challenged the congregation to fill an ark for Heifer International. Pastor Phil issued his own challenge: Raise \$5,000, and he would kiss a goat. By early December, the goal was met and the “kissing” date was set.

After some initial reluctance on the part of the goat to take her appointed place on the chancel area, Pastor Phil knelt before her, took her face in his hands, and kissed her on the nose. The choir presented him with a bottle of mouthwash and a can of air freshener. The event was covered by a local television station.

Total funds collected for the project exceeded \$7,500. Pastor Phil said he’d do it again. Heidi, however, had no comment.—**Debby Rager**

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

Three siblings team up for disaster response

Brethren disaster response work provided a family reunion of sorts for the Butterbaugh family.

Dwight Butterbaugh has been the disaster response contact at Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren for several years and has been to a number of projects over that time. When he received a request for help at tornado-stricken Hallam, Neb., last year, he decided to call his brothers, Dean and Duane—members of the Dixon (Ill.) congregation—to see if they could go, too.

"We three brothers had never worked on a project together, but all had experience in building and each had served before in disaster work," Dwight wrote in a report on the project.

Both brothers answered "yes," and Dwight had the core of his crew. Several others from Mount Morris signed on, and the group traveled to Hallam in November. They hung sheet rock, taped, and did other small jobs to help rebuild a home for a family who had earlier lost another home to a fire.

"I will remember this experience because we brothers shared a week of fellowship, and knowing the family we were building for," Dwight wrote.



• **Gettysburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren** is celebrating its bicentennial this year with a number of events, including a July 23 anniversary celebration dinner at the Brethren Home Community's Nicarry Meetinghouse in New Oxford. Many former pastors are also speaking on Sundays throughout the year, and several historical presentations are planned.

• **Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren**, Lebanon, Pa., marks its 50th anniversary this year. Planted by the Annville (Pa.) congregation in 1955 as a meeting point, Mount Wilson received individual congregational status in 1981. (Elizabeth Liskey Fake, who has played organ for Mount Wilson since its founding, continues in that role today.) An anniversary service will be held June 26.

• The Blooming Grove Historical Society in Cogan Station, Pa., is sponsoring a 200th anniversary celebration of the **Blooming Grove Dunkard settlement** this year. An April 1 community gathering kicked off the celebration; Elizabethtown College professor David Eller spoke at the event. Additional events are planned for July and November, including "The Great Gathering" July 23-24 at the Blooming Grove Meeting House and Museum, with workshops, a concert, and worship. Two meetings are held in the meeting house each year, and the museum is open to the public.

• **Wakeman's Grove Church of the Brethren**, Edinburg, Va., held a dedication ceremony for a new Sunday school wing on March 6. The church's original building was constructed in 1901.

• **Good Shepherd Church of the Brethren** (Blacksburg, Va.) on April 10 held a mortgage burning celebration to mark payment of all its building indebtedness. The service included a time of sharing stories and memories.

• American Red Cross employee Linn Davison sent a letter to *The Herald Mail* of Hagerstown, Md., thanking **Hagerstown Church of the Brethren** for opening its doors to a number of families who were evacuated from a nearby apartment fire Feb. 25, and to the firefighters and Red Cross employees helping them. "The church not only allowed the use of its facilities," Davison said in the letter, "but within a short period of time had provided fruits, pastries, and even homemade soup."

• The *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News* ran an article on **Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren's** efforts to support Heifer International. This year, the church set a goal of \$6,000 for Heifer's 60th anniversary through its annual "Make and Bake" talent auction; a total of more than \$8,200 was raised.

• The *McPherson (Kan.) Sentinel* published a Feb. 18 feature on the "Made with love" quilting project of the Cedars Service Guild of **The Cedars Village retirement community**.

Participants make the quilts for residents of The Cedars Health Center. Salem Church of the Brethren in nearby Nickerson contributes some ready-made quilt tops.

• **Darlene Young**, a member of Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren and a computer specialist for the US Department of State, was among those highlighted in a State Department "Saluting Women's History" feature. Young, who is current national president of Blacks in Government, received personal congratulations from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice.

• **Jonathan Keeney**, a youth member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill., has been named a National Merit Scholarship Finalist.

From left, Illinois Brethren Duane Butterbaugh, Dean Butterbaugh, and Dwight Butterbaugh shared some brotherly love with the tornado-ravaged town of Hallam, Neb.

Encountering Jesus: The power of incarnation

At the end of last summer, our family took a railroad trip to Vermont. We wanted to travel north from our home near Washington, D.C., without driving. To watch Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York pass without fighting traffic was part of the point. So, loaded with camping gear and suitcases, we boarded the train. We were to return the night before school started. Prepared for the 12-hour trip, our daughters, Kate and Hannah, had packed plenty of books and games.



KIM MCDOWELL

Among the stash was the last of Hannah's assigned summer reading. She'd finished everything else much earlier except the final one, which she'd been putting off. It was called *Rattlebone*. For a lover of fantasy, the book didn't have immediate appeal. About an African-American girl growing up in Kansas in the '50s, it looked to Hannah like it would be hard to relate to. She thought it might very possibly be depressing, too. But she brought it along.

After a week of camping, hiking, and learning about how all kinds of things were made (from Ben and Jerry's ice cream to granite gravestones), it was time to return from Burlington. At 6:45 a.m., we staggered into the tiny waiting room of the train station, rumpled and a little dirty, carrying our equipment and bags. Already there, seated in the few chairs, were an older couple and a middle-aged woman. With 24 hours left before school began, Hannah finally had her assigned book in hand.

As we all settled in to wait, we exchanged the casual glances and smiles of co-travelers. Then the woman

book was real, intriguing, and full of human interest. What had been intangible idea became concrete image. She began reading immediately. By noon, she had finished the book. Then I picked it up and did the same.

The author's entry into our midst made all the difference. Curiosity and engagement drew us. We felt ourselves related to her, connected, willing to be shaped by her art. We wondered how much of her life was described in the book. Questions kept coming to us: What did she mean by certain things she'd said? We looked for her throughout the day when we went to the dining car or when the train stopped and we got off for brief breaks.

A firm link had been forged with meeting this woman in the flesh. Suddenly her story was immediate. We wanted more of it. Encountering her enlivened her written words and brought her experience into vivid focus. It was, for me, a parable—one about the power of incarnation. Being "in the body," incarnate, has an immediacy that nothing can match.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14a). God's entry into our midst makes all the difference.

It's a powerful experience to encounter Jesus in the Gospels. Or in prayer. And there is something uniquely vivid about coming face to face with him in the people I meet. It has happened again and again for me in the church. In spite of the ways we fail each other, there is, for me, this persistent reality. I keep on encountering Jesus in my congregation, in our denomination, and in the wider church (and beyond).

When one of the youth challenged an unjust employer, I knew Christ speaking truth to power. When a homeless man in the rotating church shelter program handed me a bag of pastry to share with other guests, I tasted Christ's generosity. When a woman stood defenseless before an approaching tank in Israel, I saw Christ's transforming attitude to violence.

It's why I'm so grateful for workcamps and conferences, for outdoor ministry programs and Song and Story Fests

where I and others have come face to face with Jesus. It's why I'm glad for small churches, a small denomination where the personal touch is so real. Ethereal theology is becoming flesh all the time—in the everyday, as often as in the extraordinary.

I know the dangers of expecting too much. Flawed humanity will never fully embody Christ. All too often the harm done in the very process of seeking to incarnate the way of Jesus is grievous.

And yet, sometimes where I least expect it, suddenly I'm looking him in the eye. In the midst of the ordinary, it leaps to life. As vividly as a book was suddenly real when we met its author, Jesus is revealed in those who reflect him. There is relationship and connection, the wonder of incarnation, and it makes all the difference. **W**

Kim McDowell is pastor of University Park Church of the Brethren in Hyattsville, Md.

It's a powerful experience to encounter Jesus in the Gospels. Or in prayer. And there is something uniquely vivid about coming face to face with him in the people I meet.

spoke: "That's my book." Following her gaze to Hannah's hand, I stared at her. Unsure of exactly what she meant, we all hesitated. "Turn it over," the stranger instructed. As Hannah did so, revealing the title, the woman nodded and said, "Yes, it is." "You mean, you wrote it?" I asked a little incredulously. "Yes, I'm Maxine Clair," she said.

We took this in, marveling at the odds. One book in sight and its author, coincidentally, seated next to it? Then, awaiting the train, we began talking. Hannah described her school assignment, and admitted her sense that the book looked like a sad story. Maxine Clair said that while some sad things happened in it, the tale itself wasn't unhappy. She told us about the writer's conference she had been attending, about where she lived and taught. We told her that we didn't live far away. The conversation continued until, with the whistle of the arriving train, we got up to board separate cars.

But it changed things entirely for Hannah. Suddenly, the

QUOTE WORTHY

“Pope John Paul II took as an informal motto of his papacy the words of Scripture, ‘Be not afraid!’ Through these 26 years, he taught us in word and deed the meaning of this phrase—that all who wholeheartedly open their lives to Christ and belong to him have nothing to fear in this world or the next.”

—Bishop William Skylstad of Spokane, Wash., president of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (RNS)

“Terri’s memory might be best honored by conversations we have with each other about our end-of-life decisions—what we want and what we do not want, the care we choose to receive and the caregivers who provide it.”

—J. Donald Schumacher, president and CEO of the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization in Alexandria, Va., commenting on the death of Terri Schiavo. Brethren end-of-life resources are available at www.brethren.org/abc/advocacy/end_of_life.html.

“When the tidiness of the church kitchen is more important than the spiritual well being of our youth, we have failed. When looking good is more important than doing good, we are faithless.”

—Virginia District executive David Shumate, writing in the district’s January-February 2005 newsletter

“Districts and denominations don’t do transformation. God does transformation.”

—General Board member Dale Minnich, speaking on the need to give God room to work in bringing about change

“Showing God’s love can be as simple as a ‘thank you,’ or even an ‘I love you.’”

—Heather Hall, a youth speaker at this year’s Eastern Regional Youth Conference at Juniata College

“This stuff keeps on giving. . . . It’s fun doing the work of Jesus.”

—Mountain View Church of the Brethren pastor David McKellip, after a tsunami fair at the Boise, Idaho, church raised more than \$2,000

CULTUREVIEW

• **College students who don’t attend church** are more than twice as likely to report feeling depressed than those who frequently attend services, according to a study by UCLA’s Higher Education Research Institute reported in *The Lutheran*.

• Lilly Endowment Inc. is offering its **National Clergy Renewal Program** again this year, providing pastors with resources to facilitate a time of renewal and reflection through sabbath rest. Up to 120 grants of up to \$45,000 each will be made to congregations. Details are at www.lillyendowment.org. Applications must be post-marked by June 10.

• **Giving in the United Methodist Church** rose by 4 percent in 2004 despite a loss of more than 69,000 members during the year, according to an article by United Methodist News Service.

• NBC Nightly News and The Today Show did a **series on “Faith and America,”** including a look at faith in the media and faith in the workplace, on their March 21-25 broadcasts.

• A study by Elizabethtown

(Pa.) College sociology professor Conrad L. Kanagy showed that **Old Order Amish showed a net gain** of 89 farms and 6,833 acres in Lancaster County, Pa., from 1997 to 2003. Added to data from earlier studies, Kanagy concluded that the Amish have gained a total of 266 new farms and 21,659 acres in the county over the past 20 years.

• A study of **television’s treatment of religion** found that matters of faith are addressed more in broadcast networks’ shows, but mostly in a negative manner, the Parents Television Council announced. Researchers found that NBC led other major networks in negative depictions of faith, with 9.5 negative treatments for every positive treatment. It was followed by Fox, with 2.4 negative depictions for each positive one and 1.2 negative for each positive treatment by both WB and ABC. In all, 2,385 hours of programming on major networks contained 2,344 treatments of religion. (RNS)



JUST FOR FUN: SCRAMBLE

ACROSS THE ATLANTIC One of this month’s features talks about the Brethren “seagoing cowboys” and the impact they had in post-World War II Europe. Unscramble the names of these present-day European nations; answers are printed below:

- | | |
|------------|---------------|
| ELDRAIN | LUGOPART |
| BLUEMUGROX | DRAWTNLSIZE |
| CANMOO | LAPNOD |
| GRAYMEN | OVAASLIK |
| GRABAILU | ROADRAN |
| TIANOSE | ARKMEND |
| OATARIC | TEECHNITELINS |

ANSWERS:

Ireland; Luxembourg; Monaco; Germany; Bulgaria; Estonia; Croatia; Portugal; Switzerland; Poland; Slovakia; Andorra; Denmark; Liechtenstein

Please, God, may we Laugh?

Taking ourselves too seriously takes away from our faith by Tom Mullen

Christians are not well known for their ability to laugh. Our reputation centers on a serious call to a devout and holy life, and some Christians are stereotypes of a dark and somber faith.

H.L. Mencken said, "Puritans carry the haunting fear that someone, somewhere, is having a good time." By "puritans," he meant religious people in general, not just those old folks in strange hats, white collars, and gray knickers.

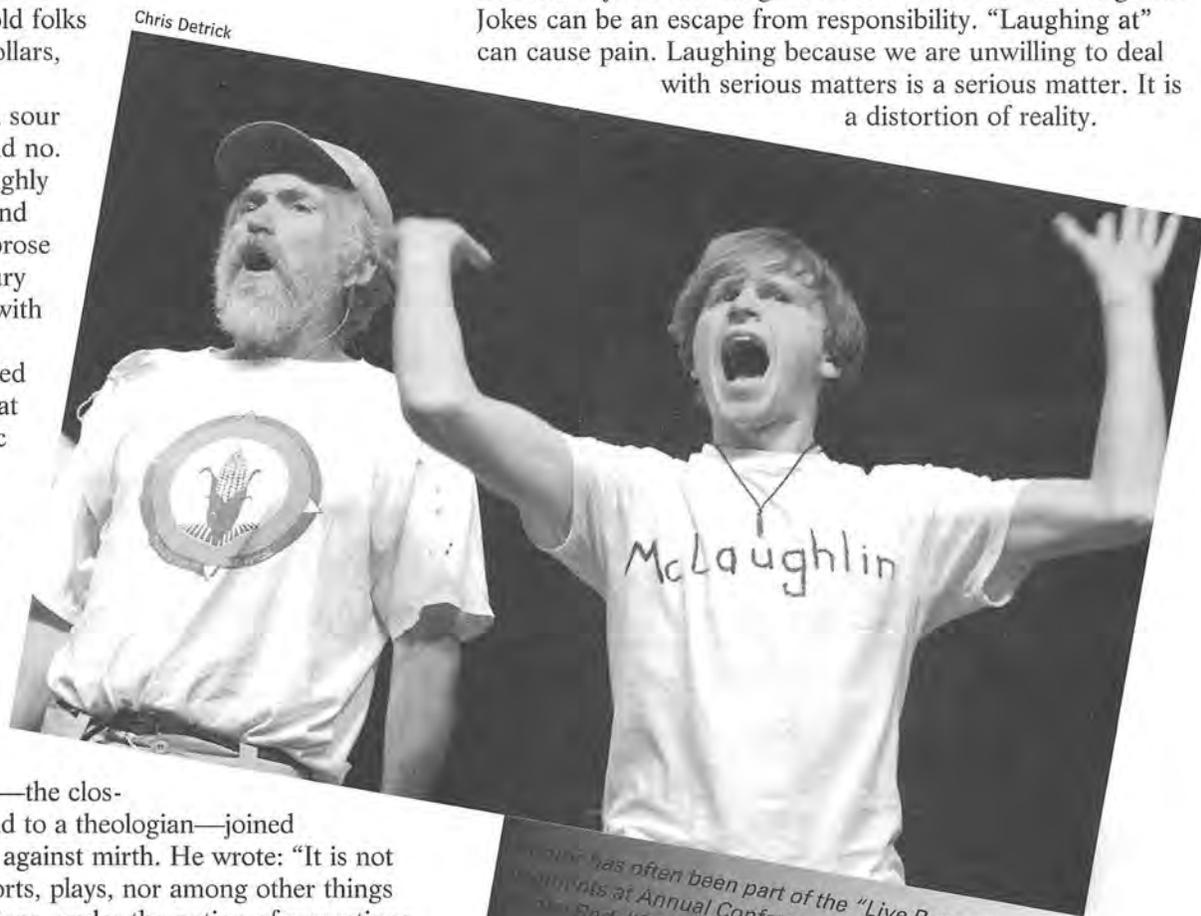
Do we deserve such a sour reputation? Well, yes and no. Early Christians were highly suspicious of laughter and joking, and Bishop Ambrose back in the fourth century pooped a lot of parties with admonitions like this: "Joking should be avoided even in small talk, so that some more serious topic is not made light of. I maintain that not only loose jokes but jokes of any kind must be avoided—except perhaps when our words are full of sweetness and grace, not indelicate."

Later, in the 17th century, Robert Barclay—the closest the early Quakers had to a theologian—joined the chorus of guardians against mirth. He wrote: "It is not lawful to use games, sports, plays, nor among other things comedies among Christians, under the notion of recreations which do not agree with Christian silence, gravity, and sobriety; for laughing, sporting, gaming, mocking, jesting, vain

talking, etc., is not Christian liberty, nor harmless mirth."

For better or worse, many Christians carry a vague but persistent uneasiness about humor. Merriment is more at home in the pool hall than the church. Humor is—how shall we put it—less responsible than seriousness.

Let the record show that some good reasons exist for caution about jokes and laughter. Humor can hurt and degrade. Jokes can be an escape from responsibility. "Laughing at" can cause pain. Laughing because we are unwilling to deal with serious matters is a serious matter. It is a distortion of reality.



Chris Detrick
Don Vermilyea has often been part of the "Live Report" segments at Annual Conference. Don Vermilyea and Chris Detrick had the audience laughing with their antics at the 2003 Conference in Boise.

Walt Wiltschek



Clowning is frequently used by church groups as a way to get at important truths with a lighter touch. Hannah Wilson led a workshop on the topic at the 2002 Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference.

But so is the exclusion of humor and laughter. Christianity's longstanding uneasiness with humorous laughter has often caused us to neglect our capacity for being "in fun." Being "in fun" is to be childlike, to be in the mood of play. Children, unless they have been damaged very early in life, see the world and are ready to respond with laughter. Babies are not much interested in "deeper meanings." So long as their tummies are filled and their diapers are not, they personify playfulness.

Children delight at mishaps, such as sitting down with a thud, and gurggle in uproarious merriment at all kinds of would-be disasters. Where is the infant so serious he or she can't muster a grin after falling down while trying to stand? Why does a little girl squeal with delight when her father plays "peek-a-boo" for the umpteenth time? But then, why shouldn't she? After all, a grown man popping out from behind the sofa and making a grotesque face for the sole purpose of seeing an infant giggle—now that's funny. Even Robert Barclay would have laughed.

Laughter dwells within most of us, and one of the losses that comes with maturity is a declining ability to be "in fun" as often as children are. I argue that being "in fun" is a gift from God and an essential condition for laughter. It allows us to look at the world with a vision slightly askew. It is exercising playfulness. When we are in this state, good humor radiates through us, helps us feel happy, and provides a joyful illumination of the disharmonies of human life.

Being "in fun" is not a pause for breath before we get back to living life as Christians. It is part of the pilgrimage. Enjoying the enjoyable is good stewardship of our resources. As Conrad Hyers says, "Humor apart from holiness may be irresponsible; but holiness apart from humor is inhuman."

A Christian perspective sees both the sorrow and comedy in life, sometimes in the same events. Once, when our family was traveling, we were eating in a restaurant that had a jukebox playing really bad music loudly. I finally decided to invest in songs less painful to hear and discovered I could buy five minutes of silence for a quarter! Two dollars paid for enough time to finish lunch in peace. It also was a commentary on our life and times, and worth a chuckle and two inward groans.

One more example: I read about an undertaker in Georgia who installed a drive-by window so that mourners in a hurry could gear down and pay their respects. Do

we laugh or cry? If we imagine somber morticians, dressed in black, recording our condolences as we speak into a microphone from our red Honda, we might laugh until we cry.

Professional humorists observe that much of life is self-parody, particularly those events that border on the tragic. Will Rogers never had to make up jokes. He merely reported jokes waiting to be discovered.

In similar fashion, a Christian perspective includes both being serious as well as being "in fun." It is a perspective worth having, especially when we—rather than someone else—slip on the ice. We not only give others a reason to laugh at us, we also do a favor for ourselves. After we've rubbed the sore places, checked for bruises, and counted all our parts, we make a significant discovery: We're still alive! That's worth a laugh, and a huge sigh of relief!

Laughing at ourselves, I think, is a moral necessity for Christians who take their faith seriously. Just as we sometimes need to make formal confession—"God, be merciful to me, a sinner"—so do we need to poke fun at our pretensions. Laughing at ourselves is an

D Resources

Books

- *Laughing Out Loud and Other Religious Experiences*, by Tom Mullen (published by Friends United Press)
 - *Godly Play*, by Jerome Berryman (published by Augsburg Press)
- Both of the above titles are available through Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.

Newsletter

- "The Joyful Noiseletter," published monthly by the Fellowship of Merry Christians, shares "holy humor" in its pages. A one-year subscription is \$26. The group also puts out a variety of other resources. More details are at www.joyfulnoiseletter.com.

Movie

- *Patch Adams*. This 1998 movie, starring Robin Williams, looks at the healing effects of laughter.

effective antidote to self-righteousness, the sin of which the Pharisees, a genuinely religious group, were often judged to be guilty by Jesus.

Consider the Pharisee in Luke 18:11-12. Clearly, he is a pompous fool: "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of that I possess." (KJV) His lack of humility is obvious, and it is hard to imagine him having a sense of humor. When humility is missing, perspective about our own pride is damaged. Taking ourselves so seriously that we blur awareness of our own foibles has a similar effect. We become victims of our own deadly earnestness. Humor is nothing short of grace to see ourselves as we really are.

One of the reasons I joined the Religious Society of Friends is because they attack large social and moral problems with conscientious determination. We work for peace, which often causes conflict along the way. We seek to thwart aggression, and so we aggressively seek it out. Some of us become pacifists who make others really want to fight.

Fortunately, some Friends have been able to keep perspective by laughing at themselves, even at their weightiest concerns. A long-standing Quaker joke illustrates the point. A Friend is awakened in the middle of the night to discover a burglar in the house. Quietly he gets his hunting rifle and confronts the thief. "Friend robber," he says, "I would not harm thee for the world, but thou standest where I am about to shoot."

That joke is best told by Quakers on themselves because it suggests an important truth: Nonviolence is an important virtue in a violent world, but it is difficult to practice it consis-

tently. It is sometimes hard to laugh at our most deeply held convictions because we do not want to demean our beliefs or deny their importance. But an inability to laugh about our concerns or in the midst of practicing them can result in idolatry of the cause.

Reinhold Neibuhr, seldom accused of being frivolous, said this in his book *Discerning the Signs of the Times*: "Humor is a proof of the capacity of the self to gain a vantage point from which it is able to look at itself. . . . All of us ought to be ready to laugh at ourselves because all of us are a little funny in our foibles, conceits, and pretensions. What is funny about us is precisely that we take ourselves too seriously. . . . This pretension is ludicrous; and its absurdity increases with our lack of awareness of it. The less we are able to laugh at ourselves, the more it becomes necessary and inevitable that others laugh at us."

The one offense that a sense of humor cannot tolerate is that we forget our humanity: the finite quality of our most deeply cherished causes. Laughing at ourselves frees Christians to be cheerful crusaders. It allows us to laugh in the heat of our commitment to noble causes and in the battle against evil. Cheerful crusaders are also cheerful lovers of humanity because they can relate to the human race as if they were part of it.



A gleam from yonder heaven: Roy Stern of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren sports a smiley face on his head for Holy Humor Sunday.

Holy Humor Sunday

At least two Church of the Brethren congregations have picked up on the suggestion of the Fellowship of Merry Christians (see "Resources") to have a "Holy Humor Sunday" the weekend after Easter. The group says the tradition stems from an old Christian custom of "Bright Sunday," doing something out of the ordinary in the lull after the Easter celebration when attendance often drops.

Antelope Park Church of the Brethren in Lincoln, Neb., has been observing "Holy Hilarity" that weekend for several years. Worshipers are encouraged to wear cos-

tumes or bright colors, to share jokes during the service, or to share silly songs, poems, or talents. The choir joins in with a fun song—last year the number included kazoos. Even the bulletin is filled with cartoons.

Pastor Joyce Petry says she sets a visual theme each year. For 2005, it was rainbows. Families were asked to bring foods according to an assigned color for a fellowship meal.

"It's a Sunday that we all enjoy," Petry says. "The children, especially, like the more informal atmosphere. It's a chance to just get together and enjoy being

together and have fun."

At Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren, Holy Humor Sunday has become a tradition. In a Newsline interview last year, pastor Yvonne Riege said the service was "a day when you're just not sure what to expect." There, too, the worship includes various bits of comedy, playful music, and colorful visuals.

"The main thing that's fun about it is that the Sunday after Easter is often a downer, and this gives it a whole new twist," Riege says. "It's a real hoot. . . . It's a cool way of celebrating God."



The Mennonite comedy duo Ted & Lee (Ted Swartz and Lee Eshleman of Harrisonburg, Va.) have been popular performers at Brethren events, sharing their unique humorous insights on scripture through drama. Ted & Lee's website says their "trademark touch" is "to celebrate the text by unearthing both laughter and insight."

The best part of the gift of humorous laughter, however, is one aspect of life together in churches that we experience over and over again. Since marrying Nancy Faus more than two years ago, I've attended many Church of the Brethren events: worship services, conferences, song festivals, and informal gatherings where long-time friends talk Brethren "shop" and trade family stories. I've observed many of the ways humorous laughter plays a role in Brethren life together. You/we are blessed by an abundance of folks who are often "in fun," easily laugh at themselves, and simply enjoy each others' company.

As a newcomer to the fellowship, I even allow myself the hope that the good humor that is the norm most of the time will eventually prevail as discussion of thorny issues, now divisive, continues. Laughing with, not at, each other will provide soothing oil for rough edges caused by strong opinions and angry disagreements. My hope is that people able to eat ice cream and laugh with one another will one day celebrate their likenesses more than they mourn their differences.

This hope is grounded in one other aspect of humorous laughter as understood by Christian people, which is directly connected to a biblical faith.

I recently attended a funeral service in a Brethren church for a long-time member whose life had been exemplary. Those who knew her well called her a "saint." The pastors and others who remembered her spoke of her virtues and recalled many conversations and deeds that characterized her life. Among them were many—not just a few—incidents and words that caused all of us present to laugh aloud.

Had strangers wandered in by mistake at one of those moments, they would have been baffled to learn a funeral service was going on. They might have guessed, instead, they had crashed a party.

In a sense, they would have been right. When Christian people whose lives have been well lived die, laughter as well as tears will mark their passing. Nearly all of us have attended memorial services in which stories about the one who has died gave us permission one more time to laugh with them.

When my first wife, Nancy Mullen, died, it was a sad, sad day. We cried often during the course of the memorial meeting for worship, but I still remember with a smile some of the light-hearted things people said as they spoke out of the silence.

One man said he knew Nancy was in God's care, but he worried what she would do if heaven really did have golden streets. He was sure she would form a committee, extract the gold, and give it to the poor! We all laughed through our tears, reminded both of her commitment to social justice and the joyful person she was.

Afterwards, one of my colleagues commented on the huge number of people who had attended. He said to

"All of us ought to be ready to laugh at ourselves because all of us are a little funny in our foibles, conceits, and pretensions. What is funny about us is precisely that we take ourselves too seriously." —Reinhold Neibuhr

me, "You know, Tom, when you go you won't draw nearly as big a crowd," and in tears embraced me. As we consider our own memorial service, most of us hope a large crowd will show up, even though attendance at funerals depends a lot on the weather. We also hope that some who come will be sad, illustrated by the man who carried no life insurance because he wanted no one to be glad he had died.

Poor fellow. Celebrating a life well lived will include laughter amidst our tears. If we are fortunate enough to be part of a faith community, words of resurrection, hope, and joy can be embraced and claimed. We can laugh together and weep together because the joke, ultimately, is on the Grim Reaper. That's why he's so grim!

A life of faith allows plenty of reasons for jokes, celebrations, laughter, snickering, teasing, and nonsense. As one friend put it, "Goofiness is next to Godliness." Death is also a reality each of us must face, but even then we can laugh aloud. Jesus said so: "In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33 RSV).

Good cheer indeed. **W**

Tom Mullen, former professor and dean at Earham School of Religion, is now a member of both the Friends and Church of the Brethren. He is the author of numerous books and lives in Richmond, Ind.

Ride 'em, seagoing cowboy!

**A 1940s Brethren/UNRRA partnership
touched countless lives**

by Peggy Reiff Miller

My grandfather was a seagoing cowboy, but I never heard his story. When a move to Indiana put me in the middle of “cowboy” country where Heifers for Relief was born, I seized the opportunity to find out what his trip may have been like.

Heifers for Relief (today’s Heifer International) was created in response to Dan West’s idea in 1938 of “not a cup, but a cow” (see December 2004 MESSENGER). Sending cows, rather than powdered milk, to people devastated by war would enable them to feed themselves.

The Brethren Service Committee (BSC) began serious consideration of West’s idea in December 1941, with the appointment of an exploration committee. Working together with a committee from Brethren Men’s Work of Northern Indiana, BSC voted in June 1942, the “approval of the European Cattle project in principle . . . for a Brotherhood project.” By January 1943, a plan for “The Heifer Project” was in place.

Farmers and churches all over the country began donating heifers to their local committees. With World War II still raging, however, shipping cattle across the ocean was impossible. The first Heifers for Relief shipment, therefore, was made to Puerto Rico in May 1944. When victory in Europe was imminent, BSC executive M.R. Zigler pondered the question of how to get the Brethren heifers to Europe.



Hanislawa Wojcikiewicz

A Polish photographer seized an opportunity for some work photographing the crew of the S.S. Morgantown Victory in Nowy Port, Poland, December 29, 1945.



Hugh Ehrman

Another plan birthed about the same time was Zigler's answer. Representatives of 44 nations met in November 1943 at the White House in Washington, D.C. They signed a document creating the first international relief agency in world history, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration—UNRRA for short (not to be confused with the later United Nations). By March 1945, UNRRA was able to make its first cargo shipment of relief supplies.

Zigler contacted UNRRA officials. "They reported they

"It makes a fellow appreciate what he's got, even if he doesn't have as much as a lot of people do."

—Hugh Ehrman, Monroe, Ind., *S.S. Morgantown Victory to Poland, December 1945*

were not shipping live gifts," Zigler said. But when the Near East Foundation needed bulls to establish a breeding program in Greece, UNRRA contacted Zigler. He in turn contacted Ben Bushong, a farmer active in the Pennsylvania Guernsey Breeders Association, who, according to Zigler, "was always available for church work beyond the usual." Bushong arranged with UNRRA the first shipment of "Heifers" for Relief to Europe—six bulls to Greece.

It was 60 years ago this month, on May 14, 1945, that the *M.S. Boolongena* sailed from St. John's in Canada to Athens, Greece, with Bushong and six Brethren bulls on board. The seeds of a BSC/UNRRA partnership were planted. Soon thereafter, Zigler got a phone call from UNRRA.

"Where are your cows?" they wanted to know. "We have seven boats." They also needed people to take care of the cattle.

Zigler made some calls to set the wheels in motion for obtaining heifers and men willing to make the trip. At the June 3, 1945, meeting of the Heifer Project Committee, Zigler drafted Bushong to go to Washington to work out details with UNRRA. "From that hour," Zigler said, "Ben Bushong was responsible for the Heifer Project."

On June 24, 1945, 26 cattle attendants left New Orleans for Greece on the *S.S. F. J. Luckenbach* with 588 UNRRA horses aboard. Another 26 cattle attendants left Baltimore for Greece two days later on the *S.S. Virginian* with 722 UNRRA horses, heifers, and bulls. The "seagoing cowboy" program was born.

Bushong worked out an agreement with UNRRA: BSC would supply the cattle attendants UNRRA needed for the more than 200,000 animals they planned to send to Europe, and UNRRA would ship Brethren heifers free of charge. An office for the recruiting of cowboys was set up at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Ads were placed in newspapers and magazines. Word was spread through the churches,

camp, colleges, and Annual Conference for the need of men ages 16 to 60 to take cattle to Europe. By the time UNRRA was disbanded in 1947, over 6,500 men from many denominations and all walks of life had served as seagoing cowboys.

Prospective cattle attendants who had applied to the BSC office received a telegram or phone call telling them when and where to report, often with very short notice. Les Messamer, then of Minburn, Iowa, recalls that he had to get ready to leave for New Orleans in just five hours. "My mother even washed, dried, and packed some clothes that were needed."

To be able to work legally on a merchant ship, the cowboys had to join the Merchant Marines. Coast Guard offi-

"I learned more on that trip than I'd have ever learned if I'd stayed back in school."

—Marvin Miller, Sebring, Fla., *S.S. John J. Crittenden to Poland, February 1946*

cial soon began to recognize the Brethren by their request to "affirm" rather than "swear" their seaman's oaths. On their return, the cowboys received one cent per month for their Merchant Marine service and \$150 per trip from UNRRA, their real "employer."

Wilbur Stump collection



Les Messamer



(left to right) The seagoing cowboys lived in close quarters, like these on the S.S. Morgantown Victory, December 1945.

Wilbur Stump feeds his heifers aboard the S.S. Zona Gale en route to France in April 1946.

These Chinese dock workers in Shanghai quickly learned that pushing a cow from behind is not a wise thing to do.



The cattle crew of the S.S. Virginian poses on board ship in Poland, October 1945.

The experience of one cowboy compared to the next is as varied as his type of ship, port of departure, destination, cargo, the time of year, the weather, and the make-up of the cowboy crew and the ship's crew. Ships left from cities like Baltimore, Houston, New York, New Orleans, and Newport News. Destinations included Poland (about 40 percent of shipments), Belgium, Greece, Italy, Yugoslavia (via Trieste, Italy), Czechoslovakia (via Bremen, Germany), China, and France—where the first UNRRA transport of Brethren heifers went in September 1945.

Most of the UNRRA vessels were converted Liberty or Victory ships that had been mass produced as supply ships during the war. The Liberty ship, smaller and slower, carried

Sebring, Fla., confessed to having “fed the fish” 13 times. “One minute you’re afraid you’re gonna die, and the next minute, you’re afraid you’re not!” he said.

Lucky was the cowboy whose system adapted to the sea without sickness. And lucky was the cowboy tending horses who didn’t get bitten. One unsuspecting cowboy found himself dangling from his overalls straps and tossed down the aisle by his charge.

Danger lurked everywhere. The *William S. Halsted* had no more than pulled out of port in Baltimore in a dense fog when it collided with a fuel tanker and the hay on the top deck caught on fire. Bob Ebey, of North Manchester, Ind., reports, “Cowboys grabbed the water hoses for watering their animals and had the fire out before the ship’s crew could get to it.”

“The storms were particularly frightening, when

you see water higher than a two-story house coming at you!” remembers Carl Shultz, of New Port Richey, Fla., also on the *Halsted*. Wayne Lawson, of Milford, Ind., tells of a two-day storm on one of his trips. “When we came up on deck, the horses and stalls were gone! Some horses were still hanging over the edge and we had to cut them off.”

Many cowboys saw mines in the water. Walt Gingrich, of Palmyra, Pa., tells of his ship receiving orders to stop as it was sailing up the Adriatic Sea to Trieste. A military ship passed them and began shooting its guns when it was a mile or so beyond them. “After a while, somewhere way up ahead of it, there was a terrible explosion,” Gingrich said. “We discovered they were firing at a mine to blow it up.” An earlier ship wasn’t so lucky. Bushong wrote that it “had gone to the bottom of the harbor of Trieste, hav-

“We took these couple boxes of food and things to this one family in Germany. It was their reaction and just how much impact the war had on the people—that was the thing that got to me the most.”

—Walt Gingrich, Palmyra, Pa., S.S. Cedar Rapids Victory and S.S. Beloit Victory to Italy and Germany, summer 1946

300 to 400 animals and a cattle crew of about 16 cowboys. The Victories carried 700 to 800 animals with a cattle crew of about 30. Trips could take anywhere from four weeks to three months or more. At the peak of shipments in 1946, UNRRA had 72 livestock ships in action.

Life aboard ship was full of drama, complete with humor and danger. Most cowboys found the food plentiful and good—when they weren’t seasick, that is. Marvin Miller of

CELEBRATING COWBOYS

A celebration of the early days of Heifer Project International (HPI) will be held at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., on Aug. 13. Activities will include a gathering of seagoing cowboys and presentations by project partners whose lives have been changed by the animals they received. This event is sponsored by the Heifer International Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, the Brethren Service Center, and the Historical Society of Carroll County (Md.). For more information contact: HPI Mid-Atlantic Regional Office (215-248-5822) or Brethren Service Center (410-635-8747).

—Kathleen Campanella

Cowboys dine aboard
the S.S. Santiago
Iglesias en route to
Poland in
October 1945.



COLLECTING HISTORY

Wondering what to do with your (or your relative's) seagoing cowboy diary, photos, movie, or scrapbook? Don't throw them out. Consider donating them to the Brethren Historical Library and Archives, located in Elgin, Ill. For information, call 800-323-8039.

ing hit a mine, crew saved, cargo lost.”

Young boys fresh off the farm were exposed to the seamier side of life on these trips. Cowboys were tempted by the black market prevalent in their port cities; some were propositioned by

The trip opened my eyes to a lot of things that were going on in the world that I had no idea about.

—Elmer Bowers, Goshen, Ind., S.S. Norwalk Victory to Italy, February 1946; S.S. Adrian Victory to Greece, September 1946

young boys for their sisters, desperate to put food on the family table; and none could escape the spicy language of the salty seamen on ship or their drunken, womanizing behavior off ship.

Many cowboy crews, however, served as an example to the seamen. Some crew members accepted invitations to join the cowboys for a worship service on board. Many a captain was struck by the decency of the cowboys. Ross Noffsinger, supervisor of a trip, told his family how the captain had said, “On the sea, the captain is the law. I have a gun and I won’t hesitate to use it!” Upon completion of the voyage, however, the captain admitted to Noffsinger, “If ever there was a trip when a gun was unnecessary, it was this one.”

Shore leave was a window to the world for the cowboys. Side trips to Paris, the Parthenon and Acropolis, Pompeii, or Venice were exciting. Seeing annihilated cities or exploring battlefields in Poland covered with corpses still unburied a year after the war was sobering. Witnessing the poverty and low value placed on human life in places like Shanghai was heart-wrenching.

Many a cowboy’s life was changed by the experience. For some, it was simply an adventure that whetted the appetite for travel. For others, witnessing firsthand the carnal destruction of war made them lifelong advocates for nonviolence, peace, and justice. For some, it was a reinforcement of their beliefs; for others, a shaking up of their beliefs. At any rate, the cowboys returned home telling what they had seen. Their stories were a boon for the promotion of Heifer Project. When UNRRA was disbanded in 1947, the momentum was in place for Heifer Project to continue on its own.

It is hard to assess the impact of the BSC/UNRRA partner-

ship. The number of animals delivered—some 300,000 overall, including more than 4,000 Brethren cattle—was a drop in the bucket compared to the need.

But Mennonite cowboy Ron Graber relates an encounter of recent years with a Polish professional, who recognized a souvenir Graber had in his house as having come from Poland. Graber told the man about his trip delivering horses to Gdansk in August 1946. The man told Graber that he had accompanied his father to the dock at Gdansk to receive a horse just about that same time. “That horse meant the difference between life and death for our family that winter,” Graber was told.

It is impossible to know the number of lives saved by those who volunteered to be seagoing cowboys. An upcoming gathering in New Windsor, Md., will honor them (see sidebar). If there is a cowboy in your congregation, tell them “thanks”—and maybe add a “Yee-haw!”

Peggy Reiff Miller lives and writes in Milford, Ind. She is working on a historical novel about the seagoing cowboys. She expresses her thanks to the many cowboys and their families who have graciously shared their diaries, photos, and stories with her.

LEARN MORE

The video *Dan West: Peacemaker*, produced in 2004 by David Sollenberger, contains many interviews, images, and other stories from the early years of Heifer Project. It is available from Brethren Press for \$15 plus postage and handling. Call 800-441-3712.





Water, water not everywhere

by David Radcliff

Numerous factors are causing world's supplies to run dry

Water is as woven into our lives today as it was in the biblical creation accounts. As there, where this precious liquid “brought forth” life, sustained the garden, and coursed through primordial riverbeds, so today it is the fluid cornerstone of planetary life.

Unlike there, however, water today is not only precious but premium—and increasingly precarious. River systems find their waters wrested away from them for agricultural and urban development in water-poor regions, to the point that by the time they reach the sea, the mighty waterways have become pitiful rivulets. Half the world's wetlands are gone, lost to “development,” even as an acre of wetland brings an average of \$10,000 in economic gain to the human community annually.

Water tables in the bread-basket areas of the world's great grain-producing regions are in precipitous decline; aquifers under the Great Plains of the US and China are dropping at rates of feet and meters per year, respectively.

Global water cycles are being affected by factors such as deforestation (decreased rainfall leading to drought in a region); global warming (with increased precipitation in certain areas, leading to flooding and more severe storms); and dam construction (the world's 45,000 larger dams interrupt natural patterns of flushing, silt deposit, and fish spawning, along with seasonal water level changes that many species have come to count on over the millennia).

Then there are water issues such as pollution and scarcity with which we are more familiar. In a recent visit to the Ecuadorian Amazon, we learned that petroleum production continues to have a devastating effect on this vast, water-based ecosystem.

Liquid toxic mining waste spews into the streams at the headwaters of the Amazon River at a rate of 4.3 million gallons per day, along with more than 1,000 gallons of spilled crude oil.

While there has been significant improvement in the health of some bodies of water in the United States over the past 30 years, right around half of US lakes, streams, and estuaries are still polluted to the point of being considered unsafe for swimming or fishing.

And speaking of fish, some 24 percent of the world's freshwater species are threatened or endangered, mostly due to water diversion or dams. Those that remain often carry the toxic residue of industry or power production; one-quarter of the fish caught in the Great Lakes are unfit for consumption.

The Chesapeake Bay is a particularly poignant example of the ill effects of pollution on aquatic species. Due to the oxygen-depleting effects of fertilizer and pesticide run-off from farms and lawns in the bay's multi-state watershed, the annual oyster catch has plummeted from 1880s highs of 18 million bushels per year to 13,000 bushels today.

Water serves as the lubricating membrane for a well-functioning global ecosystem. Take it away—or try to control it too closely—and the system suffers or goes awry. Think the Everglades. Or the 1993 floods along the tightly managed Mississippi.

Water plays much the same role in the human body: lubricating, transporting, regulating, cleansing. To serve these necessary functions, and for hygienic use, the United Nations says that people need daily access to five gallons of clean water within half a mile of their home. Anything less is considered a water shortage.

In the US, water use in the home is around 65 gallons per person per day, and 1,300 gallons daily for all uses (adding in agri-

culture, industry, and recreation). That's about four times as much per person as the average European. Around the world, some 1.1 billion of the world's people do not have adequate access to clean water—not even the five gallons the UN recommends.

■ ■ ■

Even with looming shortages in the US—especially in the Southwest and Great Plains—most of us feel we have water to waste. Actually, we do waste around 50 percent of the water we withdraw from the ecosystem. Much of what isn't wasted still serves less-than-essential purposes. We irrigate golf courses to the tune of 4 billion gallons per day. A pound of grain-fed beef can require up to 900 gallons of water to raise. And what's the largest crop under irrigation in the US? Lawn grass—25 million acres worth.

And our thirst for water extends into less obvious areas. It takes 10 pounds of water to manufacture one pound of paper. A kilowatt of electricity: two gallons. A gallon of gas: 18 gallons. One automobile: more than 100,000 gallons.

So we're living as if we're flush with water—except where we're fighting over it. In the drier yet often heavily populated and farmed areas of the West and Southwest, states are jockeying for better access to shared river systems, while interest groups (anglers, farmers, ranchers, cities, industrialists, Native Americans) vie to see that their voice is heard in the debate over dividing up increasingly scarce ground and surface water.

It's only going to get worse. In the world as a whole, by 2025 water demand is expected to increase by 50 percent over current levels.

Millions of our neighbors are already running short. They not only lack adequate water for staying clean, doing chores, and staying healthy, but the water they do have is sometimes so foul as to be deadly. Water-related disease, from typhoid and cholera to diarrhea and schistosomiasis, claim upwards of 10 million lives every year. Two million die from diarrhea alone, most of these children (the number is likely much higher, as this disease sets the stage for other illnesses that are then blamed for the deaths). Diarrhea is also the principal culprit behind the 75 million "Disability Adjusted Life Years" lost annually by the world's people due to debilitating disease.

■ ■ ■

Liquid water has graced God's earth for 3 billion years. For most of that time, it has flown freely across the planet, leaving life in its wake. Now we are faced with a future of possible

SPEAKING OF WATER

The 2nd Alternative World Water Forum took place March 17-20 in Geneva, Switzerland. The focus was on developing and promoting institutions and public policy that encourage access to potable water for everyone and to have fair and sustainable water management. The World Council of Churches held an ecumenical event after the forum. Details are at www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/photo-galleries/meetings/water/water.html. Further discussions on the topic were planned this month in Basel.

shortages even in parts of the world like ours where we have taken water for granted. How can we sort through the competing claims for water to make choices based more on faithful sharing than famished grasping?

The Scriptures present us with simple guidelines for seeing to it that the water God has provided for life on earth continues to be life-giving.

Those who have, share with those who don't. For \$25 billion to \$30 billion per year over a decade, access to clean water could be provided to all the world's people. That sounds

It takes 10 pounds of water to manufacture one pound of paper. A kilowatt of electricity: two gallons. A gallon of gas: 18 gallons. One automobile: more than 100,000 gallons.

like a lot, until we notice this is a fraction of what the wealthy world spends on bottled water (\$100 billion a year).

Beware of the power of mammon to blind us to God's purposes. Caught up in the consumer mindset, we don't see the consequences of our actions. Becoming aware that our oil consumption or food choices have very real water-related impacts can free us to make responsible decisions. For instance, according to Worldwatch Institute, if all of us in this country cut back on our meat consumption by one-half by 2025, it would free up an amount of water equal to the flow of 14 Colorado Rivers.

God called the creation "good." Christians have been reluctant to embrace caring for the earth for its own sake, as if this weren't an appropriate value. However, God affirms earth's goodness in the creation accounts, and goes on to make the earth one of the relationships we are given to tend.

Can we, with Paul, hear the whole creation "groaning" as it deals with the excesses and abuses of the human family? Might we also not listen for the "trees of the field clapping their hands" at the opportunity to live within the verdant and well-watered ecosystem God intends? An Indiana couple makes it their business to show up at local zoning board meetings when plans are being considered to pave over yet more woods or wetlands for yet another shopping mall.

God caused the rain to water the earth. As there is pressure to privatize water along with anything else that can possibly wear a price tag, we must recall that God intends for the goodness of the earth to be shared freely by all as a common heritage. Water packaged by private bottlers routinely costs 1,000 times more than water from a municipal tap. For the poor or the frugal, water must remain accessible, with individual, community, and nature's needs superseding commercial exploitation.

God's creative process began as the Spirit hovered over the face of the deep. Water has played a similar seminal role in our spiritual lives at birth, at baptism, at love feast, at giving and receiving the cup of cold water in service and peacemaking. Let water and Spirit continue to inspire our own creative thinking and doing as we face a water-challenged future. This is the only clear way to ensure a world of water flowing freely for all. **W!**

David Radcliff is director of New Community Project. He lives in Elgin, Ill., and is a member of Faith Church of the Brethren in Batavia.

Do clothes make the worshiper?

by Kristen Campbell

'Sunday best' changing as church-going attire turns more casual

Sneakers and see-through, suits and ties and tie-dyed, feathered hats and baseball caps: On Sunday morning, you can see it all.

And it marks a change for Mary "Mickie" Jernigan, who recalls when church fashions were different.

These days, Jernigan, who is in her 70s, says she still has "Sunday dresses" she wears to worship at Government Street Presbyterian Church in Mobile, Ala. But other people, she says, are dressing more casually for worship.

That's their business, she adds.

"I mean, I can't tell people how to dress," she says. "I know what I feel comfortable in."

Jernigan says she's seen Sunday worship attire become more casual over the last decade or so. "It depends on the church. I just think it's respectful to look nice."

Within black congregations, dressing up remains important, according to Gwendolyn S. O'Neal, professor and head of the department of apparel, textiles, and interior design at Kansas State University.

Historically, from the African-American perspective, the church was the "foundation of everything," she says. "It provided the context for education. It was where you gathered for social and political events. It was where you were taught all kinds of things."

Within the black community in particular, O'Neal says, people dress up for "anything that we reverence," whether it be a secular or sacred occasion.

Elsewhere, many dress more casually for worship, and sometimes offer religious reasons for doing so.

Cecil R. Taylor, dean of the School of Religion at the University of Mobile, says he wears jeans to church, and doesn't mean any disrespect to God by doing so.

"The important thing is to come before the Lord," Taylor says. "I think whether I wear jeans or a three-piece suit probably is immaterial before the Lord."

After all, Taylor recalls, David was anointed king after working in the fields. In the biblical story, David's divine appointment is preceded by God telling Samuel of other candidates, "Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

The Rev. Roy Schneider, pastor of Providence Presbyterian Church in Mobile, says he once encouraged members of another church he served to come to worship straight from their work baling hay.

"The hardest thing was to convince their wives," Schneider says, adding that he was only concerned they "came with hearts that were prepared to worship the Lord."

Schneider says the way a person dresses can reflect his or her heart. For one person, Schneider said, dressing up too much might be a prideful act.

"God is looking at your heart, and (God) is the ultimate judge of what you're wearing," Schneider said.

The Rev. Robert Seawell, vicar of the Episcopal Church of the Apostles, says his attire varies with the type of service he is leading. For the congregation's traditional Sunday morning service, Seawell says he wears his vestments. During the Sunday evening service, he may wear shorts.

"For me, it's a nice mix," says Seawell, who believes both services reflect different aspects of God. The morning service is more contemplative, he says; the evening service is more charismatic.

Generally speaking, Seawell says he thinks worship attire has grown more casual.

"I think that worship ought to be a continuation of what we do," he says. "Yeah, there should be some set-apart time. The Sabbath is a set-apart time... (But) I don't think it has to be so far removed from who we are," he says, wondering aloud why, if a person doesn't wear a coat and tie during the rest of the week, he should feel obliged to sport them come Sunday.

Duke Walker, a member of Government Street Presbyterian, says that while members of his congregation don't tend to dress very casually, he has seen more relaxed attire at other churches.

"I think it's less perhaps about a loss or lack of reverence and more about being comfortable with what you're doing," Walker says. "Maybe it's that people are making God more a part of their everyday (lives)." ❧





Moses views the promised land from Pisgah. (*The Picture Bible for Children*, 1900, the Society for Promoting Christianity)



by Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm

Deuteronomy: *God's teaching at the boundaries of life*

As the culmination of the first five books of the Bible (the Torah), the book of Deuteronomy stands at the boundary of Israel's history and the life of faith.

The Greek title, *deuteronomos*, means "second law." It points to the nature of this book as an expansion or reinterpretation of God's words shared earlier with Israel at the time of the Exodus. The Hebrew title, *'elleh haddebarim*, means "these are the words." It refers to the words of command and instruction, preaching and exhortation that characterize Moses' speeches throughout the account.

Most interesting of all is the way in which these words mark several boundaries in the life of faith. Historical, geographical, political, literary, and theological boundaries are

of vital importance to this magnificent collection of speeches and sermons:

- Historically, the setting for the book of Deuteronomy marks the boundary between Israel's wandering in the wilderness and its settlement into a new phase of life.
- Geographically, the people of Israel are perched on the edge of Canaan, between the land of sojourn and the land of promise.
- Politically, Moses offers his words on the boundary of Israel's beginning as a people with a new national identity, between Assyrian hegemony and Judean autonomy.
- Literarily, Deuteronomy follows the book of Numbers and links the Torah with the historical documents of Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings (what is known as the Deuteronomistic History).

• The theological boundaries this text explores mark some of its greatest contributions to the life of faith. Among the several theological questions Deuteronomy explores, at least three are worth noting as we consider what it means to be people of faith today:

What is God's law? According to the book of Deuteronomy, the law of God is not so much the imposition of precepts as it is the presentation of instruction; it is not absolute rule but a way to faithfulness. The rules of faithfulness are set for Israel but in need of constant reinterpretation as they face new circumstances.

For example, the differences between the recounting of the 10 commandments in Deuteronomy 5 and what is recorded in Exodus 20 are offered as an expansion and reinterpretation of Israel's initial recep-

tion of God's words at Sinai. The two accounts are not meant to contradict one another but to highlight the ongoing need to understand and reinterpret God's way in the world. At the boundary between divine and human realms, God's teachings are intended to engage us ever anew as we seek God's way and will among us.

What is the role of love in the life of faith? The command to love God stands at the center of faith (Deut. 6:4), and all other commands and teachings are related to this. Just as God's love is

steadfast and just, so does God call us to steadfast love and justice in our relationships with others.

Love is not described in Deuteronomy as a feeling as much as it is a practice—a practice that demands all of one's heart, soul, and strength (the mind was assumed as part of the heart in Hebrew thinking). All of life is to be oriented to our love of God and is necessarily related to how we live with others. At the boundary between divine and human faithfulness, love is what moves and empowers us to be God's people.

What does it mean to worship God? Law, love, and worship are all integrally related in the book of Deuteronomy. In response to the divine words issued through Moses, God demands absolute loyalty and service. Warnings against idolatry and foreign worship are intended to mark the boundaries of Israel's holiness, and Deuteronomy names Jerusalem

life in a new setting.

According to Deuteronomy, our actions have consequences: God blesses those who obey and punishes those who do not. At times we are left with an almost intolerable tension between the desire to destroy anyone who violates the boundaries of faith and God's desire for love, compassion, and justice.

All of life is to be oriented to our love of God and is necessarily related to how we live with others. At the boundary between divine and human faithfulness, love is what moves and empowers us to be God's people.

as the cultic center of Israel. Worship of God is essential to the people's identity and vocation. At the boundary between divine and human relationship, it is worship that orders and opens our lives to God ever anew.

• • •

On the one hand, Deuteronomy marks the end of an era as God's people leave the wilderness and make a new beginning. On the other hand, it looks forward to the future and self-consciously offers instruction for

Deuteronomy's struggle with boundaries of all kinds speaks a lively word to our own struggles as we seek to know God's way among us, to love God and neighbors faithfully, and to worship the One who gives us life anew. **W**

Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm is assistant professor of preaching and worship for Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

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 June: Joshua, by Jim Myer.

DEUTERONOMY: A CLOSER LOOK

When written: Portions may derive from Moses' time, but many scholars believe that much of the book was consolidated shortly before the time of Josiah's reform in 621 BCE.

Famous stories: Unlike other portions of the Torah, Deuteronomy does not recount any particular actions but reissues the teachings of God through a series of speeches given by Moses to the people of Israel. For a prophet who was reluctant to speak (Ex. 3:11; 6:12,30), Moses had a lot to say!

Well-known verses: "Hear, O Israel: the Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might" (Deut. 6:4-5); "... one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deut. 8:3); "What does the Lord your God require of you? Only to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. . . ." (Deut. 10:12); "The word is very near to you; it is in your mouth and in your heart for you to observe" (Deut. 30:14).

Other notes: Deuteronomy is the fifth and final book of the Torah and was the book of Moses most often quoted by Jesus in the New Testament.

Consultation highlights military recruitment issues

Trenton Voth, now 20, still remembers “military day” in eighth grade when tanks and other military vehicles rumbled to his Halstead, Kan., school. Steeped in the peace tradition of the Mennonite Brethren Church, he began to think, “If we’re a gun-free zone, how do we allow other people to bring in their guns and show them?” The event spurred Voth to work on behalf of peace and to spread the message to his friends.

Speakers and participants at a March 4-5 Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service in Elgin, Ill., held in part to address planning in case of a military draft, warned that today’s youth are already facing military recruitment firsthand.

At 16, Voth was pulled out of class to see a military recruiter. He was ready. He told the recruiter he believed that when Jesus said love your enemies, that meant he shouldn’t shoot at them.

But Voth—echoing the message of many speakers at the consultation—noted his situation is vastly different from that of many people of color, including many from the historic peace churches (Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers) for whom the military may seem the only viable economic option for getting ahead. Speakers warned that recruiters are drawing heavily from communities of color and impoverished communities where youth may see few other avenues to pay for college or to move into a steady job that provides training and benefits.

Church staff said young people are drawn by the promises. Clarence Williams, a youth pastor at Butler Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church in Fresno, Calif., said among youth he interacts with—primarily southeast Asian or African-American, with a smaller percentage of Latino or white students—signing up for the military is about incentives. “It’s never talked of as patriotism. . . . They’re being enticed by money. They’re being enticed by the possibility of college if they survive,” he said.

The options the military offers are already tempting for classmates of William Olivencia, a 15-year-old from Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the

Wait Wiltschek



Brethren. “A lot of my friends are like, ‘This is pretty cool,’ ” Olivencia said. The consultation helped him learn additional ways of talking to friends about the dangers of military recruitment, but he says he already has warned his friends. “I say, ‘Think outside the box. You’re just going down there to find a good life. . . . What if your life gets destroyed that way?’ ”

Speakers at the consultation said military presence is common in schools, with recruiters visiting campuses even as early as elementary grades. Public high schools turn over students’ personal information to military recruiters—a little-known part of the No Child Left Behind Act. Parents can ask schools not to provide this, but they must begin early. Parent Fred Suter of Columbus (Ohio) Mennonite Church recalls telephoning the high school guidance counselor when his son started his junior year. The school already had provided the information to the military the year before. “They had that information about my son before he was 16 years old,” Suter said.

Those resisting the lures of military recruiters spoke of the influence of parents, congregations, and other young people. Tim Showalter, a 21-year-old Goshen (Ind.) College student from Harrisonburg, Va., chose not to register with Selective Service when he turned 18, a move that means he is ineligible for state or federal school aid, state or federal jobs, and a Virginia driver’s license. He remembers being struck by hearing other young adults speak about standing up for peace. “Those stories were really important. A kid two years older than me said not only can our parents and grandparents do this, we can do this, too.”

“Peace churches can equip their youth to have the advantage in talking to recruiters,” Voth said. “We can use that opportunity” to witness for peace, he added. “When our youth talk to recruiters, it is a chance for us to recruit for God.”

—**Marla Pierson Lester** (Mennonite Central Committee US)

Andrew Duffey, right, a high schooler from Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren, visited with Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, at the Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service in March. The General Board hosted the event, with more than 90 people from a variety of peacemaking traditions attending. Noffsinger serves on the Council of Moderators and Secretaries, a group of Anabaptist leaders that sponsored the consultation.

Cheryl Burnbaugh-Cayford



Manchester College student Travis Poling, left, shared with Rolando Flores, a Mennonite from Puerto Rico at the consultation.

General Board hears good news, shares glimpses of the church

Meeting in Elgin, Ill., March 11-14, the General Board received numerous reports of positive developments in the agency and in the church. The agenda included time to focus on stories from board members and their congregations and districts.

A positive income report headed the good news (see story in April MESSENGER, p. 22). A giving report for 2004 "showed the first growth in years" in con-

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



General Board members were invited to help with a "work project" during their March meeting: preparing a mailing to participants in this summer's youth and young adult workcamps. From left, board member Tim Harvey joined Annual Conference moderator-elect Ron Beachley and Brethren Volunteer Service worker Sam Bowman to stuff envelopes.

gregational giving to the board's Core Ministries Fund, according to Ken Neher, director of Funding and Donor Development. Other categories of giving were up as well, and the prospect for 2005 is similarly bright. Self-allocation reporting from congregations for 2005, up 8.9 percent from 2004, was another positive note, as was the giving to the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) this year.

Reports of recent out-of-the-ordinary efforts highlighted the breadth of the board's work: the Church of the Brethren Christmas Eve service on CBS, the response to the tsunami, and the Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service.

Reports of these three juxtaposed in one meeting gave a sense of how the board is working in areas of worship, peace, service, and witness.

The board also received a report from Dale Roth, chair of the Stewardship of Properties Committee, a board-appointed committee considering use of General Board properties in Elgin, Ill., and New Windsor, Md. He reported plans to gather data from board members and staff, districts, the church at large, Annual Conference agencies, and other organizations that rent from the board. "We're open to the Spirit," he said, adding that the committee does not have a "preconceived notion" about the outcome of its work. He outlined questions the committee will ask and a timeline for the study, which will include an insight session at Annual Conference and conclude

with a report and recommendations to the board in March 2006.

Board members discussed how to have informed decision making when the recommendation is received and asked that the board's October meeting include consideration of the committee's survey questions as a group. Heads of other Conference agencies may be invited. "This must be a very transparent and collaborative discussion," said Stan Noffsinger, general secretary.

A capital proposal was approved for up to \$130,000 for masonry repair on the four oldest buildings at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor. Repairs are needed "so it doesn't deteriorate any further and become a more expensive problem," said executive director Roy Winter. Safety concerns also motivated the proposal.

A project to increase donations to the Emerging Global Mission Fund was presented early in the meeting. The fund supports new church planting in the US and mission in Brazil. "New Birth, New Life" would encourage Brethren to mark events of new life—such as baptisms, births, anniversaries, memorials—with gifts to the fund. A concern that the approach would not generate the amount of money needed was also expressed. "We see this as seed planting," said Del Keeney, executive director of Congregational Life Ministries. "This feels incremental but it has the potential to change folk."

A collection for One Great Hour of Sharing, taken on Sunday morning when many congregations observed the annual offering, received \$536.

Emergency Disaster Fund sends major tsunami gift

A grant of \$100,000 from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) in March continued Brethren support for Church World Service (CWS) work following the tsunami in south Asia.

Donations to the EDF topped three-quarters of a million dollars in the first three months of the year, totaling \$868,775 as of mid-March. "The response of our members to the efforts of EDF and the needs in southeast Asia has been remarkable," said Stan Noffsinger, the board's general secretary.

A record number of Gift of the Heart kits for disaster relief also were received at the Brethren Service Center warehouse in New Windsor, Md. In January and February, 118 tons of the kits were received, sent from every US state but Hawaii, Utah, and Wyoming, reported Loretta Wolf, director of the board's Service Ministries. The program warehouses and ships the kits for CWS.

Service Ministries shipments to countries affected by the tsunami as of mid-March included 23,450 blankets,



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 263 held orientation Jan. 23-Feb. 11 at Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla. Volunteers, their home churches or hometowns, and placements are as follows:

Front row: Elke Grothstuck, Bonn, Germany, to Bering Omega House, Houston, Texas; Sarah Vaughn, Lubbock, Texas, to Community Mediation Center, Harrisonburg, Va.; Rebecca Golden-Trist, Champaign, Ill., to L'Arche Community, Tecklenburg, Germany; Dustin Jones, Darlington, Md., to Pesticide Action Network North America, San Francisco; Helga Steinmann, Wilhelmsdorf, Germany, to Bridgeway, Lakewood, Colo.; Fred Miller, Bethany Church of the Brethren, Greenwood, Del., to Lend A Hand Center, Walker, Ky.; Joanna Felo, Stayton, Ore., to La Puente Home, Alamosa, Colo.

Middle row: Thomas Engler, Lehrensteinsfeld, Germany, to Café 458, Atlanta, Ga.; Daniela Baur, Erlangen, Germany, to Camp Stevens, Julian, Calif.; Elizabeth Griswold, Carlsbad, Calif., to Escuela Indígena, Guatemala; Tiffany Wright, New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, to District IV Human Resources Development Council, Havre, Mont.; Carol Lena Miller, First Church of the Brethren, Roanoke, Va., to Meeting Ground, Elkton, Md.

Back row: Seth Flory, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to Camp Alexander Mack, Milford, Ind.; Jason Verbeck, Ellisorde Church of the Brethren, Tonasket, Wash., to Trees for Life, Wichita, Kan.; Trenton Greenawalt, Harrisonburg, Va., to the Brethren Home, New Oxford, Pa.; Tilman Schroder, Frankfurt, Germany, to Lancaster (Pa.) Habitat for Humanity; Jonas and David Miller, First Church of the Brethren, Roanoke, Va., to Meeting Ground, Elkton, Md. For more information about BVS, visit www.brethrevolunteerservice.org.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

May 1 National Youth Sunday

May 5 National Day of Prayer

May 7 Bethany Theological Seminary commencement, Richmond, Ind.

May 9-15 Cover the Uninsured Week sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers

May 15 Health Promotion Sunday sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers

May 21 Five Loaves and Two Fish—Jesus Multiplies Our Gifts for Christian Education, Carlisle (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

May 27-29 Young Adult Conference, Woodland Altars, Peebles, Ohio

June 3-4 Puerto Rico annual assembly, Vega Baja, P.R.

June 5 Brethren Press summer curriculum quarter begins

128,557 Gift of the Heart kits (16,335 school kits, 952 children's kits, 9,885 baby kits, 101,385 health kits), and 175 Interchurch Medical Assistance Clinic Boxes—representing \$3.3 million worth of aid.

The \$100,000 was to start rebuilding efforts following the tsunami, reported Roy Winter, director of Emergency Response. It followed three previous grants, making a total of \$180,000 in Brethren funding related to the tsunami. For more information about Emergency Response/Service Ministries see www.brethren.org.

D.R. assembly welcomes church planting projects

The 14th Annual Assembly of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic was held Feb. 18-20 in Santo Domingo with the theme "Peace in the Storm" from Luke 8:22-25. Preachers included Stan Noffsinger, general secretary of the General Board, and Jim Hardenbrook, Annual Conference moderator. Led by moderator and pastor Anastacia Bueno

Beltre, some 95 delegates and many additional attendees enjoyed a spirited weekend of worship, business, and fellowship. The 19 Dominican congregations gave a hearty official welcome to three new church planting projects: Carmona, in the area of Sabana Grande de Boyá and a "daughter" of the San Luis congregation, which was welcomed as a fellowship because of its larger size; Al Coride, a preaching point of the Peniel congregation; and Villa Esperanza, a preaching point of the San Juan congregation.

Delegates elected pastor Mardocheo Catalice from the Fe en Cristo congregation in Boca Chica as moderator-elect, and approved a 2005 budget. The assembly also received reports from all the congregations, elected leaders, and General Board staff working in the Dominican, while the children in attendance enjoyed activities provided by Dominican church leaders working jointly with a work group from Florin Church of the Brethren, Mount Joy, Pa. Youth and young adults were led in Bible study by Carol Yeazell, a member of the board's Congregational Life Teams.



New Sudan Council of Churches/Brethren Witness-Washington Office

INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: SUDAN

The Sudanese people celebrated the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the northern government and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) on Jan. 9.

Jan. 9 was a historic day for southern Sudan. The government of Sudan, based in the North of the country, and the Sudan People's Liberation Movement/Army (SPLM/A) of the South signed a Comprehensive Peace Agreement promising to bring closure to five decades of conflict.

The conflict began at the advent of Sudan's independence in the 1950s and has been most intense and deadly since 1983. It is deeply rooted in pervasive forms of racial discrimination, religious differences, regional power imbalances, wealth exploitation and disparities, oppression, and human rights abuses. The discovery of vast reserves of oil in the 1960s, mostly in southern Sudan, made the conflict more urgent and intense. In the past two decades, there have been nearly 3 million deaths, millions more maimed and disabled, and 4 million to 5 million refugees. The extent of the tragedy and suffering is not well known because of the harsh and isolated conditions in southern Sudan, the secrecy of the raids and attacks, the fears and traumas of survivors, and persistent denials and cover-ups by authorities.

The sad history of conflict in Sudan now has a chance to be transformed—this is the driving expectation of the peace agreement.

Thousands of Sudanese attended the historic peace ceremony at a soccer stadium in Nairobi, Kenya. Most were southern Sudanese, many of whom are among the hundreds of thousands of refugees living in Kenya. They sang and chanted about peace and prosperity. At the same time, people danced in the streets of Juba and other towns and villages of southern Sudan. It was said that the streets of Khartoum, Sudan's capital, were empty, but the estimated 3 million displaced southern Sudanese living there followed the ceremony on radio, celebrating in their homes.

Widespread celebrations clearly demonstrated the Sudanese people's will to own and undertake the agreement, but suspicion continued despite promises of new relationships and structures. Memories of failures and betrayals of past agreements are fresh. The Sudanese are conflict-weary. Some Sudanese, most notably in Darfur, are still in violent conflict or under siege as militias commit atrocities and acts of violence. The peace accord is to be celebrated for the South, but much of Sudan remains in the midst of a violent struggle of oppression and vast human rights violations.

Implementation of peace must become the highest agenda in Sudan. The challenges do not end with the signing of the agreement, which is the formal end of hostilities and the benchmark for changes in governance and peacemaking to be undertaken earnestly and sincerely by all parties. The agreement itself is nearly 300 pages long and lays out what is to be done for national peace and governance for a six-year period. There will be self-rule for southern Sudan and a referendum on self-determination, to determine if the South will remain part of Sudan or secede. The terms of the agreement also

encompass matters of national governance, power-sharing, security, military arrangements, wealth-sharing, and other protocols.

The challenges of peacemaking, however, are changing and in many cases will become more urgent. The New Sudan Council of Churches (NSCC) has been promoting reconciliation and peacemaking in the South. Since the mid 1990s, it has facilitated more than 40 peace conferences and meetings, many leading to substantive peace agreements and peace monitoring arrangements. New challenges will revolve around how to restore normal life for the Sudanese. There are urgent needs to replace cultures of conflict and violence with ones of harmony and peace, to replace despondency with hope, and to replace dependency with self-reliance. For people who have been engaged in conflict and exposed to the effects of Africa's longest civil war, this is not an easy task. Following the peace agreement, the NSCC will continue its programs for reconciliation and its peace initiatives, while promoting justice, good governance, civil society, education, and self-reliance.

The peace agreement was achieved only with tremendous influence and pressure from other nations in the region and major powers including the US. International monitoring, insistence, pressure, and even sanctions will be essential to ensure that the six-year period is used well.

The Church of the Brethren has made profound and practical contributions to peace in Sudan, as a partner with the NSCC in its peacemaking initiatives and by supporting staff to work with the council. We must not be deceived that our work is done. The Brethren witness is unique and critical, and working with our brothers and sisters in Sudan is important. It helps fulfill our mission to continue the work of Jesus peacefully, simply, and together.

—Merlyn Kettering is a consultant and strategic advisor for the New Sudan Council of Churches and the General Board's Global Mission Partnerships.

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$100,000 for Church World Service (CWS) work following the tsunami in south Asia
- \$20,000 to continue Brethren Disaster Response work in Florida following the 2004 hurricanes
- \$10,000 to CWS for peace and rebuilding work in post-war Liberia
- \$10,000 to CWS hurricane disaster response work
- \$5,000 to CWS for long-term recovery from severe flooding and mudslides in five US states
- \$5,000 to CWS for recovery from flooding in the Philippines

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

- \$50,000 to continue farm rehabilitation in North Korea
- \$20,000 for irrigation and water conservation in El Salvador through Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel
- \$20,000 to continue post-war agricultural work in Angola

ONCAMPUS



Bridgewater College (*Bridgewater, Va.*)

Bridgewater celebrated the 125th anniversary of its founding on April 5, presenting several awards during a Founder's Day convocation. Faculty member Nan R. Covert received the Martha B. Thornton Faculty Recognition Award, and Dr. Gavin R. Lawson the Ben and Janice Wade Outstanding Teaching Award. Outstanding Leadership Awards were presented to seniors Christina Simko and Justin Pruett.



Elizabethtown College (*Elizabethtown, Pa.*)

The college's Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies in April presented the historical drama "Dirk's Exodus," about Dutch Anabaptist martyr Dirk Willems. Proceeds from the production, written by Young Center fellow James C. Juhnke, supported the worldwide peacemaking efforts of Christian Peacemaker Teams.



Juniata College (*Huntingdon, Pa.*)

Students studying fine arts and ceramics exhibited their paintings, prints, photographs, ceramics, and computer art at the Juniata College Museum of Art March 18 to April 9. The exhibit featured more than two dozen works made by Juniata students during the 2004-2005 academic year.



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

Dr. Leonard Pellicer, dean of the College of Education and Organizational Leadership, announced that the Parsons Foundation has awarded La Verne a \$100,000 grant to the university to establish a Literacy Clinic.



Manchester College (*North Manchester, Ind.*)

Dr. Glenn R. Sharfman has been named vice president and dean for academic affairs at Manchester effective July 1. He fills the position vacated when Jo Young Switzer became Manchester's president this past winter. Sharfman has been associate dean and director of graduate studies at Hiram College in northeast Ohio since 2001.



McPherson College (*McPherson, Kan.*)

The college announced five new members who will join the board of trustees this year. The new members, Carine Ullom, Brad Elliott, Ted Bray, Craig Holman, and Daryl K. Beam, will participate in orientation activities at the beginning of this summer's board retreat. Their terms will begin at the end of the retreat.

ERYC helps youth along journey of 'Seeking God'

Seeking God does not have a specific set of directions, rules, or regulations. You don't have to face a certain direction, utter a specific phrase, or perform a concise hand movement. Contrary to popular belief it's quite possible to seek God in your business suit, your pajamas, from your bed, your office desk, or your car. Glimpses of God can be found almost anywhere you look.

Held March 11-13 at Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., Eastern Regional Youth Conference (ERYC) is a gathering from the four districts in Pennsylvania. About 220 senior high youth and advisors came together that weekend to hear from MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek and an ensemble of youth the importance of seeking and seeing God.

Friday night included get-to-know-you games and meeting in small groups designed to challenge you to better know your peers. Saturday featured music from Wretch, the weekend praise band; worship; and workshops ranging from journalism to dating, and conscientious objection to fashion.

Saturday night Cassie Jones from Western Pennsylvania District told us of the beauty and the struggle that had consumed her life for the past year. As everyone sat intently and listened to her love and her downfalls we were all forced to look into ourselves and evaluate our own lives. Another youth speaker, Heather Hall from Middle Pennsylvania District, shared some of the ways she has seen Christ's love shared through involvement with work-camps and other opportunities.

Following the sermon we were introduced to The Switch, a small outfit from Pittsburgh, bringing along good music and a striking message through their concert. Others played volleyball or chatted with friends. Sunday morning wrapped up with more sharing in our small groups and closing worship.

As we all made the drive home, hours for some and mere minutes for others, we turned over the ideas and ideals we were taught. Whether you are reading this at home, in your office, or anywhere else, you can start your own personal journey to seek God right here and right now.—**Matthew Graves is a youth member of Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.**



Melanie Moles

Youth and advisors gathered in small-group prayer circles during a morning sharing time at Eastern Regional Youth Conference, held this year at Juniata College.

Is it 'Purpose Driven Lite'?

First the disclaimer: Rick Warren is not N.T. Wright or Walter Brueggemann. Currently, my son Peter resides in one of the oldest bastions of theological education:

Alexander Hall, on the campus of Princeton Theological Seminary. Upon seeing Rick Warren's *The Purpose Driven Life* on his bookshelf, a classmate commented: "What are you doing with that 'lite stuff'?"



PAUL MUNDEY

I would expand that comment: What are more than 20 million people around the world (the current sales of Warren's *Purpose Driven Life*—and climbing) doing with that "lite stuff"? Well, among other things, they are growing in the basics of Christian belief and praxis—never grasped

through the current methodology of many congregations.

Last Lent, our congregation in Frederick, Md., entered into Warren's "40 Days of Purpose" emphasis. Using *The Purpose Driven Life* as our mantra we explored Christian faith and practice at a 101 level: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, evangelism. Sermons were preached. Small groups were organized. Ministry and mission fairs were held.

The response bowled me over: 839 people meeting in 76 host homes. More than 100 people signing up for ministry involvement (volunteerism in the local church), and more than 50 signing up for mission involvement (volunteerism outside the local church). Worship attendance increased by more than 100 each Sunday. One thousand *Purpose Driven Life* books were distributed. And overall, there was an incredible enthusiasm and drive to be the church.

Especially noteworthy was the response of our youth. To quote one, Ashley Brown: "We felt (our study of *The Purpose Driven Life*) took some stress off of our everyday lives and made us think about what we are really here for."

Warren's phenomenal effectiveness reminds us of the power of indigenous communication. When deep truth is translated into the metaphors, language, and rhythms of a particular people group, truth connects and transforms. That's the brilliance of Rick Warren. Not intellectual illumine but anthropological prowess: the ability to respect and penetrate the culture of laity around the world. Just as the *Harvard Business Journal* translates complex management theory into the language of practitioners, *The Purpose Driven Life* translates complex theological insight into the language of the people. I find that to be a good thing.

I also find goodness in the man who writes. Recently I was with Rick Warren at the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. He spoke candidly about the pressure of

notoriety and the windfall that results from 20 million books. And so, Warren shared with us, "My wife and I have become 'reverse tithers': We live on 10 percent and give 90 percent away." The "giving away" is visible in Warren's spirit of philanthropy touching the world, most dramatically in his work in South Africa with victims of AIDS.

Overall, Warren's approach strikes a sensitive chord in the heart of humankind. It is noteworthy that the Templeton Foundation sponsored a worldwide essay competition last year titled "The Power of Purpose," inspired by Warren's book. For them the very concept of "purpose" was intriguing, central to an understanding of human activity and destiny.

Quoting William Damon, the president of Stanford University, the Templeton Foundation affirmed that purpose is key, because "Purpose is the intention to accomplish something that is at once meaningful to the self, and of positive consequence to the world *beyond the self*" (emphasis added).

In that regard, a purpose-driven emphasis aligns with Brethren practice and thought. For to be Brethren is to accomplish something of "positive consequence to the world beyond self"—i.e., service and sacrifice for all of God's creation.

And so, Warren's emphasis is not "purpose-driven lite"; it is "purpose-driven 101"—reminding us of the basics so that we can build toward more radical expressions of Christian faithfulness.

Frankly, I cannot fathom how we have missed the basics after decades and decades of curriculum studies, hymns, and sermons. But I've moved beyond my chagrin, utilizing Warren's contribution. And that's all it is: a contribution. Warren doesn't claim to be a guru or advanced thinker, but he does claim to be a player, helping advance the Christian movement.

While attending Lausanne II in Manila, I heard Tom Houston describe the Christian movement as a pilgrimage of torches. Tom's intent was vivid: Various aspects of the church carry different "flames"—different styles/approaches/roles—but contribute to one light. For one, the torch is in-depth spirituality and touching worship. For another, the torch is social activism and prophetic witness. For yet another, the torch is deep teaching and probing research. For Rick Warren, the torch is indigenous, accessible communication of Christian "basics."

Though Warren's torch is far from enough, I for one am grateful for the light he adds to the Christian cause. 

Paul Munday is pastor of Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren.

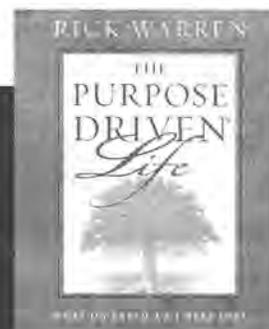
ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth Am I Here For?* It is a follow-up to *The Purpose Driven Church*. A variety of ancillary materials are also available.

Format: The book is divided into 40 short chapters that can be read as daily devotionals, studied by small groups, or used by churches participating in the 40 Days of Purpose campaigns.

Author: Rick Warren is founding pastor of the Saddleback Church in Lake Forest, Calif.

Price: Listed at \$19.99. **Online:** www.purposedrivenlife.com



Do more like March issue

I must admit that there have been issues of the MESSENGER that did not impress me all that much, but I found several very good articles in the March issue that I really appreciated: "The bread which we break . . .," "Message in a bottle," "The gift of unexpected love," "Love feast breaks down barriers," and "Leviticus: Blessed desire for holiness (order)." I look forward to more articles similar to those.

William C. Shimer
Westernport, Md.

Finding truth takes backbone

This is in response to the gentleman from Idaho [February 2005 Letters]. If a person wishes to know what the Bible says about science, they can study the Word and come up with the truth. If a person wants to know what the Bible says about sickness, they can study the Bible and come up with the truth.

What the church did was study the Bible—all of God's Word, not ours—and came up with the truth concerning sexuality. God's Word is not going to change. We can accept it or reject it. I'm glad the church showed some backbone and stood up for the truth.

We are all born with a sinful nature. We can all make excuses for what we do that is sinful. The fact is, it will be an excuse but not the reason. Does that mean we kick people out of the church who sin? No, for we all would have to leave if that were the case. What it means is that we have to recognize sin as sin and not try to put words in God's mouth claiming some new doctrine. We have to seek God's help in changing our way of life so that we can conform to the Scriptures. We should not be seen as endorsing a sinful lifestyle.

Larry Lutz
Vandalia, Ohio

Our souls sing different tunes

Like most other denominations, The Church of the Brethren is changing. Some of the change is for the best. The fact that we are making a concerted effort

This denomination is known for its four-part-harmony singing. If we lose this, by not teaching our children to read music and listen to those around them, we are losing a very valuable part of who we have been.

to welcome non-Brethren and those from all walks of life is, I believe, a very positive move towards the future.

Within the framework of making this special effort to be open, we are reaching out to the disenfranchised. Those who openly state they are not interested in traditional worship (or those whom we apparently suspect are not interested) are now allowed to feel that church is less judgmental and more interesting. In many cases this idea comes from a more secular style of music and a focus on drama and unstructured worship order.

We are relaxing the style of worship so those who are unable to afford special clothes for church can come as they are. Or if they're individuals who must "dress" for work and want to be casual on weekends, they can do so without comment.

The change I see in the style of worship is a right and proper thing if it brings more souls to find their rightful place at the Lord's table. This change is also, I believe, a very detrimental move if it tramples to dust those of us who don't want to be involved in any way in contemporary worship and in the end drives us out. Not everyone is fed and nurtured by the same things.

I think we need to make enormous efforts to respect the needs of those on both sides of this issue. There has been a trend in the past few years to structure services at Annual Conference along very contemporary lines. This denomination is known for its four-part-harmony singing. If we lose this, by not teaching our children to read music and listen to those around them, we are losing a very valuable part of who we have been. I believe there are many in the denomination who feel as I do, but don't wish to speak up for fear of appearing out of touch with the times, or to appear to be uncaring of those who need to find their place at the table.

I am personally thankful that at Beacon Heights in Fort Wayne, Ind., we have both traditional and contemporary services. I believe we are all fed. I have seen few, if any, letters to MESSENGER stating this viewpoint. We are all in the need of that Living Water that flows in an everlasting stream, but we all hear it slip into our being to a different tune.

Leland D. H. Harding
Fort Wayne Ind.

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Beliefs needed to be heard

This is in response to the letter by Glenn Hassinger of Myerstown, Pa., in the December 2004 MESSENGER, "Time to Say No," in reference to the homosexual and lesbian lifestyle being unacceptable. When are the Brethren in question going to acknowledge the scriptures that plainly say how we are to live our lives in regards to this subject?

I have been Brethren all my life and have seen over recent years some disappointing attempts to change what I assume were original biblical beliefs of our denomina-

tion. Thank you, Mr. Hassinger, for expressing your beliefs. It was something we needed to read and pray about, and I am sure you have many other supporters.

Jane Horne
Columbus, N.C.

Service showed best of Brethren

I rejoiced in the way the planners and participants shared the Good News in the Church of the Brethren Christmas Eve service. It was in the best of free-church wor-

ship tradition, involving lay and ordained leadership, ethnic variety, men and women, young and old, all of whom shared in a clear, unpretentious, and well planned manner.

The worship ingredients were joined together, word and music, in a simple and extraordinary style. And the congregational participation in responsive readings and hymn singing gave witness to how liturgy is indeed the work of the people.

I find joy in the classic music and liturgy of Christmas. But this warm and invitation- al expression of our community of faith gave testimony not only to the One whose work we strive to continue, but also to our endeavor to witness to true community in the way we strive to live with others. I'm pleased that those who might not know us well were introduced to us by our worship.

We do better working together in worship than we do in clarifying position papers. Could it be because of the focus of worship?

Earle Fike Jr.
Bridgewater, Va.

Editor's note: An insight session about the Christmas Eve service is planned for this summer's Annual Conference in Peoria, Ill., in which high- lights will be shown and additional stories shared.

Letter invites dialogue

Gale Younkins [January 2005 Letters] is "my kind of guy." When he sees something wrong, he offers a suggestion for a "fix" and invites others into the dialogue.

When we Brethren started to use the "set-apart" lingo it rubbed me the wrong way, but I never gave it enough thought to propose a correction. At last, "light" for my darkness! I hope the idea works its way through officialdom and editorial venues.

Norman L. Harsh
Roanoke, Va.

The opinions expressed in "Letters" are not necessarily those of MESSENGER. Readers should receive them in the same way as when differing views are expressed in face-to-face conversation.

Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

Send letters to MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org. Please include hometown and phone number.

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Let's honor the commandments

I agree that the "Ten Commandments are a moral law" for this nation [January 2005 Letters]. However, I wish that our nation would HONOR the commandments. Specifically, we totally disregard "Thou shalt not kill" when we go to war and when we allow the death penalty.

Beverly A. Brubaker
Gratis, Ohio

Repentance is necessary

Roger Eberly in the March issue of MESSENGER, relating to the article in December 2004 by Glenn Hassinger, relates that maybe together with gays and lesbians we learn to share the Good News of Jesus.

How can a continued alcoholic or drug abuser proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ when they wish to remain a user and abuser? The same is true for the homosexuals and lesbians.

How can I as a believer lock arms with the professing homosexuals and lesbians and expect God to bless the church? Maybe the problem with our steady decline in membership is the fact we are trying to love and accept the lifestyles of those who are not willing to give up their lifestyles and serve Christ the Savior.

The scriptures are very implicit in stating confess and repent of your sins. It's about time that some of our Brethren ministers get with God's program instead of their own ideas of what sin is. It's no wonder we are dwindling in church membership more each year.

Many sinners are flocking to the Brethren church because they know we will "pussyfoot" around and try to please everyone. I can't see this picture with Christ at all. His message is LOVE and REPENTANCE. They go hand in hand.

Jack L. Cary
Middlebury, Ind.

Review extols 'wide way'

It was so good to see the media review by James H. Lehman on the book *If Grace is True* regarding universalism [January 2005]. It does my heart good to know that our national magazine is promoting the wide and enlightened way of theological diversity, rather than the narrow and difficult way of the Bible. If only grace were true.

Terry Hatfield
St. Petersburg, Fla.



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- FOLLOWING JESUS in ISRAEL (October 19-31)
- In the FOOTSTEPS of the APOSTLE PAUL (November 6-22)

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- VIETNAM (February 8-25)
- MEXICO (March 10-18)
- PARAGUAY, BOLIVIA and PERU (March 21 - April 6)
- ALASKA CRUISE TOUR (June 7-19)
- WEST PRUSSIAN MENNONITE HERITAGE (June 25 - July 5)

- ENGLAND and SCOTLAND (June 28 - July 10)
- EUROPEAN HERITAGE (July 5-20)
- CANADIAN MARITIME PROVINCES (August 5-14)
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If universalism is true, we no longer have reason to celebrate the coming of Jesus, God's Son, into the world, his sacrificial death on behalf of those who receive him as Lord and Savior, or his resurrection.

Universalism ignores truth

I read with troubled interest James Lehman's review of *If Grace Is True* by Philip Gulley and James Mulholland (January 2005 Media Review). First, the authors redefine salvation because they "are offended by the picture of God" (as they see Him). According to Lehman, the authors "wrestle with the idea that Christ had to die to satisfy God's wrath" and "struggle . . . with the place of . . . Adolf Hitler." These men confront "whether people can come to God who do not know Christ."

To the question "Does God save every person?" Gulley and Mulholland answer, "Yes," based on their conclusion that "God's grace . . . endures beyond the grave." Lehman says, "The authors conclude with this vivid image: At the great banquet . . . we will see a humbled Hitler washing the feet of a Jewish Holocaust victim with his tears."

What astounds me is not that these men wrote *If Grace Is True*, endorsing the false teaching of universalism; rather, why would MESSENGER publish a review of such a book?

If universalism is true, we need to scrap many Old Testament prophecies; Jesus' teachings about salvation, heaven, and hell; and most of the rest of the New Testament. If universalism is true, we no longer have reason to celebrate the coming of Jesus, God's Son, into the world, his sacrificial death on behalf of those who receive him as Lord and Savior, or his resurrection. If universalism is true, we can discontinue preaching the gospel and witnessing; why bother if God eventually will save everyone?

Anyone who searches the Word of God guided by the Holy Spirit will discover truth: Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through him (John 14:6). Certainly God's grace is true . . . for those who choose God's way of

salvation before death (see Heb. 9:27).

I shudder at Lehman's statement that some Brethren "will find (the book) reassuring." (Perhaps those with itching ears? See 1 Tim 2:3-4.) I pray earnestly for anyone who is reassured by the notion that "every person (will take) his or her place in the kingdom (of God)." Such "reassurance" is illusory—and tragically short-lived.

Lois Duble
New Windsor, Md.

UN could help end wars

A recent letter in our local newspaper pictured the awful results of war on Israeli children. Through reports we know that the killing and destruction is severe, irrational, mean. The same is said for all the wars now raging, dozens of them, large and small.

The war in Israel is supported by your tax dollars. Some years the amount exceeds \$12 billion. It's the most aid money that any country receives, proba-

bly because of effective lobbying and US oil security in that area.

It's not easy to sort out all the history of that area of the world. Ethnic conflicts did not start in our lifetime. But we know that area was referred to as Palestine more than 50 years ago, and Jews gradually moved to that area. For space, Palestinian Arabs were gradually driven from the land, and the action continues today. Someone compared this process to American Indians driven from their habitat by our ancestors—a bloody happening that we don't like to believe.

As long as the United States continues the process of empire-building, I sense little possibility for a better situation—and end of war. It's time now and always to solve world problems through the United Nations. It was established after World War II, and the planet and people are better for it. The US needs some new directions.

Wilmer Brandt
Marshfield, Vt.

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Consignment sales at Annual Conference. Brethren Press makes space available at Annual Conference for individuals and groups to sell items to Conference attendees on a consignment basis. Consignment space must be reserved by May 19. For information on consignment sales, contact Brethren Press Consignments, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694 or kstocking_gb@brethren.org.

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

New Members

Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Kris Bohnstedt, Barb Thorn, Wade Bollinger, Terry Fonner

Big Creek, Cushing, Okla.: Lillian Cantrell

Blue Ridge, Va.: Bill Morgan, Madeline Morgan

Charlottesville, Va.: Pam Starling, Laura Starling, Ashley Mawyer, Lori Hofecker

Denton, Md.: Myrtle George, Judy Willey

East Fairview, Manheim, Pa.: Dale Schwear, Mary Schwear, Carley Schwear

Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.: Daniel Walter, Darryl Myers

Freeburg, Paris, Ohio: Loni Dickerhoof, Marci Estock, Mitchell Estock, Elmer Huntsman, Theodore Popa

Maple Grove, Lexington, N.C.: Matthew Brown, Kaitlin Stafford

Monte Vista, Callaway, Va.: Gary Dean, Martha Dean

Myerstown, Pa.: Glenn Rambler, Brett Beamesderfer, Carla Beamesderfer

Nappanee, Ind.: Max Miller

Peach Blossom, Easton, Md.: John Trax, Norma Trax, Rose Regan

Pulaski, Va.: Nita Lawson

Quakertown, Pa.: Judy Moyer, Tim Shearer, Tracey Shearer, Sandy Shearer, Helen Grey

Ridgeway Community, Harrisburg, Pa.: Kathy Richwine Cracraft, Betty L. Brinkman, Robert H. Getz, Jr.

Union Bridge, Md.: Jacob Benedict, Emily Benedict, Carissa Doody

Anniversaries

Barker, H. Warren and Lillian, Roanoke, Va., 60

Bergy, Keith and Jean, Caledonia, Mich., 50

Black, Bobby and Elva, Moorefield, W.Va., 50

Clayton, Daniel and Rebecca, Philippi, W.Va., 50

Cook, Harold and Barbara, Winston-Salem, N.C., 55

DeWitt, William and Betty, Auburn, Ind., 55

Johnson, James and Georgia, Orange Park, Fla., 50

Keeney, Galen and Naomi, Palmyra, Pa., 50

Kline, Paul and June, Catlett, Va., 55

Kraft, Gerald and Jennie, Auburn, Ind., 55

LaSalle, Charles and Janet, Everett, Pa., 50

Lawrence, Leonard and Lois,

Peru, Ind., 60

Malone, Max and Betty, Goshen, Ind., 55

McCaman, Samuel and Donna, Lorida, Fla., 60

Mitchell, Earl and Vera, Slidell, La., 70

Owens, Thomas and Avis, Moatsville, W.Va., 50

Price, Chuck and Pat, Northridge, Calif., 55

Pritts, Russel and Thelma, Fort Hill, Pa., 60

Sawyer, Lawrence "Bud" and Ruby, Milford, Ind., 60

Saylor, Adrian and Elaine, Saint John, Kan., 50

Shaffer, Frank and Doris, Everett, Pa., 55

Williamson, Ray and Jan, Philippi, W.Va., 50

Deaths

Abbott, Mary M., 80, Hartford City, Ind., Feb. 17

Ainley, David, 95, Waterloo, Iowa, Feb. 16

Ankenman, Galen, 95, Norton, Kan., Feb. 8

Avey, Mary Grace, 89, Everett, Pa., Dec. 5

Bahr, Dale, 81, Manistee, Mich., Jan. 29

Bashor, Hubert, 97, Trotwood, Ohio, Feb. 20

Beard, Lewis, 88, New Oxford, Pa., Dec. 26

Becker, Mary, 95, Ephrata, Pa., Feb. 22

Blose, Dorothy, 86, Glen Campbell, Pa., Feb. 8

Border, David A., 98, Live Oak, Calif., Feb. 20

Bottoff, Vashti, 92, Plymouth, Ind., Nov. 17

Brallier, Evan, 95, Rogersville, Mo., Feb. 28

Buhr, Eloise F., 90, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 18

Burd, Violet Fern, 75, Ashland, Ohio, Feb. 17

Cripe, Lottie M., 90, Warsaw, Ind., Nov. 25

Eisenbise, Eugene, 86, Hershey, Pa., Dec. 1

Eshleman, Ruth, 88, Lancaster, Pa., Dec. 16

Filburn, Charles Roy, 89, Connellsville, Pa., Dec. 18

Filburn, Geneva, 87, Connellsville, Pa., Feb. 13

Fravel, Nelson, 78, Broadway, Va., Jan. 21

Funderburg, George, 95, Springfield, Ohio, Feb. 12

Funderburg, Mark, 90, New Carlisle, Ohio, March 4

Funk, Kathy, 55, Springfield, Ohio, Feb. 1

Gehr, Paul, 91, Lititz, Pa., Jan. 15

Good, Jennie, 88, Saint Petersburg, Fla., Jan. 16

Gorden, Edwina L., 98, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 12

Gump, Wilbur, 77, Sebring, Fla., Dec. 22

Haldeman, Bruce K., 84, Greencastle, Pa., Jan. 12

Halsell, Grace, 85, Lebanon, Pa., Feb. 10

Halterman, Lillian G., 79, Petersburg, W.Va., March 10

Hanawalt, Perdetha Eloise, 96, Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 7

Hand, Bill, 87, Plymouth, Ind., July 25

Hapner, Catherine L., 89, Pennville, Ind., March 20, 2004

Hartleroad, Opal, 96, Peru, Ind., Feb. 9

Hauger, Ralph, 86, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 18

Helveston, Alfred, 82, Quakertown, Pa., Aug. 15

Hershberger, Mildred, 78, Lemoyne, Pa., Jan. 25

Hicks, Billy Joe, 81, Cushing, Okla., June 17

Hodgson, Walter, 88, Waterloo, Iowa, Jan. 31

Holderread, Arthur, 88, Cushing, Okla., Nov. 7

Holderread, Harold, 66, Elkhart, Ind., Aug. 19

Hollar, Patrick, 53, North Mankato, Minn., Jan. 2

Housel, Blair F., 88, Martinsburg, Pa., Nov. 2

Howell, Rolland, 67, Continental, Ohio, March 1

Hoyle, Richard, 80, Dixon, Ill., Jan. 28

Hyde, Margaret, 88, Westminster, Md., Feb. 20

Hyde, Monroe, 92, Westminster, Md., Feb. 15

Iversen, Kermit, 84, Waterloo, Iowa, Jan. 23

Jarz, Elizabeth, 85, Lombard, Ill., Dec. 16

Kadel, Albert, 91, Springfield, Ohio, March 5

Kayler, Lori, 65, New Lebanon, Ohio, Dec. 8

Keim, Naomi, 90, Lake Placid, Fla., Dec. 23

Keiser, Roger, 74, Nappanee, Ind., Dec. 2

Kidd, Richard, 75, Huntingdon, Pa., Dec. 2

Kinsinger, Ruth, 86, Somerset, Pa., Dec. 12

Kinzil, Lester, 88, Cushing, Okla., Aug. 7

Kirk, Webb Ernest, 84, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 24

Langham, Francis, 96, Martinsburg, Pa., Jan. 17

Leckrone, Helen Marie, 94, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 8

Leedy, John R., 77, Gettysburg, Pa., Jan. 4

Lehman, Kenneth A., 82, New Oxford, Pa., Nov. 9

Lepley, Russell L., 87, Connellsville, Pa., Feb. 5

Libecap, Edna, 91, Deltona, Fla., Jan. 3

Linton, Mary Ruth Myers, 86, Huntingdon, Pa., Dec. 31

Looney, Odell William, 86, Roanoke, Va., Oct. 16

Mast, Dorothy, 74, New Holland, Pa., Dec. 20

Mast, Fred M., Jr., 80,

Mechanicsburg, Pa., Feb. 27

Maxey, William (Clyde), 77, Daleville, Va., Dec. 12

May, George W., 92, York, Pa., Jan. 26

Mayack, Victoria Ballard, 53, Eagle River, Wis., Dec. 6

McDaniel, Willard B., 86, Raymond, Calif., Jan. 5

McGoldrick, A. Sean, 56, Oakland, Md., Dec. 19

Mearkle, Elmira Cunard, 97, Everett, Pa., Feb. 19

Merrow, Jessie Oletha, 92, Jacksonville, Fla., Jan. 17

Miles, Elaine, 66, Bella Vista, Calif., Jan. 7

Miller, Brock, 85, Plymouth, Ind., Feb. 2

Neidlinger, Beulah, 75, Plymouth, Ind., June 6

Netzley, Dessie, 92, Troy, Ohio, March 7

Nicodemus, Charles, 88, Elkhart, Ind., Feb. 1

Peterson, Amel, 95, Imperial, Neb., Feb. 8

Petticoffer, Clara, 89, Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 31

Rand, James W., II, 62, Manchester, Pa., Jan. 24

Reber, Lucille, 87, Palmyra, Pa., Dec. 15

Reffner, Irene, 84, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 22

Royer, Florence "Flossie" Miller, 87, Claypool, Ind., Feb. 25

Royer, John, 73, Mount Joy, Pa., Jan. 1

Shaffer, Betty L., 84, Windber, Pa., March 4

Shaffer, Martin, 80, Center Valley, Pa., Aug. 6

Shearer, Edna, 95, Palmyra, Pa., Feb. 8

Shonk, Verna, 95, Manheim, Pa., Feb. 25

Shrock, Doris A., 75, Columbia City, Ind., Jan. 6

Smith, Arlene, 74, Everett, Pa., Dec. 1

Snider, Donald, 89, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 1

Stechman, Willis B., 86, Lake Odessa, Mich., Feb. 23

Stuckey, Arthur, 64, Canton, Ohio, Dec. 26

Stuckey, Wilbur, 88, Sebring, Ohio, Nov. 28

Studebaker, Laurel, 89, Springfield, Ohio, Feb. 20

Swaim, Dwight, 96, Lima, Ohio, March 7

Swindell, Doris E., 80, Everett, Pa., Jan. 27

Thomas, Florence, 91, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 26

Thornburg, Irene, 75, Plymouth, Ind., Sept. 22

Uhl, Charles, 92, Coopersburg, Pa., Oct. 8

Veal, Lawrence J., Jr., 22, Denton, Md., Jan. 9

Wine, Pauline Flory, 100, Imperial, Neb., Jan. 18

Worline, Joshua, 24, Dupont, Ohio, March 10

Yarian, Kenneth, 89, Sebring, Ohio, July 2

Licensings

Burns, Roger, N. Ohio Dist. (Mount Pleasant, North Canton, Ohio), Feb. 27

Cole, Jeffrey, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Mountain View, Bunker Hill, W.Va.), March 6

Dillehay, Julie, Idaho Dist. (Mountain View, Boise, Idaho), March 21, 2004

Gough, Jeff J., N. Ohio Dist. (Brook Park Community, Brook Park, Ohio), Feb. 20

Miller, Evan, N. Ohio Dist. (Mount Pleasant, North Canton, Ohio), Feb. 27

Ordinations

Adkins, Barry M., W. Marva Dist. (Sandy Creek Congregation, Bruceton Mills, W.Va.), Feb. 20

Brought, Ryan E., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Hempfield, East Petersburg, Pa.), Feb. 27

Cable, John D., W. Pa. Dist. (Roxbury, Johnstown, Pa.), Feb. 20

Godfrey, Mark D., W. Plains Dist. (McPherson, Kan.), March 13

Huffaker, Michael, N. Plains Dist. (Ankeny, Iowa), Feb. 20

Kline, Valarie, S/C Ind. Dist. (Upper Fall Creek, Middletown, Ind.), Oct. 31

Miller, Glenn N., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Spring Grove, Pa.), Feb. 27

Miller, Richard D., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Jennersville, West Grove, Pa.), Feb. 27

Mummert, Ray G., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Spring Grove, Pa.), Feb. 27

Shirk, Paul D., S. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Spring Grove, Pa.), Feb. 27

Twigg, Charles E., W. Marva Dist. (Onego, W.Va.), Feb. 13

Placements

Coulter, Carol, pastor, Family Faith Fellowship, Enid, Okla., May 16, 2004

Dillehay, Julie, associate pastor, Mountain View, Boise, Idaho, June 2, 2004

Dodds, James A. "Sonny," from interim pastor to pastor, Sunny-side, New Creek, W.Va., Feb. 27

Hott, Gerald, from interim pastor to pastor, Capon Chapel, Levels, W.Va., Feb. 27

Huffaker, Michael, from interim pastor to pastor, Ankeny, Iowa, Jan. 1

Ilyes, Charles L., from pastor, Springfield, Coopersburg, Pa., to pastor, Midway, Lebanon, Pa., March 1

Kerner, David C., pastor, Ashland City, Ashland, Ohio, March 1

Nunn, Wilkie L., pastor, Downsville, Williamsport, Md., March 6

Sitting on the bench

Last year I headed to an area high school one afternoon to watch one of the youth from my congregation play in a soccer game. It was a good day for a game: cool, but not cold, with some sunshine and a light breeze. Everything seemed set for a perfect couple of hours.

The youth I had come to see wasn't in the starting lineup, so I waited for him to make his entry as a substitute. I waited through the first half, and then on through the second.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

His team was losing by a sizeable margin at that point, and it was just a sophomore game—a level where the emphasis is on player development, not points and position in the standings. Yet there he sat. The game wound down to the final horn, and he remained confined to the bench.

He wasn't happy afterwards, and I couldn't blame him. He says it remains a bad memory for him

to this day. He had talents and abilities to offer, and he just wanted to play, yet the coach chose to ignore him. Who wouldn't be frustrated in such a situation?

I wonder sometimes if youth in our congregations have similar feelings. Traveling to youth and young adult events around the denomination, I'm struck again and again by the talents and abilities that members of these groups have to offer the church. And again and again, I hear pleas for the church to let their voices be heard.

When I was "on loan" to the World Council of Churches in February to assist with coverage of the WCC's Central Committee meetings, I particularly enjoyed a chance to do a feature on the young adult stewards present there. They expressed that same desire to be heard, and to be a meaningful part of the organization's work.

A steward named Penias, from the African nation of Zambia, urged the delegates, "Let's not just talk about youth, but let youth talk. And let us not just let youth talk, but put trust in them to make decisions."

An article in *Giving* magazine encouraged congregations to pay attention to pleas like these. "Think of your own church," it said. "Are teenagers lingering on

the edges of the congregations, waiting for a chance to say, 'We're here and we can help?'"

It noted that church leaders "often have low expectations of teens, assuming they're too busy to participate or aren't interested in the serious parts of church life."

Yes, teenagers are busy people, but so are many of the people who carry out the work of the church. If all we offer is more "busy work," then we shouldn't be surprised if youth show little interest. But if the church shows interest in really using the gifts that younger members bring, a wealth of potential awaits. That means listening to them, and learning to know them.

As church consultant James W. Moss Sr. notes, "If you want to claim the time of busy people, you have to offer them something meaningful to do that has the potential to make a difference in the Kingdom and in the lives of people. I believe talented people want to do more than sit in the pew. We just have to find significant things for them to do."

It's not about older generations moving aside so that youth and young adults can take over. The church needs the gifts and perspectives of all age groups working together in order to grow and thrive. But the emphasis is on *all*. The newer voices can't be drowned out or brushed aside.

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May is traditionally the month when congregations mark "Youth Sunday" and let youth lead the morning worship. That's good, as long as it's not a check-off of a duty fulfilled until next year. It's only one highlight, just the beginning of making youth an integral part of congregational life.

In an article titled "Cracking the Youth Code," a representative of a consulting agency that specializes in youth trends for marketing purposes said that youth aren't as brand-conscious as people think. Instead, "They are true to things that are true to them, things with perceived value."

Do youth and young adults see value in the church? And do they see the church valuing them? They have a great deal to offer. Let's not leave them sitting on the bench.—Ed. 

COMING NEXT MONTH: A visit with moderator Jim Hardenbrook, Annual Conference preview, a unique chapter of Brethren history, Mission Alive, the book of Joshua, movie review, and more.

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Live full lives, full in the fullness of God.

—Ephesians 3:19, *The Message*



Paul Jeffrey/ACT-CWS

Impassioned and eloquent, the apostle Paul called on the mission churches he nurtured to proclaim “the extravagant dimensions of Christ’s love. Reach out and experience the breadth! Test its length! Plumb the depths! Rise to the heights! Live full lives, full in the fullness of God,” he instructed the Christian community at Ephesus.

In heeding Paul’s counsel today, each of us is implored by Eugene Peterson’s compelling rendering of Ephesians 3:18-19 to reach beyond the self-enclosed worlds we inhabit. To cross borders, to embrace “the other,” to

renew ourselves in mission by knowing and making known the fullness of Christ’s love.

Fullness is the watchword of the Global Food Crisis Fund. Through our gifts we develop food security for the world’s hungry. We work in solidarity with people who exist at the margins. We enlist partners to bolster livelihoods, access clean water, and plant both seeds and hope.

But foremost, the Global Food Crisis Fund enjoins givers and gift-given alike to experience the blessing that comes in striving to “live full lives, full in the fullness of God.”



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