

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2005 [WWW.BRETHREN.ORG](http://WWW.BRETHREN.ORG)



## Looking in on outdoor ministry

Being a church camp brings blessings and challenges

YOUTH ESSAY WINNERS • MODERATOR'S REFLECTIONS • BOOK OF JUDGES

# Relationships Can Be Tricky



## Brethren Retirement Centers Want to Strengthen Relationships with Congregations and Districts



The oldest existing Brethren home was established in 1889 when one district responded to the need for a faith-based community to care for older adults. In fact, all of the Brethren homes came out of congregational and district ministries.

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

Church  
of the  
Brethren

# MESSENGER

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## ONTHECOVER

The “flying squirrel,” in which someone is raised up in a harness to swing on a rope high in the air, is one of many camp activities that teach trust. It’s a familiar concept to camp directors, who provide a unique ministry despite a long list of challenges in a changing cultural landscape. The photo, of Erica Gard at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind., was taken by Erin Kauffman.



**NOTE:** MESSENGER returns this year to a combined summer issue; you will note that this issue is dated “July/August.” The next issue published will be for September 2005.

## DEPARTMENTS

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

## 8 CCS '05: 'Struggling' with conscientious objection

Youth at this year's Church of the Brethren Christian Citizenship Seminar delved into the timely topic of conscientious objection: the church's historic refusal to participate in war. Phil Jones, director of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, told the youth he wanted them to “struggle” with the issue.



Amy Adkins

## 9 What I like most about the Church of the Brethren

Last fall, MESSENGER invited youth ages 13-18 to write a short essay on what they like most about being Brethren. The entries flowed in to the MESSENGER office, and a panel of judges had the hard task of selecting the top submissions. The 2005 grand prize-winning essay and five others are printed in this month's issue.

## 12 Looking in on outdoor ministry

A host of challenges face church camps: finances, facilities to keep up, a declining church membership, competing options, and more. But camps press on, adapting as needed, to ensure their unique ministry remains available. As Camp Swatara director Marlin Houff says, “The type of Christian community experienced at camp is a model for what a more perfect world could be like.”

## 18 Judges: Strange times, extraordinary stories

Former seminary professor Graydon F. Snyder this month boldly traces a path through the bizarre book of Judges. Amid the stories of broken jars, forbidden haircuts, and deadly tent pegs runs a narrative of God carrying the Israelite people through a chaotic period of history.

## 20 Living out conflict transformation in Indy

The Indianapolis Peace House is one of the most visible pieces of the Plowshares Project, a collaborative of three colleges in the historic peace church tradition. The house met resistance from the neighborhood when plans were unveiled, but it has built relationships—modeling its purpose.

**I**n many congregations prayer concerns tend to focus on the physical—on illnesses, surgeries, accidents. Our sense of need becomes particularly acute when our bodies are not whole. Physical pain or limitation demands our attention, sometimes forcing us to dramatically refocus our activities, even our whole life. We invest time and money into a cure, we consume information, we entrust ourselves to professionals and follow their advice. Rarely do we question whether to deal with the problem. Rather, we are intensely focused on bringing about healing.



WENDY McFADDEN  
Publisher

Two years ago the district executives issued a health alert for our body, the Church of the Brethren. Calling on the church to make an appointment for a check-up, they invited the agencies of Annual Conference to help them plan a consultation on ecclesiology, that is, the meaning and purpose of the church. The process being planned is called "Together: Conversations on Being the Church."

Like a person who embarks on an exercise plan and improved diet, we Brethren will exercise our conversation muscles, learning how to talk with each other about important matters. Sometimes it's easier not to talk. But forging a common understanding of what it means to be the Church of the Brethren in the 21st century will make it more possible to talk civilly (even lovingly) about the divisive issues that fracture other churches and society in general. The "Together" conversations will begin early in 2006 and culminate at the 2007 Annual Conference; they will be carried out in congregations, districts, and national gatherings stretching from northwest to southeast. (For more details, visit [www.togetherconversations.org](http://www.togetherconversations.org) or contact your district office.)

Why bother? The body of Christ is meant to be whole. 1 John 4:20 tells us, "Those who say, 'I love God,' and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God whom they have not seen."

If a historic peace church cannot engage in a conversation of this sort, perhaps we are not the living peace church that we have claimed to be. In fact, if our impatience causes us to give up on each other, we might actually be giving up on God.

*Wendy McFadden*

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To view the official Church of the Brethren website, go to [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org).

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

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## AROUND THE DENOMINATION

*Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts*

**Atlantic Northeast:** Michele Gibbel has announced her resignation as Camp Swatara program director, effective the end of the summer.

**Atlantic Southeast:** The camp board announced that all debt on the Kramer Dining Center of Camp Ithiel, a long-running project, has now been paid off. A major anonymous gift helped finish the effort.

**Idaho:** Camp Wilbur Stover, located in New Meadows, holds its annual week of intergenerational programming for district children, youth, and adults July 10-16.

**Illinois/Wisconsin:** Youth traveled to the district's lone Wisconsin church, in Stanley, for this year's spring retreat. Jeff Neuman-Lee was keynote speaker for the weekend.

**Michigan:** Volunteers took part in a Habitat for Humanity Jimmy Carter Build in May and June, doing siding and hanging drywall for a house in Gladwin. Bob Schnepf coordinated the work.

**Mid-Atlantic:** This year's District Disaster Auction was held May 7 at the Agricultural Center in Westminster, Md. It included an auction, quilts, and a variety of booths and food stands.

**Middle Pennsylvania:** A workshop for church secretaries was held June 14 at the district center, led by Southern Pennsylvania associate district executive Georgia Markey.

**Missouri/Arkansas:** Members of Rockingham Church of the Brethren, Hardin, Mo., voted on May 1 to cease services and close the congregation. A final service of celebration was held June 26.

**Northern Indiana:** The West Goshen congregation on Aug. 14 is holding a reunion for all 1960s members of its Church of the Brethren Youth Fellowship. Randy Yoder is the speaker for the event.

**Northern Ohio:** The Church Life & Growth Committee sponsored a third annual district family picnic June 18 at Inspiration Hills. . . . District conference is July 29-31 at Ashland University.

**Northern Plains:** The new church development committee and district board have approved a new church project in Sioux City, Iowa, led by Lucinda Douglas. An initial service was planned for June 5.

**Oregon/Washington:** Family camps are scheduled for July 19-24 at Camp Myrtlewood in Oregon and Aug. 21-26 at Camp Koinonia in Washington. District conference follows the Koinonia camp.

**Pacific Southwest:** The district board approved a recommendation to sell the former San Francisco congregation's property for \$3.6 million to a Lutheran church.

**Shenandoah:** The 13th annual Disaster Response Auction was held May 20-21 at Rockingham County Fairgrounds in Harrisonburg, Va. The event has raised more than \$1.7 million to date.

**South/Central Indiana:** Three ordination services and a licensing service were scheduled in a three-month span from May to August, each at a different congregation.

**Southeastern:** General secretary Stan Noffsinger and funding counselor Ray Glick represented the General Board for informal conversations and sharing at three meetings in the district in May.

**Southern Ohio:** Area 2 (Midwest) Congregational Life Team coordinator Duane Grady was the preacher for a district pastors' worship service on June 15 at Brookville Church of the Brethren.

*Church of the Brethren chaplains attending the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) conference April 9-13 in Albuquerque, N.M., included, from left: John C. Katonah, Evanston, Ill.; AnnaLee Hisey Pierson, Wauwatosa, Wis.; Jean Keith, Beaverton, Ore.; and Becky Baile Crouse, Kansas City, Mo. Also present but not pictured was David Wolfe, Martinsville, Va. Both Keith and Crouse received board certification from APC at the conference.*

**Southern Pennsylvania:** The district is sponsoring Tim Taylor and Eric Longwell as chaplains for two area state parks this summer, part of an annual ministry.

**Southern Plains:** Big Creek Church of the Brethren, Cushing, Okla., hosts this year's district conference. Held July 29-30, it will be the second district meeting in the denomination in 2005.

**Virgina:** The district-wide spring mission rally was held May 7 in Roanoke, Va., with the theme "The Race Set Before Us." It included worship, exhibits, numerous workshops, and an open house at the district resource center.

**West Marva:** A pastors and family outing to a minor-league baseball game in Washington, Pa., was scheduled for May 29, to watch the Washington Wild Things take on the Richmond Roosters.

**Western Pennsylvania:** Camp Harmony director Neal Harvey has announced his retirement effective Aug. 1 following 23 years of service to "pursue some dreams that I've had for a long time."

**Western Plains:** Ottawa (Kan.) Church of the Brethren has legally changed its name to Ottawa Community Church.

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.





Mati Wiltschak

## Jubilee Troupe wraps up tour of 'creative expression'

The Jubilee Troupe, a group of Brethren and Mennonites seeking to bring new creativity to worship and an increased focus on peacemaking through the performing arts, this spring wrapped up more than a year of events.

The troupe debuted at the Organizing for Peace conference held in March 2004 and went on to do performances and workshops during Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va., at Western Regional Youth Conference in California, at a retreat weekend in New Windsor, Md., and a host of other events.

It wrapped up the venture with a Midwest tour this spring, including activities at the Manchester College Regional Youth Conference in April, before "taking a break."

Chris Fitz, a member of York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren and founder of the troupe, said the group was assessing the viability of doing such a project on a long-term basis. On Earth Peace, the Church of the Brethren Witness/Washington Office, New Community Project, the Genesis Peace Witness Fund, and Brethren Peace Fellowship all provided support for the initial run.

Fitz said he wanted to bring the aliveness he felt in creative drama and storytelling to worship. The troupe arose

*Susan Bihlman, left, shows Emily Cordi how to tie on a quilt as part of an outreach project of Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren.*

*Jubilee troupe members Christina Cruz, Holly White, Chris Fitz, and Tabea Steinbeisser, perform a piece of interpretive drama during Regional Youth Conference at Manchester College.*

from "a vision of how we can be more embodied in our faith practice, in our worship, and in our everyday lives," he said. "The arts can do this in profound ways. . . . When we free our deep creative expressions, we begin to really understand how to hold it all together—faith, witness, nurture—as one whole life."

In addition to Fitz, key members of the troupe during all or part of the year included Christina Cruz, Lancaster, Pa.; Holly White, Richmond, Ind.; Tabea Steinbeisser, Munich, Germany; Myra Martin-Adkins, Washington, D.C.; Shalom Black, Silver Spring, Md.; Chris Palsgrove, Westminster, Md., and Gloria Newton, Pasadena, Calif. Many others assisted at various events.

## Quilts form the heart of Live Oak outreach

If you asked Live Oak (Calif.) Church of the Brethren member Anne Deis why she started Quilts for Kids in Crisis, she would tell you she was called by God. "I can't not do it. I am compelled to do it," she says.

Quilts for Kids is part of a non-profit organization, Live Oak Community Action Team, which works against rela-

tionship violence locally and has operated under the umbrella of the Live Oak congregation since the beginning of 2005. The group was established in 2000 with the goal of providing quilts to children during situations of need including fire, accident, or domestic violence.

Quilts are being donated to local fire fighters and law enforcement, as well as a shelter for battered women and children, who hand them out as the need arises. Sheriff's deputies alone gave out 24 quilts in less than eight months.

Batting is donated by a batting company, which only requires payment for shipping. Some material for quilt tops is donated by a company that does specialty sewing for children; other fabric is donated by area residents, though much of the cost has come out of Deis' own pocket. Live Oak youth recently raised \$400 to aid the project.

The first day of quilting brought together quilters from the Live Oak church, youth group members, and area residents, who heard about the project and wanted to help. Twelve quilts were completed, and most of those attending took materials home to work on in their spare time.

The group's goal for this year is to complete 200 quilts and enter the project as part of Make a Difference Day, the largest national day of volunteering in the US. The award, \$10,000 to each project, would help to make a lot of quilts!—Anne E. Palmer

Anne E. Palmer



## LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Brethren Woods**, the camp of Shenandoah District, received this year's Outdoor Ministries Association Environment Grant. The \$500 matching grant will be used to expand a K-5 outdoor education program to middle school and high school levels and create a self-guided study trail.

• **Pleasant Hill Village Brethren Home** in Girard, Ill., celebrated its 100th anniversary on June 12 with an "old-fashioned church service" and a potluck meal. A memorial brick project for a new walking path also coincided with the anniversary.

• **Painesville (Ohio) Church of the Brethren** marked its 50th anniversary with a worship service on June 26, exactly 50 years after the first service was held. A luncheon followed. A time capsule buried on the congregation's 30th anniversary will be opened this year as part of the celebration.

• **Knob Creek Church of the Brethren**, Johnson City, Tenn., plans a homecoming to celebrate its building's 100th anniversary on Sept. 18. The day before, it will also be part of a tour of churches in the city that are 100 years or older.

• **COBYS Family Services**, in partnership with another Lancaster County (Pa.) ministry, Friendship Community, marked the 10th anniversary of its Wenger Foundation Dinner on April 21 in Lebanon, Pa. The major fundraiser event had a goal of bringing in \$100,000.

• **Sonnenwald Natural Foods** in Spring Grove, Pa., operated by several Brethren in Southern Pennsylvania District, marks its 50th anniversary on July 24. The many Brethren Volunteer Service workers and others who have assisted there over the years are especially being invited to attend. Call 717-225-3456 or 717-225-3825 for further details.

• **Wayne A. Nicarry** received this year's Huntsdale Award from The Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa., for more than 50 years of service to the organization.

• Ford Motor Company in April did a feature on **Dave Liepelt**, a member of Detroit Trinity Church of the Brethren in Redford, Mich., for its communications network. Liepelt, who studied automotive restoration at McPherson (Kan.) College, is a member of the Model T Ford Club of America board of directors and works as an antique vehicle specialist. His family owns about two dozen Model T's in all, and he has two of his own.

# Seeking Peace: The Courage to Be Nonviolent

Sept. 8-11, 2005 — Indianapolis, Indiana

Members and friends of the Church of the Brethren, Mennonite Church USA and The Society of Friends are warmly invited to take part in an energizing, multi-faceted, intergenerational gathering, designed to provide opportunities to build mentoring relationships and explore practical and intellectual approaches to peace and peacemaking.

### Conference goals:

- To feed the soul of the peacemaker by providing practical resources.
- To energize the peacemaker through workshops and dynamic, biblical worship
- To build up the communities of peacemakers by providing a place to share stories and to create networks
- To help us better understand the current powers and principalities and build affinity networks in the struggle to change them
- To address issues of peace and justice and how to maintain a healthy peace witness and community

### Topics and themes:

- Thoughts and preparation for long-term work
- History of the Peace Churches and Peace movements
- Alliances, long term assets and energy
- Healthy peacemaking communities based in knowledge, connections and relationships
- New realities and perspectives
- The work of principalities and powers
- Consumerism
- Media

Information about the conference is available online at:

[www.plowsharesproject.org/HistoricPeaceChurchConference](http://www.plowsharesproject.org/HistoricPeaceChurchConference)

Contributing organizations include the Plowshares Peace Studies Collaborative of Earlham, Goshen and Manchester Colleges, Every Church a Peace Church, Mennonite Central Committee Great Lakes, Mennonite Church USA Peace Advocate, On Earth Peace Assembly, Quaker House-Fayetteville/Ft. Bragg, N.C., and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

# New Vistas New Vitality

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*. . . bringing renewed energy, focus and purpose to ministry for themselves and their congregations*

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## From the moderator: On one hand . . .

**I**n the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, Tevye, the main character, often talked to himself or to God. When trying to make a decision he would say, "On one hand. . . ." Then he would take the opposing argument by saying, "but on the other hand. . . ." I could use those words to describe my year as Annual Conference moderator.

On one hand, we have been slow to see amazing opportunities that lie before us. When we do see them we meet them well, but our vision is impaired. On the other hand, the Church of the Brethren is making powerful contributions to our world. When CBS needed someone to step into the breach and produce their Christmas Eve special at short notice, they called us. When Selective Service wanted a partner to develop an Alternative Service contingency, they looked us up.



JIM HARDENBROOK

On one hand, deep love for this denomination is evident throughout our congregations. On the other hand, that love is often expressed with tears or anger that flow from broken hearts.

On one hand, many congregations are distracted from their primary mission by personality conflicts, debates over political and social issues, self-centeredness, or simply trying to survive. On the other hand, many strong, vital congregations are nurturing their members and bringing the good news of Jesus to their communities.

On one hand, many pastors are weakened by unhealthy habits of mind, spirit, and body and fail to engage in the

### Some observations

1. Denominational leaders need a church home in which to worship and work.
2. Stay humble. Much of the Spirit's work is being done outside the institutional church.
3. Move beyond survival. Jesus never commissioned the church to work at surviving. That's his job.
4. Find out what God is doing in your area and figure out how to become a part of it.
5. Fix your eyes on Jesus through Bible reading, prayer, and practice.

communities where they live. On the other hand, many pastors serve their congregations with faithful excellence. I have heard some exceptional sermons and seen some powerful ministries.

On one hand, many congregations are weak—just waiting to die. We continue to close congregations and have yet to stop our declining membership. On the other hand, several districts are beginning to work intentionally on congregational renewal.

On one hand, many Brethren seem fearful of immigrants and fail to see possibilities in our own backyards. Some Brethren are either uninterested or unaware of the Christian church's incredible growth outside North America. On the

other hand, faithful evangelistic outreach and servant ministries continue among Brethren of India, Brazil, Nigeria, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic. The fledgling work in Haiti is very encouraging. Brethren cross-cultural church starts in the United States are exciting.

On one hand, cultural acclimation is the norm, not the exception. Caught up in materialism and individualism, we don't look and act much differently than our non-Christian neighbors. On the other hand, Brethren continue to "swim against the current" through effective disaster response, Brethren Volunteer Service, a faithful and respectful peace witness, and a commitment to an Anabaptist style of congregational decision-making.

On one hand, it is difficult for us to verbalize what it means to be Jesus' apprentice or to articulate who he is. At times we speak more of self-fulfillment than of self-denial. On the other hand, Brethren really like Jesus. We are committed to "continuing the work of Jesus."

On one hand, the "Brethren Name Game" is still played with some vigor in certain circles, and those who are new to the denomination can sometimes feel left out. But on the other hand a guy who has always lived and pastored in the Northwest, who never attended a Brethren college or seminary, and who has only been in the denomination for 12 years can be called and tolerated as Annual Conference moderator. What a blessing it is to be that guy.

Please don't overemphasize the negative side of these brief remarks: I have tried to provide a balanced perspective. Overall, I am incredibly optimistic about our denomination's future. I see potential for significant, positive change.

Jesus said, "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). I believe that. So, on one hand, we have some problems. But on the other hand, many among

us are ready to "throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles and run with perseverance the course marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:1-2).

As he introduced me to the concluding worship gathering at the 2004 Annual Conference, moderator Chris Bowman turned to me and said, "Brother, you are in for the ride of your life!" Brother Chris was right. On one hand, it has been a long, challenging year. But on the other hand, I wouldn't trade it for anything. My wife, Pam, and I thank you. 

Jim Hardenbrook is serving as moderator for this year's Church of the Brethren Annual Conference. He is pastor of Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren.

QUOTE WORTHY

“The Church of the Brethren began with great risk. A few young men and women sought to follow the whole New Testament. They wanted the church to focus on Jesus rather than creeds, dominance, or power.”

—Cerro Gordo (Ill.) pastor Rob Tevis, writing in the Illinois/Wisconsin District newsletter about church planting

“Our neighbors may be those we least expect, and the barriers we perceive between us and them may swiftly fall away before the fresh wind of the Spirit.”

—excerpt from the Pentecost 2005 message of the World Council of Churches regional presidents

“I never wanted to be famous. What I wanted to be was very, very good at what I do.”

—actor Alan Alda, in an interview with Canadian movie/entertainment magazine *Tribute*

“Invoking Christianity as an instrument to advance a political agenda or to vanquish a political opponent is divisive, demagogic, and beyond the pale in American politics.”

—Colbert I. King, writing in *The Washington Post* on “Hijacking Christianity”

“I think the endless fixation on sexuality is the devil’s work. So much psychic energy goes into this one area that issues of hunger and disease, poverty and civil war get overlooked.”

—US Episcopal Presiding Bishop Frank Griswold, on the global schism over homosexuality (RNS)

“If we want to help people give, we need to give people opportunities to serve and to lead. If you focus on leadership development and missional ministry, you’ll find that the money issues are being taken care of.”

—Dan Dick, research coordinator and project manager for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship (quoted in the United Methodist Church’s *The Reporter*)

CULTUREVIEW

• **Mainline Protestants no longer dominate a list of the 25 largest American churches**, the National Council of Churches’ 2005 *Yearbook of American & Canadian Churches* reports. Three of the largest 25 churches in the US are Pentecostal, and six are African-American, according to the yearbook. The Catholic Church remains the largest faith group in the US, followed by the Southern Baptist Convention and the United Methodist Church.

• **The US Army halted its recruiting efforts** for one day, on May 20, to allow commanders to emphasize proper conduct following apparent excesses. The stand-down affected almost all 7,500 recruiters at 1,700 stations around the US, according to Army officials. (AP)

• The National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) has published a **new report on Protestant adolescents in the United States** based on NSYR

survey data. The report, titled “Portraits of Protestant Teens: A Report on Teenagers in Major US Denominations,” is authored by Phil Schwadel and Christian Smith. Among the findings: 65 percent of Protestant teens report attending church at least once a month. The full document is at [www.youthandreligion.org](http://www.youthandreligion.org).

• CBS announced on May 18 that it was **cancelling the show “Joan of Arcadia,”** which aired on Fridays the past two years, according to *The Hollywood Reporter*. It featured a teenage girl who regularly talks with God. “This show isn’t about answers. It’s about questions,” creator Barbara Hall had told *O* magazine in a March interview. Voters in *USA Today*’s annual “Save Our Shows” poll ranked “Joan” second-highest among on-the-bubble shows they wanted back, with 40 percent voting for it.



JUST FOR FUN: BRAIN TEASER

**THE SECOND VERSE** How well do you know your hymns? Listed below is the first line of the SECOND verse of 10 hymns found in *Hymnal: A Worship Book* used in the Church of the Brethren. See how many you can name. Answers are printed below:

1. “Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God.”
2. “But if, forgetful, we should find your yoke is hard to bear.”
3. “May we thy bounties thus as stewards true receive.”
4. “Touch thou our hands to lead us aright.”
5. “Teach us beyond our striving, the rich rewards of rest.”
6. “Breathe, O breathe thy loving Spirit into every troubled breast.”
7. “There’s a song in every silence, seeking word and melody.”
8. “See, the streams of living waters springing from eternal love.”
9. “Christ, by highest heav’n adored; Christ the everlasting Lord.”
10. “Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast.”

ANSWERS: 1. “Come, we that love the Lord” (We’re marching to Zion) #14; 2. “How clear is our vocation, Lord” #541; 3. “We give thee but thine own” #384; 4. “Move in our midst” #418; 5. “O God, in restless living” #557; 6. “Love divine, all loves excelling” #592; 7. “In the bulb there is a flower” #614; 8. “Glorious things of thee are spoken” #619; 9. “Hark! the herald angels sing” #201; 10. “When I survey the wondrous cross” #259.

## 2005 Christian Citizenship Seminar Youth get a chance to 'struggle' with conscientious objection

In a time when some military branches have reported shortfalls in their recruiting goals, and news reports have raised questions about the ethics of those recruiting practices, a renewed focus is reminding Brethren youth about the denomination's heritage of conscientious objection to war.

That emphasis formed the theme of this year's Christian

essarily pacifist—a stance he said is shared by many in the denomination today.

"You have a unique opportunity to express your personal beliefs," Cary said. "This is where I am, and this is what I must do. . . . Make sure it's not your decision, but that it's God's decision for you."

Other differing perspectives were shared later in the week. Representatives of Selective Service explained the need for draft preparation and provisions being made for alternative service while assuring the group that "no one wants a draft." Center on Conscience and War director J.E. McNeil, meanwhile, said that peace churches must be concerned about such a possibility.

Several speakers addressed another form of conscientious objection, that of being war tax resisters. Phil and Louie Rieman of Indianapolis and Alice and Ron Martin-Adkins of Washington, D.C., explained why they had decided not to pay the portion of their taxes that support military operations—and the consequences that can come with that choice, such as fines and property seizure. Marian Franz of the National Peace Tax Fund provided additional background on this witness.

"If we say that war is wrong, and we believe war is wrong, then why would we pay for it?" Louie Rieman said.

Other events during the week included a tour of the United Nations, worship at a diverse selection of New York churches, dinner at ethnic restaurants around Washington, a visit from Annual Conference moderator Jim Hardenbrook, small-group discussion, and visits with congressional representatives to give voice to the issues. One group had a lengthy visit with aides of US Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), who last year proposed a bill to reinstate the draft.

Most participants said they found the week was a valuable experience.

"It's enriching to get to learn new things about what's going on in the world," said Jake Blouch of Hershey, Pa., a high school senior attending his third CCS. "I've always left CCS with this new fire. . . . It gets you motivated. In Brethren settings we often talk about these things, but here at CCS we actually get to go out and do something about it."

Jacob Wenger, from Petersburg, Pa., wrote in a report that he came out of the event with a calling to work in the field of peacemaking. "I felt conflicted, elated, strong, and overwhelmed all at the same time," Wenger said, reflecting on the information presented. "This experience is so powerful I can only hope that other denominations hold similar seminars for their youth."

Christian Citizenship Seminar is held annually for youth except National Youth Conference years; it is sponsored by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office and the Brethren Witness/Washington Office.—**Walt Wiltchek**



Youth and advisors at this year's Christian Citizenship Seminar visit with aides of Rep. Charles Rangel in Washington, D.C.

Citizenship Seminar (CCS), which began April 23 in New York and finished April 28 in Washington, D.C. Nearly 100 senior high youth and advisors participated in the seminar, coming from states stretching from Pennsylvania to California.

A series of speakers shared a wide range of viewpoints during the week. Phil Jones, director of the General Board's Brethren Witness/Washington Office and one of the seminar's coordinators, said the program was designed to have youth "struggle with your head, your heart, and your spirit . . . the things that guide your conscience."

Former conscientious objectors (COs) Enten Pfaltzgraff Eller (in the post-Vietnam era) and Clarence Quay (World War II) shared the stories of their struggles, as did more recent COs Andrew Engdahl and Anita Cole. Eller and Quay each chose not to register and instead did alternative service, though Eller's came after a lengthy court case. Engdahl and Cole arrived at their decisions after entering the military and asked for reclassification.

"When Jesus said 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,' that has to be now, not later," Eller told the youth. "You have to struggle with where God is calling you and how you're going to follow."

Others, like Indiana pastor Jack Cary, offered a different voice: that of a church that strives for peace but isn't nec-

# Great Lakes District Newsletter

July 2005



On Earth  
Peace

## Living Peace Church News & Notes

Greetings from On Earth Peace! This is a new monthly column for congregations and districts focusing on the peace and reconciliation ministries of the church.

### Congregations Can Work Things Out!

For years, Ministry of Reconciliation practitioners have been working tirelessly to spread the message: Conflict is a normal part of congregational life. "Conflict is neither good nor

"The good news for congregations is the variety of options available for those wishing to build their skills in dealing with conflict."

bad," states Annie Clark, Coordinator of the Ministry of Reconciliation, "When dealt with skillfully, growth and change can result from working through a conflict. It's important to deal with problems as they arise. Many congregations wait to call us until the conflict has gotten out of hand. What may have started as a small problem has grown and festered over time. I'd like to see congregations call us to schedule workshops when things are going well, before people are ensnared in painful situations."

The good news for congregations is the variety of workshops available for those wishing to build their skills in dealing with conflict. Want to bring conflict transformation skills to the Biblical basis for reconciliation to the entire congregation? Schedule a **Matthew 18** workshop. **Conflict Transformation for Congregational Leaders** is designed for pastors, board members, and deacons and other caregivers. A new workshop, **Peace Skills for the Family**, focuses on parenting issues, and features a time of cooperative games at closing for the entire family. Many other workshops are also available. And for those congregations in need of assistance with difficult conflict, trained interveners are available to help across the denomination. For more information, contact Annie Clark, Coordinator of the Ministry of Reconciliation at 260-982-8595 or [annieclark@mchsi.com](mailto:annieclark@mchsi.com).



**On Earth Peace:** An agency of the Church of the Brethren helping people discern the things that make for peace

P. O. Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776  
410-635-8704 • [www.brethren.org/oepa](http://www.brethren.org/oepa)  
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## MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION WORKSHOPS

- **Matthew 18**
- **Conflict Transformation for Congregational Leaders**
- **Peace Skills for the Family**
- **Shalom Team Training**
- **Deacons as Reconcilers**
- **Introduction to Mediation**
- **Dealing with Difficult Behaviors**
- **Making Meetings Go Better**
- **Communication Skills and Team Building**

For more information on these offerings, or to schedule a workshop tailored to the needs of your congregation, call Annie Clark at (260) 982-8595 or [annieclark@mchsi.com](mailto:annieclark@mchsi.com)

## Upcoming Events

- |            |                           |
|------------|---------------------------|
| July 2-6   | Annual Conference         |
| July 9-10  | District Youth Conference |
| July 13    | District Board Meeting    |
| July 19    | Shalom Team Training      |
| July 23    | Disaster Preparedness     |
| July 27-30 | Family Reconciliation     |

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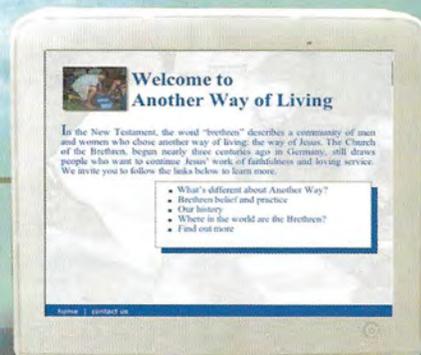
## Top 10 reasons for YOU to visit



10. Check the earnings of your Brethren Pension Plan account and/or the investments your church has invested in the Brethren Foundation. (click Brethren Benefit Trust)
9. Explore ways to respond to violence faithfully and constructively. (click On Earth Peace)
8. Learn more about mission work, disaster response, and National Youth Conference 2006. (click General Board)
7. Find resources on deacons, disabilities, and ministry with older adults. (click Association of Brethren Caregivers)
6. Explore ministry education – 100 years of history, and today's opportunities. (click Bethany Theological Seminary)
5. Review Annual Conference statements and official business of the church. (click Annual Conference)
4. Apply for a loan online from the Church of the Brethren Credit Union. (click Church of the Brethren Credit Union)
3. Check job opportunities, subscribe to the church magazine, buy a book from Brethren Press. (click Marketplace)
2. Learn more about Church of the Brethren history and beliefs. (click Tell Me More About the Brethren)
1. Find out what's happening around the church. (click News)

**Gather. Connect. Find all this and more at [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org)**

An electronic ministry of seven Church of the Brethren agencies: Annual Conference, Association of Brethren Caregivers, Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, Church of the Brethren Credit Union, Church of the Brethren General Board, and On Earth Peace.



**NEW** >>

**Evangelism tip:**

Direct seekers to [www.anotherwayofliving.org](http://www.anotherwayofliving.org) to learn about the church



# What I like most about the Church of the Brethren

Youth share their thoughts in this year's MESSENGER essay contest

## 2005 GRAND PRIZE WINNER

*Chrissy Sollenberger, age 16, Annville, Pa.  
Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren*

Growing up in the Church of the Brethren, I was shocked to meet kids at school who didn't understand Annual Conference, work-camps, "NYC," or ice cream socials. These symbols of community, which stitch together the Church of the Brethren "blanket" that has surrounded me through my childhood and into adolescence, were something that I had taken for granted.

Throughout the past few years, however, I have learned to appreciate and thank God every day for my involvement in this blanket of

**"This is the sort of community that has provided me with the morals and standards by which I plan to live, in hopes of passing on that tradition—that 'blanket'—to my neighbors and to my world."**

love. Being part of the Church of the Brethren has meant standing up for my moral, political, and religious convictions. This challenge is increased as I live in a world that rejects my way of thinking.

What I've learned, perhaps by falling down a few times, is that no matter how hard I fall, the Church of the Brethren has this refreshing ability to pick me up—whether that healing process be at Annual Conference, where I am surrounded by a community of people just as "different" as I am; or at home with my coffee table covered by MESSENGER magazines that show me people living the same way I am throughout the world; or just in my everyday life, where there is always someone, somewhere, who knows my name and knows my story and is ready to listen.

Jesus taught us to love our neighbor as ourselves, but I believe that the Church of the Brethren has gone above and beyond the call of duty by providing the sort of community filled with individuals who love their neighbors first, and then worry about themselves next. This is the sort of community that has provided me with the morals and standards by which I plan to live, in hopes of passing on that tradition—that "blanket"—to my neighbors and to my world.



## 2005 RUNNERS-UP

*Christina Custer, age 18, Versailles, Ohio  
Oakland Church of the Brethren*

The idea of world peace often gathers images of giggling pageant girls with little thought behind a serious question. As shallow as this answer may sound in the pageant arena, the depth of this idea is shown in all those who work for this vision.

Peace does not occur with a simple wish and little action. Oftentimes we, as humans, only see what is affecting us directly, but those who strive for peace look beyond themselves and see what others need. The Church of the Brethren has always held a strong stance on peace, and what I admire most about the church is that it then supports this idea with programs set up to help one day achieve world peace.

I remember as a child hearing the story of *Faith the Cow* and Heifer International. In the story of Faith I began to see how Christian love could be shared to a different kind of neighbor than the one who lived next

**“Oftentimes we, as humans, only see what is affecting us directly, but those who strive for peace look beyond themselves and see what others need.”**

door. As I grew older and began to see the suffering that occurs all over the country and world, I longed to do something other than just offer monetary support.

The Church of the Brethren did not disappoint me. Workcamps are set up all over this planet to help people with every kind of need. Throughout junior high and high school, I have been able to touch the lives of those neighbors that I had originally discovered in my childhood with the story of Faith.

The future holds no limits as time and age passes. The Church of the Brethren continues to offer opportunities to promote peace and justice with Brethren Volunteer Service, disaster relief, and many other programs. In my eyes, the Church of the Brethren will never be portrayed as having little substance behind its stance. The Church of the Brethren has built a strong foundation to one day achieve the dream of world peace.



*Jamie Frye, age 13, McPherson, Kan.  
Monitor Community Church of the Brethren*

Congregation. According to my dictionary, this word means “A group of people gathered for religious worship,” but when I think about my church congregation, this definition doesn’t even begin to describe us. I believe that our church’s motto, “Where friends meet God,” better describes my own congregation and the

whole Church of the Brethren.

The Monitor Community Church of the Brethren has been a part of my life since I was 2. This small church may not look like much from the outside, but it has probably made the biggest impact on my life.

Without this amazing group of individuals, my family would be totally different: My mom might not have been able to receive her call to be a pastor; my dad wouldn’t share his violin music and wouldn’t be a Sunday school teacher; Jacob, my brother, wouldn’t be able to get away from his older sister to enjoy “guy time”; and I wouldn’t have the pleasure of sharing my piano music on a regular basis.

But it’s not just my own congregation that is special to me. The Church of the Brethren as a whole has also played a large role in my life.

Every time that I attend a church camp, an Annual Conference or district conference, or a workcamp, I always seem to run into someone: an old friend, someone that went to seminary with my mom, or—which is just as important—I always meet someone new. But my

favorite part about attending these activities is that I always learn something new about God, other people, and myself. I feel like a part of a big family.

We’re not just a group of individuals, but a “unit” that helps each other in life’s paths.



*Joel Rhodes, age 14, Huntingdon, Pa.  
Stone Church of the Brethren*

What I like best about the Church of the Brethren is how we bear one another’s burdens. Galatians 6:2 says, “Bear one another’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” I think that is a very important passage, and the Church of the Brethren does a good job of bearing one another’s burdens by serving worldwide and local needs.

The Church of the Brethren goes worldwide to bear the burdens of others. With the recent tsunamis in south Asia, the church has been reaching out to help. They have been doing this by making health kits to help the victims of the tsunami. The church also helps people affected by other natural disasters such as floods, earthquakes, and fires, just to name a few.

The Church of the Brethren not only goes worldwide to bear the burdens of others, but they also go local. My family experienced a tragedy of our own when our grandparents’ house burned. The fire destroyed almost everything they owned. Several Church of the Brethren congregations helped my grandparents bear the burden of the disaster.

Their home congregation, Spring Run Church of the

Brethren, provided my grandparents with food, clothing, a place to live, household supplies, and labor in demolition. The Middle Pennsylvania District disaster team served my grandparents by providing all the electricity in the renovated house. The service offered to my grandparents helped them through a dark time.

One of my favorite hymns we sing in the Church of the Brethren has these words: "Will you let me be your servant, let me be as Christ to you? Pray that I may have the grace to let you be my servant, too." I think this song describes what the Church of the Brethren does. We are "Continuing the work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together."



*Jason Rickard, age 17, Oakmont, Pa.  
Monroeville Church of the Brethren*

There are a countless number of things that are wonderful about the Church of the Brethren, and it makes it hard to pick a favorite. You could go on forever about the church's goodwill and cordial nature.

I thought for a while, and there was one thing that had significant meaning for me. What I like best about the Church of the Brethren is the openness of the church.

There are two parts to this "openness." The first part is the church's willingness to accept any person, no matter who they are, no matter what their background, with open arms. The Church of the Brethren is willing to accept anyone and set them on their path with God.

This brings me to the second part of the church's openness. The church opens up to a person, sets them on their journey, and somewhat steps back. It allows a person to learn how to have his or her own relationship with God. The church is open to anything that the person feels, even if it means leaving the church for another.

The Church of the Brethren incorporates a wide variety of beliefs and is always willing to explore new ones. Nothing is ever forced upon you. Although the Church of the Brethren is a very open church, it always stays true to its name. We are all brothers and sisters together. Everyone is always there to help you.

*Hannah Wysong, age 15, Fort Wayne, Ind.  
Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren*

My name is Hannah Wysong, but that is just a name. That is not who I am. If you saw a nametag with "Hannah Wysong" on it, it would mean nothing. However, I am real. "Real" by definition means genuine and authentic; by this definition Church of the Brethren people are real.

Last year I attended Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va. I arrived early because my dad is on Standing Committee. My aunt ran registration, and I

**"The church opens up to a person, sets them on their journey, and somewhat steps back. It allows a person to learn how to have his or her own relationship with God."**

helped out. She showed me how to register people and create nametags. I taught volunteers how to make nametags and worked several shifts at the nametag table. During this time, I saw many people I knew, but even more people I did not know. As Conference went on, I found myself telling people, "I made that person's nametag." Those names I typed into the computer began to mean something.

Church of the Brethren people are not just a nametag; I realized that as I saw people that I recognized leading worship and business meetings. These people are real.

I witnessed the compassion of the Church of the Brethren while serving food in a soup kitchen at a summer workcamp. Church of the Brethren people go to places that are in need. They are dependable, which was evident as I fell backward off a picnic table during a trust exercise at Camp Mack. Many people don't know about the Church of the Brethren, and yet we impact dozens of countries. We have countless organizations such as Brethren Volunteer Service, Heifer Project, and On Earth Peace that continue to help our world day by day.

My name is Hannah Wysong. Maybe that means something to you now, and maybe it doesn't. Either way, I am real. Church of the Brethren people are real. 

## ABOUT THE ESSAY CONTEST

Youth ages 13-18 were asked to write a short essay on the question, "What do you like most about the Church of the Brethren?" A steady stream of entries came into the MESSENGER offices, each sharing good insights and images about

the church. A panel of four judges read each of the essays and ranked them, resulting in the winners printed in this month's issue. All essay entries will be posted online at [www.brethren.org/genbd/messenger](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/messenger).

The grand prize winner, Chrissy Sollenberger, will also share her essay at

the Annual Conference MESSENGER dinner, July 3 at 5 p.m. in Peoria, Ill. Former General Board staff member Stewart Hoover, now a journalism professor at the University of Colorado, will be the keynote speaker on "Religion in the Media Age." Check the meal ticket desk at Conference for available tickets.

Erica Gard is all smiles as she swings through the air on the "flying squirrel" activity at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind.



Erin Kaufman

# Looking in on **outdoor**

by Walt Wiltschek

## Church camps face challenges, but their

**A**sk Church of the Brethren camp directors about their work, and many will likely tell you they have the best job in the denomination.

In the same breath, however, they may also note that it is a position fraught with challenges amid a changing cultural and church landscape. Camps and retreat centers are having to redefine aspects of their ministry while seeking to maintain the core features that make them unique—features they say the church, and the world, desperately need.

"The type of Christian community experienced at camp is a model for what a more perfect world could be like," says Marlin Houff, director of Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa., for 25 years. "Camps are one of the few places where persons take the time to sit down around a meal table and fellowship with one another without having to jump up and go somewhere right after a quick bite to eat.

"It's all about the place, the fellowship, the experience, the spirituality, the worship, and the presence of God."

But will people stop long enough to appreciate those possibilities? Social scientists and others studying societal trends have noted that many people are less willing to do without conveniences like television, air conditioning, and cell phones when they go on a retreat. Public demands and, in some cases,

government regulations have forced camps to build less rustic structures when new buildings go up.

As a recent *USA Today* article by Theresa Howard said, "The traditional mom-and-pop summer camps of old have given way to big business." Howard wrote that many parents are looking for programs that will bolster their children's skills and give them an "edge."

"Parents want summer camp to be more than summer camp," marketing expert Ann Fishman said in the article. "They want something that will move the child ahead. And the camper is used to customization. They really expect camp to be customized for their needs."

And there are plenty of choices. Americans are presented with an ever-growing array of options for their free time, and children and teenagers are no exception.

"Campers are provided with so many opportunities to choose from each summer in addition to summer camps," Houff says, ticking off things like sports and music clinics, mission trips, summer jobs, and more—many of which are called "camps" but aren't camps in the traditional sense. "It is great that children and youth have so many opportunities, but it does affect camp numbers."

In some locations, especially in the West, year-round schools add another layer of scheduling

**"Camps are one of the few places where persons take the time to sit down around a meal table and fellowship with one another without having to jump up and go somewhere right after a quick bite to eat. It's all about the place, the fellowship, the experience, the spirituality, the worship, and the presence of God."** —Marlin Houff, director of Camp Swatara



# ministry

special gifts continue to enrich



complexity. Many church camps, including those serving the Church of the Brethren, face the additional challenges of serving denominations with shrinking memberships and members for whom denominational loyalty is less important than in decades past. Tight finances always loom, too.

Put together, that litany of demands is enough to give anyone pause. Of course, camp directors would say that's exactly what they want people to do: pause.

• • •

Outdoor ministry, in a formal sense, has been part of the denomination for more than 80 years.

Camp Harmony, in Western Pennsylvania District, was the first, opening in 1923. It was soon followed by Camp La Verne in southern California in 1924, Camp Alexander Mack in Indiana in 1925 (an 80th anniversary party was held there May 1), and Camp Bethel in southwest Virginia in 1927.

Many other camps opened—and some closed—in the decades since, although all four of the original camps are still running. Author Linda Logan, working with the denomination's Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA), recently completed a book titled *Kum By Yah: The Story of Brethren*

*Camp includes a variety of activities: Fellowship and community-building, cooperation games, Bible study, and campfires. The photos above are from Camp Blue Diamond in Petersburg, Pa., and Camp Mack in Milford, Ind.*

*Camping*, recounting much of this journey.

Several camps have ceased operation in the past decade: Mon-Dak in North Dakota (following a fire), Alabama Camp, and the Arizona Family Camp. All were smaller, seasonal camps, some renting others' facilities to offer a limited summer program.

There are 30 active camps/retreat centers in the denomination today. They span 20 states and vary greatly in size, scope, and staffing. Some, like Wilbur Stover in Idaho or Hammond's Mill in Missouri, depend solely on volunteers and have only a week or two of programmed summer camping. Others, especially in the Midwest and

## Camp work is real ministry

By Matt Rucker

I was told, jokingly, that serving as a volunteer at a Brethren camp was not "real" volunteer service. I suspect the understanding of most people is that camps are only busy during the summer. Wrong! Every camp does a lot of work in the "off-season" and always needs people willing to come out and help.

In my two years of Brethren Volunteer Service at Camp Bethel (Fincastle, Va.), I have been challenged and blessed to serve in each of the ministries of this place. Volunteering at camp is a well-rounded experience: having opportunities to work in the kitchen and serve at special meals, or working in the office and helping with bulk mailings and computer-oriented work, not to mention all the maintenance needs of a camp.

Most people think keeping up with a house is difficult. Try taking care of 30 acres, or 65 acres, or 470. Let's not forget all the buildings, too. Working at camp, it is easy to feel overwhelmed if too much time is spent thinking of everything that needs to be done. Every time a project or work list is completed, it seems as though another five things are added. Much like the work of a church, the work of a camp is never finished, regardless if the camp is a year-round camp and retreat facility like Camp Bethel or a smaller summer camp.

I think one of the biggest misconceptions in the North American church is that we have to go to exotic countries to make a difference in this

world. While there certainly is a need for peaceful witness in those places, I feel the church forgets about the needs close to home.

To really change the world we must reach the youth, and the field that is ripe for the harvest is our summer camps. I know this from my own experience, because it was while attending Camp Emmaus (Mount Morris, Ill.) in junior high that I was introduced to both the Church of the Brethren and to the principles of nonviolent resistance and change. It was at camp where I first felt close to God. I find myself laughing to myself as I hear kids (and adults) comment now about how this is true for them, as well.

Camps are more than just places to go to for fun or to meet different people; camps are havens for the battered souls of this earth. They provide a respite for the weary and empower and renew the desire and energy of all who enter the gates. Camp is where hope is found and an evolution of the soul occurs. Camp counselors have a direct relational ministry where their impact on a child's life is immeasurable, following Christ's example.

Whether you can spend two hours or two years at your camp, I encourage you to unplug yourself from all the stress and grind of everyday life and go lend a hand. Camp service is real service. Take someone with you and experience God in a new way in the fresh air, and commune with God's creation.

Matt Rucker is a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill. He is one of several Brethren Volunteer Service workers serving in camp settings.

East, have full-time staff and offer large summer programs plus other events throughout the year.

"Seasonal camps obviously are going to have less revenue, and fewer expenses," says Jerri Heiser Wenger, co-director of medium-sized Camp Blue Diamond in central Pennsylvania along with her husband, Dean. "Of course their ministry will be more limited, but no less important in the life of the children, youth, and district. God can do just as much in the smaller camps as God does in the large ones, perhaps just not year-round."

The biggest difference, directors say, is the ability to support a full-time administrator and other staff who bring experience, continuity, and ongoing leadership. In other places, it takes the dedication of volunteers to keep things running.

In any setting, the key dynamic is the partnership between a camp and congregations in that district (see sidebar, "Camp-congregation connection is crucial"). A significant part of most camps' financial support comes from those Brethren congregations, as do many of their summer campers.

"Congregations need to convince parents and youth that faith-based experiences are important," Wenger says. "This is happening somewhat as most congregations continue to pay half, or more, of summer camp tuition fees, but I'm not convinced that most of these congregations realize what a difference a camping experience can make in the lives of our youth."

Houff acknowledges that camps also must do better at sharing this story with congregations. "We do not do a good enough job telling our members about our camps and what they have to offer," he says. "It is extremely frustrating when we hear from members of our churches who don't begin to realize what is being offered at their church camp."

Camps, though, are a unifying force for many districts. John Jones, co-director of Camp Myrtlewood in Oregon, said at an OMA meeting this past fall that camps are "a place where people come together. It's one of the 'glues' in our district."

Oregon/Washington District actually has its district conference at Myrtlewood every other year, going to the other district camp, Koinonia, in alternate years. Camp Mack, for the two Indiana districts, and Camp Ithiel, for Atlantic Southeast, also frequently serve as district conference hosts.

Districts and camps have other partnerships, too, such as the work with the district youth choir in Western Pennsylvania or the Youth Ministry Team in Middle Pennsylvania, or district work days.

"(Camp) is one of the few places where Brethren from many different congregations in a district gather and get to know one another," Houff says. "We work together at camp. We play together at camp. We worship together at camp."

We learn from each other and hopefully celebrate our diversity and oneness in Christ.”

• • •

Camps occupy a unique role in the denomination—in many denominations, for that matter.

Writing in *The Church Herald* of the Reformed Church in America, Martha Hunyadi said that camp was “the place that my faith first became real to me.” In *The Observer* of the United Church of Canada, pastor Orville James wrote, “Some of us never feel closer to God than we do at camp. Is it the vespers and devotionals? Creation and nature all around us? The singing, sharing, and prayers? Whatever it is, God is often very real, and it’s easier to say, ‘Yes, I believe; I’m a Christian.’”

Within the Church of the Brethren, new Camp Mardela (Denton, Md.) director Gieta Gresh wrote in the April Mid-Atlantic District newsletter, “At camp being a Christian is ‘cool.’ It is an atmosphere where Christian children can be themselves. They can learn to appreciate their faith and feel accepted by their peers for their belief.”

Much of that boils down to a sense of community, a traditional hallmark for Brethren. Community-building is a key part of most camp weeks, and much of the success of the experience rests on how

well that is done.

“The greatest gift outdoor ministry has to offer the church and our children and youth is an opportunity to be a member of a faith community in a safe and fun environment,” Jerri Heiser Wenger says. “Camp offers opportunity for kids to ask tough questions and realize that their struggles are also the struggles of others.”

There is also the essential area of leadership development, which Wenger says is her “soap box.” Scores of Brethren leaders, and leaders in other denominations, name camp experiences growing up as pivotal in their faith development and personal development.

The 2004 annual report of the National Council of Churches’ Committee on Outdoor Ministries (on which Camp Mack director Rex Miller represents the Church of the Brethren) noted that one of its 2004 initiatives included receiving research from several camping organizations and denominations, as well as from the Lilly Endowment-sponsored Indiana Camp Ministries Enhancement Program.

“All reported the powerful influence that outdoor ministry has in faith formation and in the development of leaders,” the report stated.

Likewise, in a report on research by The

## WHAT IS OMA?

Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) is the organization through which the Church of the Brethren camps network and share ideas, do joint professional development, and organize denominational activities. According to *The Brethren Encyclopedia*, it arose from the former Brethren Camps Committee in March 1977.

Denominational staff support for OMA ended in 1997 due to budget cutbacks, but the organization continued after a few difficult years of reorganization. It has a budget of \$10,850 this year, raised through individual memberships, camp dues, gifts, and an endowment. Active participation is primarily from the larger camps in the East and Midwest, which have full-time staff and larger budgets for travel, but its membership stretches from coast to coast.

“Whether large or small, camps share enough in common that networking and gathering for leadership training, worship, and fellowship together is extremely valuable,” Camp Swatara director Marlin Houff says.

OMA sponsors events at Annual

Conference each year through its liaison relationship with the General Board Congregational Life Ministries office.

Activities this year in Peoria, Ill., include the Outdoor Ministry Association Recognition Luncheon, at 12 p.m.

Tuesday, July 5, when annual camp staff and volunteer awards are presented; co-sponsoring a Tuesday morning insight session on “Building Youth Leadership and Ministry in Your District”; and an exhibit hall booth.

In addition to the awards, OMA issues gifts from its Environmental Grant Fund for camp environmental projects and from the Four Horsemen Fund, for those pursuing studies in outdoor ministries. It co-sponsors the annual Youth Peace Travel Team with other Brethren agencies and provides several host sites for Brethren Volunteer Service and Ministry Summer Service.

Each fall, Brethren camp directors and managers and other staff gather for a retreat; this

year, that will take place Nov. 13-17 at Camp Swatara in Bethel, Pa. In

November 2006, OMA will hold its periodic national conference, when volunteers and others involved in outdoor ministries can attend to hear a keynote speaker and participate in other activities. It will be at Camp Bethel near Fincastle, Va. Other details are still being set. Michele Gibbel of Camp Swatara is the current OMA Steering Committee chair.

OMA also recently completed a long-running project, working with author Linda Logan to produce the book *Kum Ba Yah: The Story of Brethren Camping*. It walks through the history of camping in the denomination and contains an addendum by Dean Wenger and several helpful appendices. Published by Brethren Press, the book will be available at Annual Conference, or call 800-441-3712. Cost is \$9.95.



## RESOURCES

• A number of camping resources, including the **Outdoor Ministry Program Leadership Manual**, are available from the National Council of Churches (NCC) Committee on Outdoor Ministries. Visit [www.nccusa.org/nmu/mce/educaministr.html](http://www.nccusa.org/nmu/mce/educaministr.html) for more information. They can be ordered through Camp Mack at 574-658-4831 or [rex@campmack.org](mailto:rex@campmack.org).

• A listing of all Brethren camps, with contact information, can be found at [www.brethren.org/links/camps.htm](http://www.brethren.org/links/camps.htm).

• The **New Earth: Christian Resources for the Outdoors camp curriculum** is published annually through the Cooperative Publication Association, of which the Church of the Brethren (through Brethren Press) is a partner. The 2005 theme is "God's Calling." Details and purchase information are at [www.brethrenpress.com/store/bpress/6032.html](http://www.brethrenpress.com/store/bpress/6032.html). In 2006, the theme will be "Peace Talks"; it will include several Church of the Brethren writers. About 325 camps from a variety of denominations purchased the curriculum in 2004.

National Study of Youth and Religion, Dr. Christian Smith said, "Going to religious summer camps appears to be one of a broader set of intentional practices that parents can pursue to help build up the religious faith of their teens." And a study from the Auburn Center for the Study of Theological Education found that "more than half of new seminary students have been involved in religious-related camping experiences."

As Mike Neff, director of Camp Ithiel in Florida puts it, "Camp is an accelerator for the faith walk. . . . A week at camp can be a stepping stone to seminary, from lay to pastoral ministry, from the sidelines and onto the faith field."

Some of that occurs through worship and the setting of God's creation. Some comes from the

support of the community. Campers receive opportunities for hands-on experience in areas like leading worship, speaking in front of groups, and putting their faith into words. And counselors and staff, most of them former campers, can serve as powerful Christian role models.

"Camps train more youth for church and denominational leadership than any other church organization," Dean Wenger says. "Camps are not part of the competition for a church's funds or leaders; they are part of its Christian education and discipleship program."

The challenge is to maintain these gifts. Dr. Karen-Marie Yust, in doing the research for the Indiana Camp Ministries Enhancement Program, found some troubling trends amid the spectrum of denominations' camps: Camps emphasizing "fun" activities over things like Bible study and worship, getting the religious aspects "out of the way" quickly or giving them little preparation, counselors making little connection between experiences and faith, and movement away from many "traditional" programs.

Some camps are putting in entertainment-oriented features like climbing towers, computer labs, or water slides and air-conditioning facilities. Much of this, she reported in May, is because camps feel a need to "compete" with secular, often larger, camps that are draining away campers and funds.

The National Council of Churches report also noted difficulties in providing resources to camps as more denominations drop staff positions in outdoor ministries due to budget cuts. This happened in the Church of the Brethren in the late

experience at a week of camp.

Camps are also a place where congregations can hold faith formation events for adults. The impact of an event is increased if you can get away from the daily interruptions of life.

**Creation awareness:** We read in John 3:16-17 that God sent his son into the world not only for the salvation of those who believe in him, but that the "whole world"—that is, the *cosmos*—would be saved.

Too often we have focused only on the human condition and have failed to acknowledge that as believers in Christ we carry responsibility for all of the creation that God pronounced to be good. What better place to get reacquainted with God's creation than at camp?

**Leadership development:** Camp is a place where children and youth are given

## Camp-congregation connection is crucial

### Unique partnership affects the church at many levels

by Rex M. Miller

Several years ago a survey of incoming freshmen at Christian college campuses indicated that the camping experience topped the list of church programming in pointing their lives to the way of Jesus. Many church leaders look back to a summer camp experience as a life-changing time.

What is this relationship between camps and congregations that influences so deeply the whole ministry of the church? It can best be described as a partnership. There are several aspects of this partnership to explore.

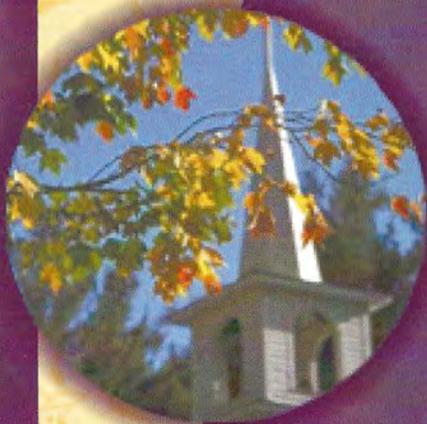
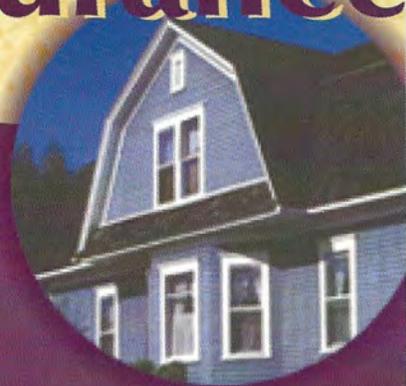
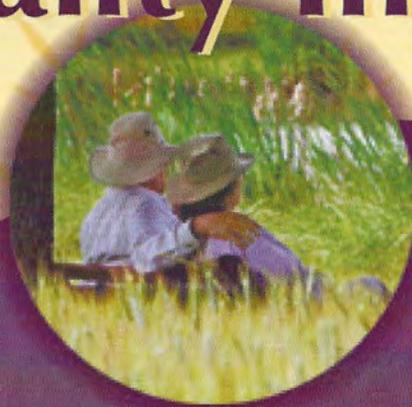
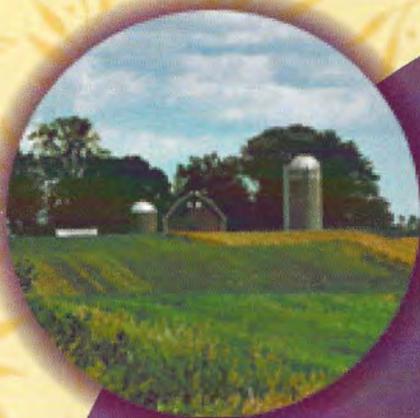
**Faith formation:** The number of hours spent in a week of camp exceeds

the number of hours in an entire year of Sunday school. The impact grows exponentially when you consider that the exposure is without the interruption of daily living. That means that camp offers the opportunity for concentrated exposure to faith formation experiences.

The partnership between camp and congregation comes alive when congregations provide mature Christian leaders as volunteers for summer camp. What better way to teach than to have leaders who live out the message they are teaching? And the teaching goes both ways: It is not unusual for leaders to have their own faith strengthened through their

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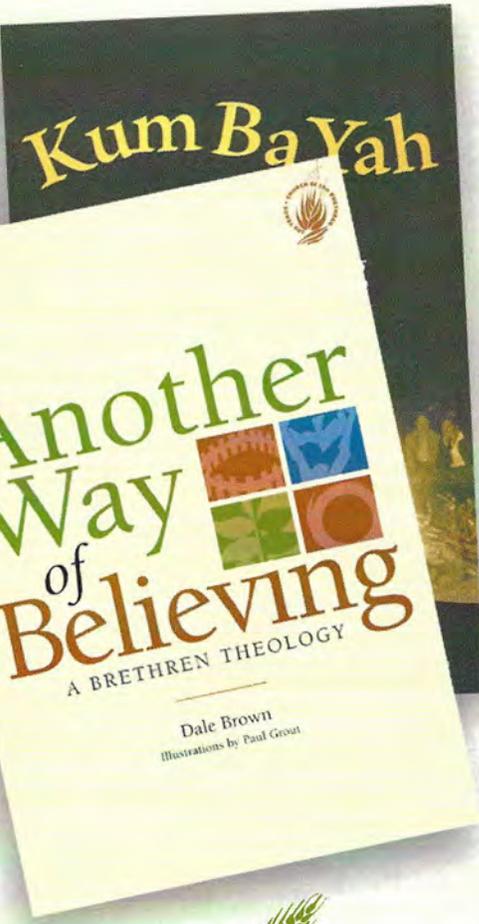
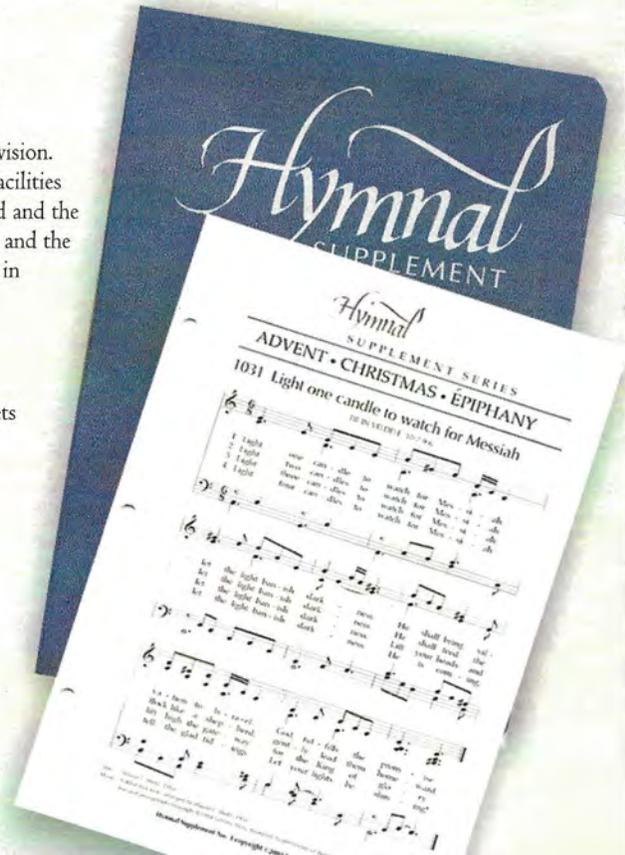
### Kum Ba Yah: The Story of Brethren Camping

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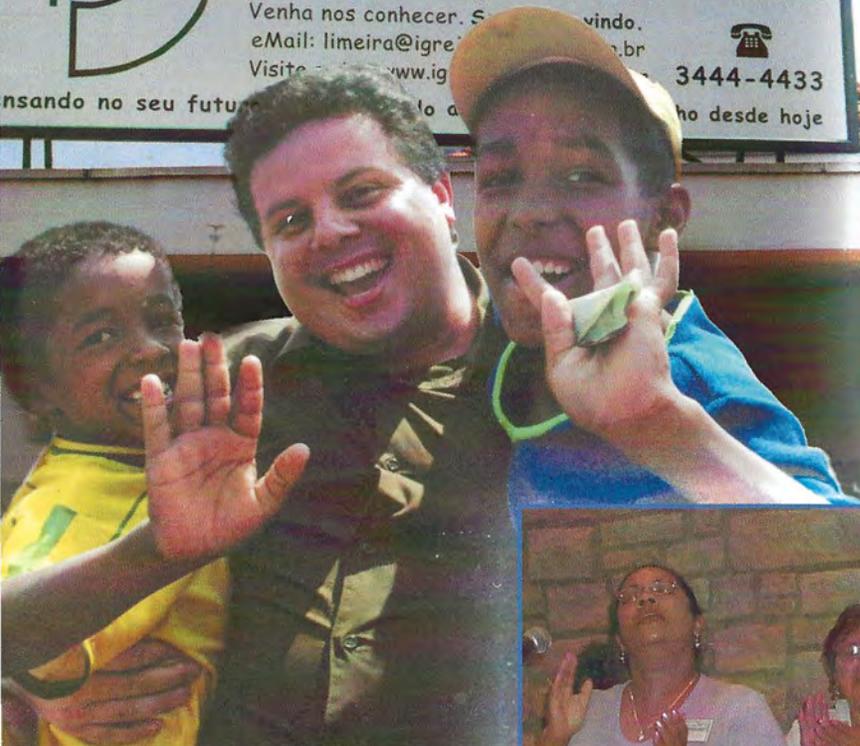
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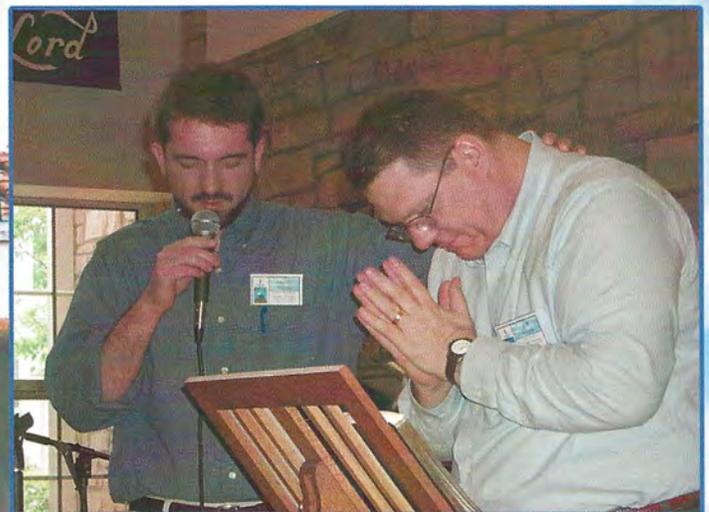
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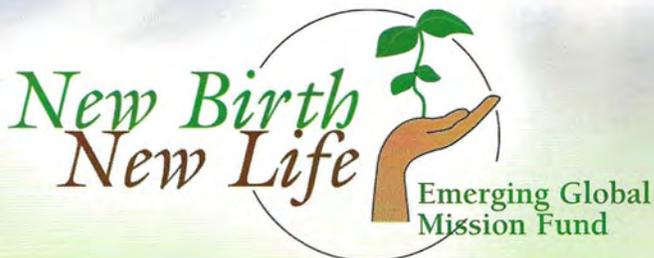
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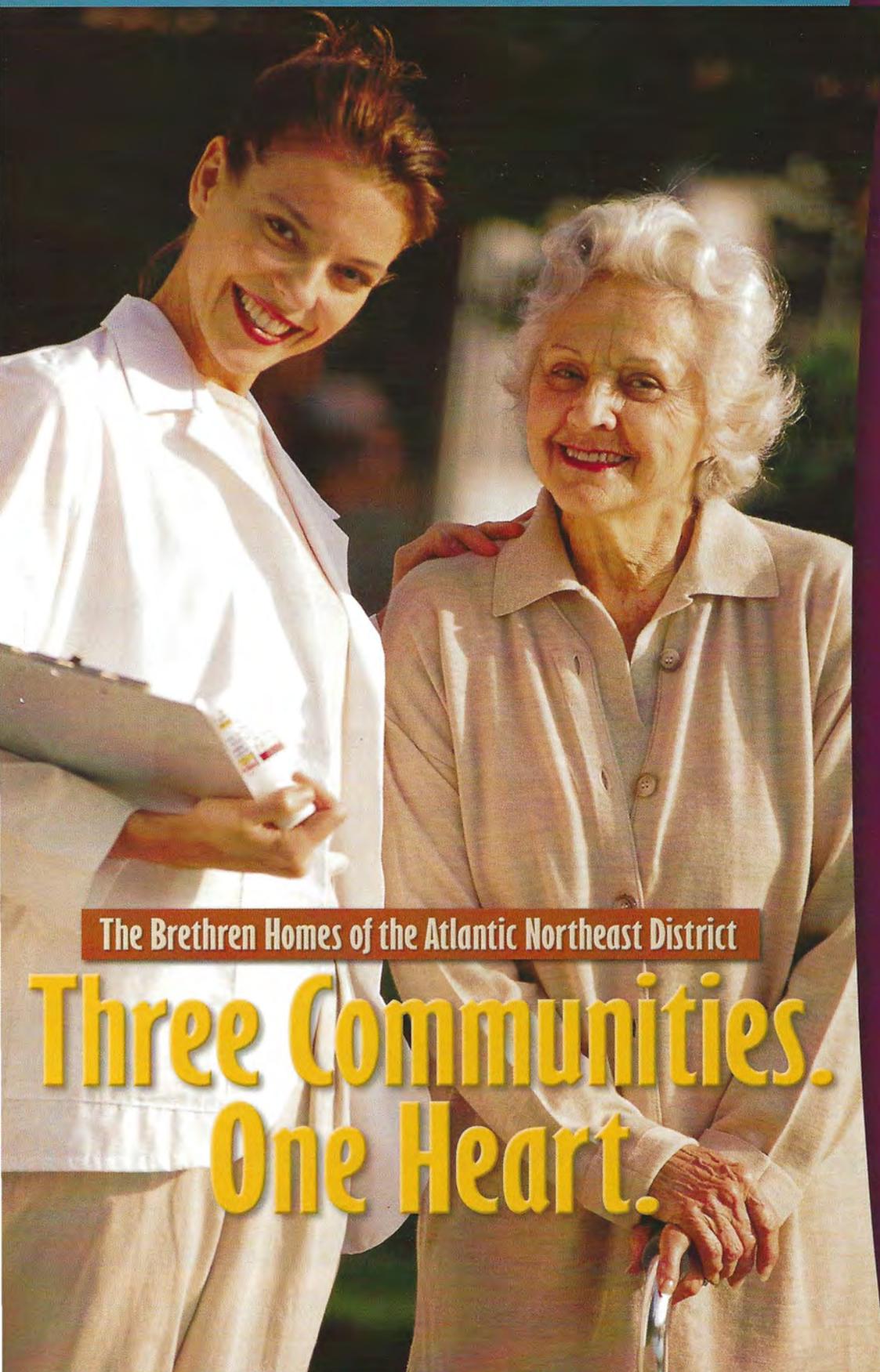
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'90s, and OMA noted this as a major hurdle in its ongoing work of networking and doing professional development.

But there are positive signs, too. Camps have become creative in generating funds, doing more advertising, holding dinners and auctions and other special events, serving as host sites for school outdoor education programs and Elderhostels, building endowments, and adding more winterized facilities. Many of these steps allow greater outreach along with greater revenue.

Interest also remains. The National Study of Youth and Religion report found that about 40 percent of US teens ages 13-17 had been a camper at least once at a religious summer camp. The American Camping Association said in the *USA Today* article that an estimated 12 million children would be attending camp this summer at one of about 12,000 camps in the US.

"In an age where everything is virtual reality and reality TV, it's so important to have places like camp

where we still make real fires, eat real food, and play real games," Camp Myrtlewood co-director Margaret Jones said at the November OMA meeting.

Change is inevitable. The task is discerning which changes are healthy adaptations, and which take away from the central calling of outdoor ministry as one facet of the Christian experience. Some things, camp directors hope, will never change.

"The camp experience, when done well, changes lives," Jerri Heiser Wenger says. "When the computers are off, the TV quiet, the video games still, we are able to get the attention of our young people. When this attention is happening in an outdoor setting, with a community of peers of faith . . . God's voice is heard, and God's nudging is felt.

"Outdoor ministry changed my life, and I know it's changing others' lives, as well." ❧

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He is a former Church of the Brethren camp program director and current camp volunteer.

*Children and youth at, from left, Camp Ithiel in Gotha, Fla.; Camp Eder in Fairfield, Pa.; and Camp Blue Diamond in Petersburg, Pa., have fun at fishing, climbing, and making new friends.*

leadership responsibilities, often for the first time. In some camps there are formal programs of camp leadership training. In all camps leadership is encouraged, and mistakes are accepted as part of the risk-taking necessary for learning.

The camp setting offers wonderful opportunities for the mentoring of teens and young adults by dedicated Christian leaders. When young people return home, their experiences in leadership at camp enhance the life of the congregation.

**A place set apart:** In Mark 6:31 Jesus invites the disciples to "come with me and . . . rest." Sabbath rest is one of the ministries that camps offer to pastors and church members. Camps are special set-apart places where people experience the presence of God in a different way.

In a world in which the pace continues

to increase, camps serve as places of refreshment, regeneration, and renewal.

**Ecumenical outreach:** One of the ministries that keeps our camps healthy is hospitality to groups of many faiths. Is it possible that we have overlooked seeing this ecumenical outreach as a vital ministry of the church?

At a time when membership in the denomination is cause for concern, the use of many of our camp facilities continues to increase as we serve others in the name of Christ. Income gained from this ministry of hospitality is often what makes it possible for us to have these camps available for Church of the Brethren use in the summer.

. . .

While the levels of partnership between camp and congregation vary, it is essential that the church recognize the

importance of a commitment to partnership in ministry.

"Camps and retreat centers are a key part of the whole ministry of the church," reflects Ken Hawkley, former education staff for Mennonite Church USA. They "are the healthiest when the connections with congregations are strong. Together we can build each other up and reach out to those in need." ❧

Rex M. Miller is executive director of Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind., and is the Church of the Brethren representative to the National Council of Churches Committee on Outdoor Ministries.

This article was originally written for the summer 2004 issue of *The Seed Packet*, a quarterly Christian education resource published by Brethren Press and the General Board Congregational Life Teams. It is available online, at [www.brethren.org/genbd/BP](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/BP), or by calling 800-441-3712.

# Judges: *Strange times, extraordinary stories*

by Graydon F. Snyder

**I**ncredible! Unbelievable stories. Asked what they like about the Hebrew Scriptures, some members of our church in Chicago immediately responded, “The great stories.” If you are looking for remarkable reports on the interaction of God with his people, Judges is the right book.

It was a very uncertain time in Israel. “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes” (21:25; 18:1). Without any direction, the people disobeyed the Lord, who handed them over to foreign tyrants. Tired of enemy oppression, the Israelites pleaded for help from the Lord. Then they were granted a judge or leader.

For the most part the judges were a sad lot. The Midianites were in charge of Palestine when we first meet Gideon (chapters 6-8). A young, hapless man, he was winnowing the wheat in a wine press—that is, so the chaff would not blow up and be seen by the Midianites.

The angel of the Lord appeared to him in this humiliating situation and called him to free the Israelites from the Midianites. Gideon was flabbergasted. He pointed out that he came from the least tribe of Israel and he was even the least member of his family. Still, he trusted the angel of the Lord by assembling a band of 300 men—chosen because they lapped up water like dogs. With trumpets, broken jars, and torches they frightened the Midianites into a fatal ambush. What a story!

The best is yet to come: Samson and Delilah, subject of so many later literary and artistic productions (especially the opera *Samson and Delilah* by Saint Saens). Unlike Gideon, Samson (chapters 13-16) had a head start. Born of pious Israelite parents, he was dedicated to the Nazirite vow: no alcoholic beverages, no unclean food, and no haircuts. As a result he was

extraordinarily powerful—a Jewish superhero of the 11th century BCE. He wreaked havoc with the tyrannical Philistines.

But he had a weakness not forbidden by his vow: He liked women, especially foreign women. The Philistines knew this weakness and decided to exploit it. They introduced him to Delilah. Eventually this seductively beautiful woman coaxed from him the secret of his strength. They cut his hair while he was asleep. Having lost his power, he was tied to the pillar of the Dagon where the Philistines could scorn him. But they forgot the secret of his strength. When his hair grew back, he pulled the temple down on masses of celebrating Philistines.

Figures de la Bible (1728) Illustrated by Gerard Hoet (1648-1733)





Not all women in Judges were so dangerous to the Israelites as Delilah. It was the crafty Jael who pretended to help Sisera, general of the Canaanite army. Instead of giving him a drink, as he had asked, she drove a tent peg through his head with a hammer (4:17-22). All this happened while the famous woman Deborah was judge (helped by Barak).

Like the choice of lowly Gideon, it seemed unlikely that a woman would ever be judge.

Furthermore, unlike the male judges, she had no known problems (5:31). Perhaps she is most famous for her splendid poem (5:1-31) that celebrated her victory over Sisera, much like the victory song of Miriam in Exodus 15:1-21.

There is so much more.

There is the parable told by Jotham, the only surviving legitimate son of Gideon (also called Jerubbaal because he destroyed the altar of Baal). Jotham compares the judge Abimelech, who killed the 70 sons of Gideon, with a bramble bush growing among olive trees, fig trees, and grape vines. It is the only non-human parable in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is the only occasion in the entire Bible where plants are said to talk.

The last three chapters are horrifying. Benjaminites in Gibeah wanted to rape a Levite who was the inviolate guest of an old man. Failing that, they took the Levite's concubine and killed her. The Levite was so distraught he cut up his concubine into 12 pieces and sent a piece to

each of the 12 tribes. The Israelites were so outraged at these transgender threats and attacks that they killed all but 600 Benjamite men and agreed never to give their daughters to this wicked tribe.

That would have been the end of the tribe of Benjamin, but in the end the Israelites allowed the 600 men to ambush and rape the daughters of Shiloh at their annual festival (21:16-24). Benjamin survived.

**It was a very uncertain time in Israel. "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25; 18:1). Without any direction, the people disobeyed the Lord, who handed them over to foreign tyrants. Tired of enemy oppression, the Israelites pleaded for help from the Lord. Then they were granted a judge or leader.**

Great stories! Incredible times. The Israelites endured because their Lord unpredictably and mercifully saved them with judges. Still, it was close to anarchy. As that last verse reads: "In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes." ❗

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

MESSENGER's "Journey through the Word" series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in September: Ruth, by Eugene F. Roop.

## JUDGES: A CLOSER LOOK

The seventh book of the Hebrew Scriptures, Judges lies between the wilderness generation (Exodus) and the taking of the land (Joshua), on the one hand, and the beginning of the Israelite monarchy (Saul and David in 1 Samuel), on the other. It describes life in the Promised Land prior to formal administrative structures. The term "judges" does not refer to legal advisors, but to interim administrators. The book of Judges recounts their stories.

The stories in Judges passed from generation to generation in oral form. About the 6th century BCE a person or group called the Deuteronomist put together a history of Israel that included Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings. Apart from the historicity of these documents, the Deuteronomist had one consistent theme: "And the people of the Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, . . . so the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel" (2:11-15; 3:7-8; 4:1; 8:33; 10:6-7; 13:1). So the Lord allowed the enemies of Israel to overrun them. Eventually the Israelites cried for help, and the Lord would raise up a judge (leader) to free them. Then it happened all over again.

The primary judges are Othniel, Ehud, Deborah and Barak, Gideon, Jephthah, and Samson. There are several minor judges, and the last five chapters (17-21) do not deal with judges as such.

# Living out conflict transformation in Indy

## *Plowshares Peace House has built trust in its community*

By Erwin Boschmann, Peter Michael, and Judy O'Bannon

**T**hrough an Indianapolis Peace House window one sees an abandoned van, a closed shop, an old couch, and a dumpster routinely raided for cans. But looking just to the right, there is a mansion valued at nearly \$2 million.

The Old Northside is a neighborhood in transition. Once, the city gave its Victorian homes away for a dollar. Crowded living, drug dealings, shootings, and prostitution were the norm; white flight was at its peak.

Then visionaries dared fixing; they moved in, brought their families, formed an association, and established a historic district controlling what can be done.

This is the neighborhood that Peace House came to looking for a student residence. To shocked neighbors it seemed like a throwback to multi-family dwellings and decreasing property values.

Peace House had considered apartments, but peace studies also needs to solve such issues as, "I don't like dirty dishes in the sink."

Peace House identified a home with a commercial kitchen, nine bedrooms, and six bathrooms. The purchase agreement was signed quickly; finding agreement with neighbors and various committees, however, seemed insurmountable.

As word spread, rumors flew, phones rang, and Peace House undertook many private conversations. While there was some openness, the response was often quite negative. A neighborhood meeting was called, to which Peace House was invited. Fear and anxiety prevailed:

"Zoning allows no more than four unrelated persons to live in one establishment." "We will oppose a variance!" "I want no fraternity!" "The US just invaded Iraq; we don't need peaceniks." "I live close by and don't want loud music, old couches, empty beer bottles, and basketball at night."

These were opinions hurled about during the meeting attended by an unusually large number of neighbors. Peace House, however, was given a chance to explain its program:

"Our students come from peace colleges and wish to solve conflicts peacefully. You will not find couches on the front porch and no beer bottles on the lawn. An associate director will live on the premises. Students want to become part of the community. They will be taking two courses,

working a 20-hour internship, attending a speaker series, and engaging in discussions with community leaders."

Unlike some developers who had made vehement demands of the board, Peace House continued by listening, inviting dialogue, searching for common ground; it was proactive and persisted.

As a result of confidence-building and calm voices, some neighbors became persuaded. Peace House promised to appoint a board member from the neighborhood, and it systematically worked through issues with committees. The board still denied its request, however.

Under pressure to find student housing, Peace House arranged for a special board meeting where the decision was reversed. The neighbor who had been most opposed had a change of mind and drafted language that would both protect the neighborhood and limit Peace House activities with 16 covenants and conditions—not ideal for either side, but both parties agreed to it.

The city also had to agree, though. A caring ally obtained 60 support signatures from nearby neighbors. Peace House appeared before the Historic Preservation Commission, which voted to accept Peace House. After a few more obstacles, Peace House was welcomed into the neighborhood as a non-single-family dwelling.

It implemented what it teaches: listen, be sensitive to a community's history, take part in its activities, be willing to become vulnerable, and compromise. In the process, new friendships were established, and those initially most opposed to Peace House now have become allies who volunteer.

"Like a cathedral, peace must be constructed patiently and with unshakable faith." When Pope John Paul II uttered these words, he certainly knew there is no peace without justice, no justice without education, and no education without hard work. Getting to peace is hard work, but Peace House staff and students don't mind hard work.

Peace House could not have a higher calling. 

Erwin Boschmann is CEO of Peace House. Peter Michael is a Peace House board member, and Judy O'Bannon is the former first lady of Indiana and Peace House director of external affairs.

### ABOUT PEACE HOUSE

**Peace House** in Indianapolis is part of the Plowshares Project, a collaboration of Manchester, Earlham, and Goshen colleges funded through a Lilly Foundation grant. Julie Garber is director of the project at Manchester, and another Church of the Brethren member, Dean Johnson, serves in that role at Goshen. The project was created to enhance peace programs;

Peace House, dedicated last September, was established as a "mini campus" to bring this focus to a metropolitan area. Students come for one semester to study peace and conflict resolution and engage with the community. More information is at [www.indypeacehouse.org](http://www.indypeacehouse.org).

**A major historic peace churches conference** funded by Plowshares will take place Sept. 8-11

in Indianapolis, with the theme "Seeking Peace: The Courage to Be Nonviolent." Church of the Brethren member Peggy Gish will be among the featured speakers, and Christian Peacemaker Teams and Every Church a Peace Church are merging their biannual Peacemaker Congress with the event. Details are at [www.plowsharesproject.org/php/HistoricPeaceChurchConference.php](http://www.plowsharesproject.org/php/HistoricPeaceChurchConference.php).



At the "Hebrews 12:28—Brimming with Worship" conference at Bethany Theological Seminary April 8-10, professor emerita Nancy Faus led a workshop on "The Joy of Congregational Singing."

Marica Shetter

## Bethany conference explores music and the arts in worship

A "Hebrews 12:28—Brimming with Worship" conference brought close to 100 participants to Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind., April 8-10. Part of Bethany's centennial celebration, the conference also was sponsored by the Rosenberger Memorial Recital Series and the Stephen I. Katonah Endowment for Faith and the Arts. Members of the Church of the Brethren as well as Society of Friends, Disciples of Christ, and Baptist meetings and churches gathered for three days of workshops, small-group reflection, and worship experiences.

Three keynote speakers—Sally Morgenthaler, James Abbington, and Dena Pence Frantz—enlivened and engaged the discourse on worship.

Morgenthaler, founder of Sacramentis.com, spoke on "Re-imagining Worship for a New Millennium." She asked, "Is there worship after the contemporary?" Recognizing that worship and relationships have changed in the "wired" world, Morgenthaler spoke to the complexity of worship in the contemporary or "emerging" church. Worship at its essence is about revelation and response, she said, and most importantly being engaged with the spiritual needs in one's own community—what she memorably phrased, "digging deep in our own dirt."

Abbington, professor of music at Morgan State University

in Baltimore and associate editor of the *African American Heritage Hymnal* of GIA Publications Inc., spoke enthusiastically about the importance of worship being a lifestyle. He said it is a circular effect in which ritual informs lifestyle, which informs ritual. In the midst of "worship wars" over genre rather than gospel, and style rather than substance, he reminded the conference that at the heart of worship is the way people understand and engage God.

Frantz, professor of theology at Bethany, introduced her work on theological understandings making use of visual art. Her address, "Birds and Flames: Occasions for God's Presence," brought insight on how images create corporate experiences as well as interior encounters. Using images of birds and flames, Frantz explored artistic depictions of metaphors for God's presence through the Holy Spirit.

Workshop topics, ranging from banner making to congregational singing, drama to praise movement, team leadership to media in worship, allowed participants to engage topics relevant for their congregations. In small groups, participants shared experiences, struggled with questions, and envisioned what they would take back to their churches. Early evening concerts featured the Richmond Church of the Brethren choir, the joint choir of Bethany and Earlham School of Religion, and handbells.

The conference brimmed with corporate worship. Three different styles were presented: a traditional service led by Rebecca Slough, James Abbington, and Nancy Faus; an "emergent" service led by Brian Messler, associate pastor at Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren, and the West Charleston (Ohio) Church of the Brethren praise band; and an energetic and informative experience of African-American music led by Abbington.—**Carrie Eikler**

## Brethren membership falls again in 2004

Overall Church of the Brethren membership continued to decline in 2004, according to year-end figures collected by the *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*, published by Brethren Press. The denomination reported a net loss of 1,280 members last year, down just under 1 percent from the previous year. It is, however, a smaller decline than in 2003, when the denomination had a net loss of 1,363 members.

Reported membership for the Church of the Brethren in the US and Puerto Rico is now 131,201. The figure does not include membership of Brethren bodies in other countries, including Nigeria, Brazil, and the Dominican Republic.

In the US, seven districts reported a net

increase in 2004, while 16 saw a decrease.

Atlantic Southeast District had the largest percentage increase, up 2.3 percent (a net gain of 44 members). Mid-Atlantic District had the largest numerical gain, with a net increase of 57 members (0.57 percent). The districts of Idaho, West Marva, Michigan, Northern Ohio, and Oregon/Washington also reported gains.

The middle and western parts of the denomination reported the biggest declines, with Missouri/Arkansas District down a net 12.9 percent, Southern Plains down 8.62 percent, and Pacific Southwest down 5.17 percent. All four Pennsylvania districts and both Indiana districts also reported declines, however, some exceeding 2 percent. Atlantic Northeast, the denomination's largest district, had the largest reported numerical decline, with a net loss of 217 members (1.44 percent).

The number of full congregations decreased by one, to 1,024, but the number of fellowships and projects increased from 37 to 44, suggesting a burst of new church plants. Total reported average worship attendance remained nearly steady from a year earlier, at 67,591 per week.

*Yearbook* figures are based on data provided by congregations that turn in updated statistical reports; 71 percent did so for 2004. Denominational membership has declined every year since 1974, and has been on a downward trend since the early 1960s. The *Yearbook* lists contact information and statistics for congregations, districts, and agencies of the denomination, as well as related Brethren organizations. The 2005 edition is now available from Brethren Press; call 800-441-3712.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

*Belita Mitchell, pastor of Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren preached for a cross-cultural worship service at Eaton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren in April. "With the love of God through Christ Jesus, we can become a multicultural church," she said.*

## Consultation highlights ways Brethren are woven together

This year's April 21-24 Cross-Cultural Consultation and Celebration drew as many as 250 African-American, Mexican, Dominican, Haitian, Indian, Puerto Rican, and Anglo Brethren participants over four days of events. The gathering was by far the largest since annual cross-cultural consultations began in 1999.

Worship services, listening sessions, and times of fellowship were hosted by Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, and Eaton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. The seminary and area congregations provided food, transportation, and hospitality.

The consultation theme from Colossians 3:12-17, "Woven Together with Love," was just "a sophisticated way of saying, we are having a dress rehearsal for heaven," said Dennis Webb, pastor of Naperville (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, as he led participants in one of the many worship experiences. Lively multicultural worship two or three times a day was a highlight of the meeting.

"What I have enjoyed is seeing brothers and sisters coming from many states to worship together with very different races, and how many are open to more diversity so that all can praise God in different lan-

## On Earth Peace checks out multicultural pulse of church

The On Earth Peace board of directors and staff met April 15-16 at New Windsor, Md., on the theme, "Signs of the Present; Hope for the Future." The board's advancement, personnel, finance, and executive committees met April 14.

Board members brought reports from 18 districts. Prior to the meeting, they were given the assignment to contact districts to check out the "multicultural pulse" of the church. Staff brought the idea of working with a consultant in the ongoing work of being and becoming an anti-racist organization. Amid discernment regarding cost and who would be most helpful to an all-white staff and a more diverse board, there was growing commitment from the board to support this direction.

Board members Dena Lee and Debbie Roberts and staff Kim Stuckey Hissong reported on the Anabaptist Consultation on Alternative Service held in March in Elgin, Ill. The board discussed creating a contingency plan in case of the resumption of a military draft. Roberts, Lee, and board member Phil Miller will join staff in developing the plan. Hissong also reported

on a conference call for those interested in countering military recruitment efforts. Sixteen people participated in the call.

Treasurer Phil Miller shared a positive year-to-date financial report with an increase in both congregational and individual giving. The board approved a revision in endowment policy to allow undesignated planned gifts to be placed in the endowment, used for current needs, or used for the Program Reserve Fund—a new fund that will hold monies for specific extra-budgetary projects. A new video created by Wilbur Mullen about Brethren Service during World War II was reviewed as a potential fundraiser.

In other business, the personnel committee shared plans to distribute a survey during the On Earth Peace report at Annual Conference. The nominating



*Members of the On Earth Peace board gathered in New Windsor, Md., in April for the agency's spring meeting.*

committee is exploring using a discernment process to name a slate followed by testing consensus among On Earth Peace constituents rather than holding an election. The executive committee will coordinate a review of the organization's increase in dispersed staff.

The board welcomed new members Robbie Miller of Bridgewater, Va., and Joe Detrick, executive of Southern Pennsylvania District, who serves as liaison with the Council of District Executives. For more information about On Earth Peace, see [www.brethren.org/oepa/](http://www.brethren.org/oepa/).

guages," said Alex Sable of Maranatha Multicultural Fellowship in Lancaster, Pa.

Sermons were given by invited speakers, but worship leaders also facilitated open times of sharing in which participants were encouraged to bring "offerings" of music or testimonies. Prayers were said in Haitian Creole, Spanish, French, and English. Spanish-English translation was available.

Preachers focused on being woven together as Christ's multicultural body. "Woven together is knowing that I love my brother," said Gilbert Romero, pastor of Bella Vista Church of the Brethren in Los Angeles. "I want to be woven to you. You're the only church I have."

Bethany dean Stephen Breck Reid examined how the ancient Israelites were woven together in worship at the temple, and compared that to the multicultural experience. He urged participants to take the message of the weekend home with them. "It's important that we go home . . . to reach folks we haven't talked to yet," he said.

A keynote address on the peace of Christ in a diverse American cultural setting was given by Fumitaka Matsuoka, a former dean of Bethany now teaching at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif. He called on Brethren to learn a "second language" of caring and compassion taught by scripture. "The Church of the Brethren started as a community that took seriously this second language" of nonconformity, he said. "Being in the world but not of the world—that's a second language."

A Saturday evening worship service at Eaton featured the Inspirational Choir of First Church of the Brethren and the Brethren in Christ in Harrisburg, Pa., directed by Barton Smith. Harrisburg First pastor Belita Mitchell preached on being "well dressed in Christ." Love adds "marvelous beauty" to woven cloth, she said. Many of the 300-plus worshipers, including visitors from neighboring congregations, received anointing for cross-cultural ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

The consultation also offered time for participants to share about painful experiences of racism and prejudice in the church, as well as suggestions about how to make the denomination multicultural. Several leaders called for honesty about "hard issues" facing those who gathered. Seminary faculty and members of two Annual Conference study committees—the Intercultural Study Committee and the Study Committee on Doing Church Business—held listening sessions during the consultation.

Participants seemed to have no doubt of God's will for the Church of the Brethren, that it is to become multicultural. Some said the very survival of the denomination depends on this. "This great denomination that has drawn this soul (referring to himself), will draw many more," said Joseph Craddock, lay minister at Germantown



Cheyl Brumbaugh-Cayford

*A cross-cultural worship service at Eaton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren in April featured the Inspirational Choir of First Church of the Brethren and the Brethren in Christ in Harrisburg, Pa., directed by Barton Smith.*

Church of the Brethren in Philadelphia.

"It's wonderful, this event—getting better every year," said pastor Verel Montauban of Haitian First Church of the Brethren, Brooklyn, N.Y. "When we are here, there is no color; thank God we all are the same."

The event was planned by the Cross-Cultural Steering Committee, aided by the General Board's Congregational Life Ministries. Committee members are Barbara Daté, Ruben Deoleo, Sonja Griffith, Robert Jackson, Belita Mitchell, and Gilbert Romero. For more information, contact Duane Grady at [dgrady\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:dgrady_gb@brethren.org) or 800-505-1596, or Carol Yeazell at [cyeazell\\_gb@brethren.org](mailto:cyeazell_gb@brethren.org) or 828-687-1155.

### **Brethren Mission House closes in the Dominican Republic**

The Brethren Mission House in the Dominican Republic, a joint venture of the General Board and Brethren Revival Fellowship, is being discontinued. The mission house, with houseparents overseeing young volunteers traveling to communities to teach English, was an effort to respond to the request for language education by the Dominican church. The first houseparents, Barb and Earl Eby, set up the complex of two houses in Azua in 2000.

A major reason for the decision was the call to shift energies and resources toward other ministry needs over the next few years, according to Merv Keeney, executive director for Global Mission Partnerships.

Current houseparents Laura and Ron Brinton closed the house and returned from the Dominican in early June. English teacher Rob Raker and former teacher Jewel Reyes are continuing to teach English classes for the Dominican church in a scaled-down effort for the near future.

## **UPCOMINGEVENTS**

**June 28-July 1 Bethany Theological Seminary heritage bus tour**

**June 30-July 2 Council of District Executives summer meeting, Peoria, Ill.**

**July 2 Church of the Brethren Credit Union annual members meeting, Peoria, Ill.**

**July 2 General Board meeting, Peoria, Ill.**

**July 2-6 Annual Conference, Peoria, Ill.**

**July 5 Brethren Benefit Trust Board meeting, Peoria, Ill.**

**July 6-12 Heartland Song and Story Fest, North Manchester, Ind.**

**July 22-24 Missouri and Arkansas District conference, Bolivar, Mo.**

**July 24-Aug. 12 Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 265, New Windsor, Md.**

**July 29-30 Southern Plains District conference, Big Creek Church of the Brethren near Cushing, Okla.**

**July 29-31 Northern Ohio District conference, Ashland, Ohio**

**July 29-31 Southeastern District conference, Mars Hill, N.C.**

# INTERNATIONAL SPOTLIGHT: INDONESIA

In mid-April Roy Winter, the General Board's director of Emergency Response, was one of seven representatives of US denominations on a Church World Service (CWS) delegation to two major tsunami response areas in Indonesia, Banda Aceh and Meulaboh. At that time, areas affected by the tsunami were "very much still a mess," Winter said. "This is going to be a five- to six-year response."

The Church of the Brethren is supporting the CWS tsunami relief effort. Through May, the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund had given \$320,000 to CWS for tsunami relief in Indonesia, India, and Sri Lanka.

The men in the delegation visited Meulaboh, south of Banda Aceh along the coast of Sumatra. Some 13,000 people died or disappeared in the tsunami in the 314 villages in the area, Winter said. Before the tsunami, Aceh Province had been closed to tourists or foreign visitors because of the civil war in the country, but now foreigners are allowed. Winter was impressed by the work of local officials, especially one Muslim sub-district head. Most of Indonesia is Muslim, Winter explained.

The official showed the delegation the need to rebuild boats for fishermen, who are among the poorer members of the community, before rebuilding homes for the relatively wealthy landowners. He was very respectful of the CWS response to the disaster, Winter said. "He was also supportive and cooperative of using good disaster response and development principles."

The official took the delegation to view the mosque where he and other worshipers were caught when the tsunami hit. The building filled completely, and many in the congregation survived by holding on to ceiling fans for an hour before the water subsided. Then the bodies of those who did not survive were carried into the mosque, only to be swept away again by a second wave. The personal story—and the high-water marks on the walls—brought home the extent of the destruction, Winter said, noting, "We were on holy ground."

Winter saw people living in tents beside their destroyed houses—for some the only way to claim their land after local government records were lost in the disaster. Indonesia has declared a

*Roy Winter, the General Board's director of Emergency Response, and a Church World Service (CWS) staff member stand with cooking kits for tsunami survivors. Winter was one of seven representatives of US denominations to visit Indonesia with a CWS delegation in April.*



*Many tsunami survivors in Indonesia, like this mother and children, are living in tent cities. The tents provided by Church World Service and others are considered temporary housing, but long-term recovery estimates foresee many people living in tents for a long time.*

"green zone" from the coast to 500 meters inland, in which rebuilding will not be allowed, Winter reported. The government is to buy property in other locations for those who lived in the green zone. "This means whole communities are waiting for the government to relocate them, when the government does not have the funds to buy the land," he said.

Tents provided by CWS and others are considered temporary housing, but Winter fears many people will be living in them for a long time. Rebuilding of homes has already begun in areas that have received a lot of international attention, he said, so CWS plans to begin its rebuilding program in "forgotten villages" where other agencies are not at work.

CWS has helped to build a temporary water treatment plant in Meulaboh, where clean water has been a major issue. The plant serves 300 households with plumbing, and serves some 5,000 refugees in tent cities, Winter said. CWS also is cleaning wells contaminated by the tsunami, digging new wells for drinking water, and providing latrines and communal bathrooms. "While I was there I heard nothing about disease outbreaks," Winter said, citing this as a major achievement of the emphasis on clean water and good sanitation.

The CWS response also has included material aid distribution and medical teams carrying Interchurch Medical Assistance (IMA) Clinic Boxes to remote villages to do medical care and to offer counseling services.

CWS had 100 staff, mostly Indonesians, working in Indonesia before the tsunami hit. Since then, some have been reassigned to tsunami response, and new staff have been hired, Winter said. Other CWS staff continue ongoing development programs in the rest of Indonesia. CWS staff have been doing good case management, he added.

"As the CWS staff do their amazing work, I am reminded that they need our prayers and support," Winter said, encouraging Brethren to send letters or cards of appreciation for the CWS staff in Indonesia to his office, to be forwarded to CWS. Send cards and letters to: CWS Staff—Indonesia, Emergency Response, Brethren Service Center, PO Box 188, New Windsor, MD 21776-0188. For more information about General Board Emergency Response and Service Ministries programs, see [www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm](http://www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm).—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



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## Seminary board approves advancement for faculty

The Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees approved tenure and advancement for three faculty members as it held its semi-annual meeting April 1-3.

The board also approved 13 candidates for graduation pending fulfillment of academic requirements, and received reports from its committees—including a report that gifts for Bethany's "Inspired by the Spirit—Educating for Ministry" financial campaign now exceed \$13.6 million. The board approved a 2005-2006 fiscal year budget of just over \$2.1 million.

Advancement was approved for faculty Scott Holland, for tenure in Peace and Cross-Cultural Studies; Tara Hornbacker, for tenure and advancement to associate professor of Ministry Formation; and Dawn Ottoni Wilhelm, for tenure and advancement to associate professor of Preaching and Worship.

The Academic Affairs Committee discussed ways to increase the number of full-time graduate students and heard updates on the Advanced Foundations for Church Leadership and Vital Pastor programs. The committee also heard a report on plans for an Aug. 4-7 "Exploring Your Call" event for high school youth.

The Institutional Advancement Committee reported that the seminary's centennial celebration is continuing, with events at Annual Conference and a Homecoming Weekend Sept. 30-Oct. 2.

In other business, vice chair Ray Donadio reported on the visit of several board members to Bologna, Italy, for a meeting of representatives of the seminary and Church of the Brethren-related colleges to discuss international components of their educational programs.

The board welcomed new member Elaine Gibbel of Lititz, Pa., and expressed appreciation to Ed Poling of Hagerstown, Md., and Ron Sink of Blue Ridge, Va., who completed terms of service. The board's new officers are chair Anne Reid of Roanoke, Va.; Donadio, of Greenville, Ohio, continuing as vice chair; secretary Ted Flory of Bridgewater, Va.; Academic Affairs Committee chair Ron Wyrick of Harrisonburg, Va.; Institutional Advancement Committee chair Connie Rutt of Quarryville, Pa.; and Student and Business Affairs Committee chair Jim Dodson of Lexington, Ky.

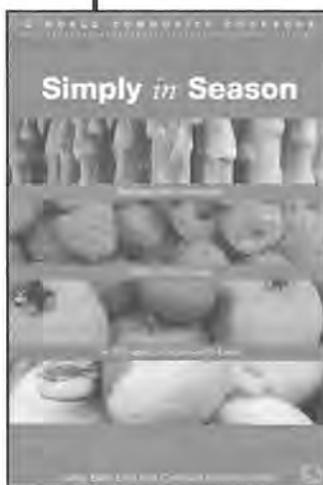


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## There is a balm in 'Gilead'

**J**ohn Ames is 76 years old and the long-time pastor of a small church in Iowa. After you have met him and get to know him, you will discover that he is both deeply spiritual and fully human, that his life experience has given him a wisdom and a compassion most of us can only hope to attain.



KEN GIBBLE

John Ames comes to life in a novel titled *Gilead*, the name of the small town where he has lived all his adult life. In order to meet him, you will have to buy or borrow the book written by Marilynne Robinson, who is neither a pastor herself, nor the daughter or wife of a pastor—a fact that makes her thoroughly realistic

depiction of the Reverend Ames all the more remarkable.

John Ames' doctor has warned him that his heart is failing. Ames decides to write, in journal form, a memoir for his 7-year-old son to read when the boy has grown to adulthood. The memoir covers nearly 100 years, beginning with stories about Ames' grandfather, a fire and brimstone preacher who went to Kansas to join the fight for abolition of slavery and later became a soldier in the Civil War. John Ames' father, in rebellion against his own father's gospel of violence, became a pacifist. Some of the best parts of the novel reveal the complex and often-troubled relationships between fathers and sons.

What I found so compelling about *Gilead* was the utter honesty of the main character. Pastor Ames writes out his fears and doubts, as well as his joys and hopes, with such integrity that the entire journal sounds like a prayer. Ames' praying includes generous doses of self-examination, confession, and, above all, gratitude. He expresses his gratitude for the usual things: his parents, his wife, his child, his friends, his parishioners (some of whom are real trials). But then he writes, "Thank God for all of them." And what is the "all of them" he's referring to? Books! That's a prayer I've never prayed, but I intend to.

In his journal Ames reveals his anxiety about the reappearance in Gilead of John Boughton, the adult son of his best friend and pastoral colleague. As he struggles with how he should deal with Boughton, whose destructive behavior has caused great damage to his family and to

Ames himself, the pastor considers the possibility of forgiveness. Coming across one of his old sermons, he sees that he once told his congregation that grace alone enables us to forgive others as well as to be forgiven. He reaffirms that truth in his mind and then thinks again about all the damage Boughton has caused. Ames writes: "I don't forgive him. I wouldn't know where to begin." Utter honesty.

Marilynne Robinson writes with such a deft touch that, even if the story itself weren't so compelling, readers would still be blessed by her use of language. As the review of the novel in *The Washington Post* put it, the book is so "serenely beautiful, and written in a prose so gravely measured and thoughtful, that one feels touched with grace just to read it."

Sprinkled throughout John Ames' journal are observations that beg to be underlined. Some examples: "I've always liked the phrase 'nursing a grudge,' because many people are tender of their resentments." "There is no ocean big enough to protect us from the Lord's judgment when we decide to hammer our plowshares into swords and our pruning hooks into spears, in contempt of the will and the grace of God." And on the subject of baptism: "It's easy to believe . . . that water was made primarily for blessing, and only secondarily for growing vegetables or doing the wash."

Caught up by the language and the lovingly depicted characters in this novel, I came to nearly the end of the book before I recognized that the story beautifully echoes the parable of Jesus we call "The Prodigal Son."

One final note: *Gilead* should be required reading for every seminary student. John Ames' thoughts on preaching, counseling, baptism, and theological themes are a mini-seminar on the essence of ministry.

But don't think for a moment that this novel is only for pastors-to-be. It's for anyone who has ever wondered how to answer Jeremiah's question: "Is there no balm in Gilead?" With the help of Marilynne Robinson and John Ames, we come to see that, at last, there is. 

Ken Gible is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. He lives in Greencastle, Pa.



### ABOUT THE BOOK

**Title:** *Gilead*. **Author:** Marilynne Robinson.

**Publisher:** Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 2004. **Price:** Lists at \$23 hardback, \$14 paperback.

**Awards:** The book won the 2004 National Book Critics Circle prize for fiction and the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

**What others are saying:** "Ultimately, this brilliant, pensive book derives its narrative force not from large events but from a good man's soul gaining depth as he confronts bodily death."—Martin Northway, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* . . .

"Robinson's words have a spiritual force that's very rare in contemporary fiction—what Ames means when he refers to 'grace as a sort of ecstatic fire that takes things down to essentials.'"—James Wood, *New York Times*

## ONCAMPUS



### **Bridgewater College** (Bridgewater, Va.)

L. Douglas Wilder, mayor of Richmond, Va., and former Virginia governor, delivered the 2005 commencement address on Sunday, May 15. Approximately 285 seniors received degrees at the ceremony. Mary Jo Flory-Steury, director of Ministry for the Church of the Brethren General Board, spoke at a baccalaureate service that morning.



### **Elizabethtown College** (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Allen T. Hansell Sr. of Mountville, Pa., has been named director of church relations for Elizabethtown. He will serve as the primary liaison between the college and the Church of the Brethren, including alumni, congregations, districts, and the national office. Hansell, former director of Ministry for the General Board, is currently also interim pastor of the Wilmington (Del.) congregation.



### **Juniata College** (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Yolanda King, daughter of Martin Luther King Jr. and Coretta Scott King, delivered the keynote address at Juniata's 127th commencement ceremony on May 14, when a graduating class of 303 students received bachelor's degrees. Betty Ann Cherry, professor emerita of history, received an honorary doctorate of humane letters degree.



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

Homa Shabahang has been selected as the new associate vice president for regional campuses at La Verne effective July 15. Since August 2000, she has served as associate dean for the College of Professional Studies at the University of San Francisco.



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

Students in professor Tim Ogden's class on Case Studies in Business annually form a corporation that creates, markets, and sells a product. This year they sold shirts, ball caps and store/restaurant discount cards to raise \$3,286 for The Firehouse, a free spot for teens in North Manchester. In five years of the program, these class corporations have contributed almost \$18,000 for the community.



### **McPherson College** (McPherson, Kan.)

New Community Project director David Radcliff spent April 17-20 at McPherson to help the Student Government Association kick off Earth Awareness Week. He spoke on "One Earth—One Chance: A Wake-up Call for Planet Stewardship." Radcliff also worked with some individual classes during his time on campus.



Youth at this year's Roundtable regional youth conference at Bridgewater College use a hula hoop for creative games during one of the many workshop sessions offered.

Steve Spire

## Youth 'guard the treasure' at Roundtable conference

By Rebekah Houff and Steve Spire

On April 8-10, 226 senior high youth and advisors from across the Southeast gathered at Bridgewater (Va.) College for Roundtable, a regional youth conference. They participated in a variety of workshops, small-group discussions, recreation, Bible study, entertainment, and other activities as they focused on this year's theme, "Guard the Treasure," based on 2 Timothy 1:13-14.

Keynote speaker Scott Duffey, pastor of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren, delivered three messages in large-group sessions, encouraging the youth to cherish the treasure of Jesus that they have in their hearts with all their passion, commitment, plans, and courage.

On Friday night the conference highlighted the band Wake-Up Call from York and Lancaster, Pa. The band's energy and enthusiasm spread throughout Cole Hall as the youth participated in the concert. Wake-Up Call also provided worship music throughout the conference.

The process of planning, preparing, and brainstorming Roundtable is done by the Interdistrict Youth Cabinet (IYC), a group of six Bridgewater College students and their advisor. Sophomore Sharon Flaten, a member of IYC, said she was very happy with how the weekend turned out. "I felt that the kids participated and enjoyed everything they were given to attend," she said.

Rebekah Houff is a Church of the Brethren student at Bridgewater College. Steve Spire is advisor for the Interdistrict Youth Cabinet.

## Regional junior high conference set for September

A first-of-its-kind Regional Junior High Youth Conference is being planned for Sept. 30-Oct. 2 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Eight districts in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic are joining with the General Board and On Earth Peace to sponsor the event.

Leadership announced so far includes Mennonite comedy duo Ted & Lee, folksinger Joseph Helfrich, Harrisburg (Pa.) pastor Belita Mitchell, and David Weiss. They will help the junior highs explore the theme "Be Strong and Courageous." Registration for the conference opened May 5. Additional details are at [www.brethrenjrhigh.org](http://www.brethrenjrhigh.org).

## Bits and pieces

Youth workcamps sponsored by the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office began on June 12, following three young adult workcamps held in early June. In all, 612 junior and senior high youth, young adults, advisors, and directors were expected to take part in one of the 27 workcamps, making it one of the highest summer totals ever for the program.

## May issue brought back memories

Each month I read MESSENGER from cover to cover as soon as it arrives. This month's issue [May 2005] brought back many memories.

In Tom Mullen's "Please God, may we laugh?," I saw my long-gone grandfathers. My grandfather, Charles Sellers, was a rather solemn man. On many Sundays, he and other elders would discuss the morning sermon, life and death, heaven and hell, etc. As a child I heard these discussions as we waited for grandmother to put dinner on the table (I'm now 85).

But after dinner, sometimes we played the Victrola records. Some were gospel music, but some were the Uncle Josh records, which contained stories that evoked many a laugh.

My other grandfather, Sam Yazel, was hardly ever serious, from my viewpoint. Sometimes we grandkids were teased almost unmercifully, but we all loved it and did lots of laughing. Now as we grow older, my sense of humor takes me through many days. I believe in humor.

In the "Ride 'em, seagoing cowboys!" article by Peggy Reiff Miller, I was reminded of my dad (Willard Sellers), who also went

with cattle to Poland. His ship was the one damaged by a tanker. Dad had left Northern Indiana in October and, because of the accident, came back home in several weeks, while new plans were made for sailing later.

Suffice it to say, I thoroughly enjoy MESSENGER. I don't agree with everything there; however I hold, in love of our church and in view of our diversity, the freedom of thinking. I would not want to be part of an organization that tried to make its members into one mold.

Margaret R. (Sellers) Zinn  
Bridgewater, Va.

## Pontius' Puddle



## Jesus came to show nature of God

I was thankful and blessed by the book review of *If Grace Is True* in the January MESSENGER. As searching Christians, we need to read the thoughts and beliefs of others about God's plan for salvation.

Lois Duple's letter in the May MESSENGER suggests concern about whom God accepts or rejects, as many do. As Christians, do we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior in order that we might receive salvation? Or do we love God and want to live according to his will for mankind on earth?

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As in the book, I also wrestle with the idea that Christ had to die to satisfy God's wrath against people's sin. Old Testament scriptures tell of a forgiving God. I believe Jesus was crucified by judgmental church leaders who did not know God very well.

I have reason to celebrate the coming of Jesus, God's Son, into the world, because I believe Jesus came not as a sacrifice for people's sins, but to show us by his teaching and life the very true nature of God. In the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:21-40) he taught in very plain words God's plan for salvation for his people on earth.

I pray as Christians we will learn to cooperate, not compete, with God's people of other religions. We all worship the same God, only in different ways.

**D.M. Naragon**  
North Liberty, Ind.

### Stay on the difficult way

Perhaps Terry Hatfield was writing tongue-in-cheek (May 2005 Letters, "Review extols 'wide way'"). If not, and we are to give up "the narrow and difficult way of the Bible," it would be appropriate to change our name to Church of the Heathen.

**William E. Hayes**  
Denver, Pa.

### Event is supportive and informative

My wife, June, and I just returned from the annual weekend gathering of Connecting Families. This retreat is populated primarily by Brethren and Mennonite families, but the Brethren were not well represented this year.

As parents of a lesbian daughter, we find these gatherings to be supportive, inspirational, and informative. We find such gatherings to be the church at work in the world in ways that make a real difference in people's lives. We appreciate Connecting Families and the work of the Brethren Mennonite Council in providing support to gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender (GLBT) persons, their families, and friends. We hope to see more Brethren at the 2006 Connecting Families retreat.

**Richard G. Blouch**  
Annville, Pa.

### It's about our respect for God

Your article "Do Clothes Make the Worshiper?" [May 2005] makes me sad. Present-day Christianity is in serious trouble in many ways, not the least of which is diluting and dumbing down its worship to the level of entertainment.

# Can we talk?

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The author, Kristen Campbell, identified as a Religion News Service writer, should presumably be knowledgeable about Christian worship. But she just "doesn't get it." Throughout her article her focus is on God's acceptance of us, regardless of what we wear (including nothing, which she doesn't mention). She quotes Samuel, who tells us that "man looks at the outward appearance, but God looks at the heart." We know that! She doesn't have to tell us.

But she's way off track. She's facing the wrong direction. To those of us who wear coat and tie to church, what God thinks of us at the moment matters little. But what we think of God means *everything*.

It is disheartening to me to realize that, in the unlikely possibility that a typical church were invited to meet the president in the White House, they would dress better to visit George Bush in his house than they would to meet God in his House. We've lost our bearings.

**Jim Martin**  
Palmyra, Pa.

## CLASSIFIED ADS

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

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

## New Members

**Beachdale**, Berlin, Pa.: Donna Foust, Emerson Dummeyer, Judy Dummeyer, Amanda Coleman, Brian Dermer, Faith Dermer

**Big Creek**, Cushing, Okla.: Sara Harmon

**Chicago, First**, Chicago, Ill.: Duane Ediger, Carol Rose

**Danville, First**, Danville, Va.:

Timothy Haraway, Brenda

Haraway, Richard Heffner

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

**Eel River Community**, Silver Lake, Ind.: Alan Kahler, Cheryl Kahler, Rachel Kahler, Steve Priest

**Elizabethtown**, Pa.: Matt Bushong,

Andrew Good, Tyler Good,

Conor Maghan, Connor

McDonough, Drew Reinhold,

Drew Sollenberger, Theresa

Strickler, Paul Ziegler

**Ephrata**, Pa.: Linsly Church, Travis

Graham, Glenda Klaassen, Tim

Doering, Jen Doering, Jeff Fritz,

Connie Fritz, Dave Fassnacht, Tam

Fassnacht, Danielle Fassnacht,

Gary Beamesderfer, Denise

Beamesderfer, Laura

Beamesderfer, Eric Beamesderfer

**Franklin Grove**, Ill.: Clinton Keene,

Anthony Sankis, David Seaton

**Fruitland**, Idaho: Brandy Nelson,

Beth Larsen, Cindy Deide,

Shailyn Kernan

**Glendora**, Calif.: Dean Kieffaber,

Diane Kieffaber

**Harmony**, Myersville, Md.: Alexis

Fogle, Brandon Fogle, Doris

Hodge, Wesley Wiser, Matthew

Wiser, Debbie Wolfe Korrell,

Kristina Korrell, Betty Jane

Leathman Cliff, Nancy Kundin

Leathman, Sheila Leathman

Selzer

**Manchester**, North Manchester,

Ind.: Libby Waas, Egon

Borgmann, Sandra Borgmann

**Maple Grove**, Ashland, Ohio: Jeff

Beebe, Erin Beebe, Karen Wynn,

Jessica Wynn, Mark Slocum, Bev

Slocum, Mallory Slocum, Alaina

Schaefer

**Mechanic Grove**, Quarryville, Pa.:

Jeremy Daubert, Sarah Felpel,

Tara Graver, Monica Hershey,

Katherine Holzhauer, Kerri

Mauger, Valerie Osborne, Alexis

Waltman

**Paradise**, Smithville, Ohio: Luke

Steiner

**Pike Run**, Somerset, Pa.: Brendan

Pyle, John Earnesty, Kathy

Earnesty

**Pleasant View**, Jefferson, Md.: Jeff

Wilson, Dawn Wilson, Pam

Moser, Brandon Myers, Amber Myers

**Roanoke, First**, Roanoke, Va.: Edith Griffith, V. Enos Griffith, Michael

Ranson, Richard M. Hart

**Saint Petersburg**, Fla.: Jeffrey Erickson

**Sebring**, Fla.: Paul Kidwell, Judy

Weimer, Craig Whitmer,

Elizabeth Batts, Mary Lee Curtis,

James Lighty, Freda Lighty,

James Kidwell

**Trinity**, Redford, Mich.: David Liepelt,

Keri Cheladyn, Steven Pyle, Jessica

Rowley, Alison Fletcher

**Twenty-eighth Street**, Altoona, Pa.:

Fred Barefoot, Patti Barefoot,

Lola Tripp, Mary Beth Flumerfelt,

Ginger Kutchman

**Woodbury**, Pa.: Charles Guyer,

Caitlin Persun

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Albaugh**, Ira and Doris, Westminster, Md., 50

**Altwater**, Jake and Shirley, New Windsor, Md., 50

**Buch**, Guy and Jeanne, Smithville, Ohio, 60

**Burger**, Ivan and Thelma, Sebring, Fla., 60

**Callihan**, Ivan and Betty, Ephrata, Pa., 60

**Clark**, Hubert and Virginia, Danville, Va., 65

**Crouse**, Galen and Carolyn, Stevens, Pa., 50

**Dotterer**, David and Mary Louise, Woodsboro, Md., 55

**Eastep**, Ron and Velma, Altoona, Pa., 50

**Fritz**, Earle, Sr. and Mary Elizabeth, Union Bridge, Md., 60

**Godfrey**, Mahlon and Mary Jane, York, Pa., 50

**Gress**, Albert and Ruth, Trotwood, Ohio, 60

**Hamm**, Ray and Barbara, Ipava, Ill., 50

**Hartman**, Jim and Ruth, Seven Valleys, Pa., 50

**Hartman**, Kenneth and Barbara, York, Pa., 50

**Holland**, Louis and Shirley, Altoona, Pa., 50

**Horning**, Ivan and Lillian, Akron, Pa., 60

**Horst**, Walter and Ethel, Ephrata, Pa., 60

**Hurst**, Earl and Martha, Palmyra, Pa., 60

**Keeney**, John and Mary, York, Pa., 65

**Kling**, David and MaryAnn, Altoona, Pa., 50

**Krehmeyer**, August and Earlene, Haxtun, Colo., 65

**Larimer**, Paul and Margaret, Sebring, Fla., 55

**Martin**, Vernon and Marian, Sebring, Fla., 55

**Martzall**, Ivan and Helen, Ephrata, Pa., 55

**McFarland**, John and Naomi, South Bend, Ind., 50

**Miller**, Earl and Arlene, Loganville, Pa., 50

**Miller**, J. Donald and Ruth, Willow Street, Pa., 50

**Moser**, Glenn and Shirley, Middletown, Md., 50

**Myer**, J. Donald and Roxene, Lancaster, Pa., 50

**Over**, Byron and Delma, Woodbury, Pa., 50

**Petry**, Melvin and Pat, Sebring, Fla., 55

**Ramer**, Dean and Julia, Sebring, Fla., 50

**Shearer**, J. Earl and Mary, Stevens, Pa., 50

**Shoemaker**, Carl and Fern, Woodbury, Pa., 60

**Smith**, Robert and Ruth, Clayton, Ohio, 50

**Stutzman**, Lyle and June, Taneytown, Md., 55

**Taylor**, Tom and Jean, Ephrata, Pa., 50

**Thomas**, Bernard and Eleanor, Jeane, Sebring, Fla., 55

**Warner**, Sam and Lois, Seven Valleys, Pa., 60

**Yoder**, Elmer and Fern, Sebring, Fla., 65

## Deaths

**Barkdoll**, Edwin I., 95, Waynesboro, Pa., Oct. 28

**Baughman**, Elfrieda, 75, Paradise, Pa., May 2

**Beamer**, Carol K., 57, Biglerville, Pa., April 15

**Biddle**, Shirley, 69, Covington, Va., March 28

**Bostwick**, Anne D., 96, Roanoke, Va., March 8

**Brightbill**, Catherine F., 98, Palmyra, Pa., March 12

**Brogan**, Michael, 62, Crestline, Calif., Nov. 11

**Brookins**, Fern, 84, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 14

**Bucher**, Terry, 62, Ephrata, Pa., April 17

**Buckalew**, Arlene W., 84, Manheim, Pa., Dec. 12

**Buhl**, Rena Mae, 71, Timberville, Va., Jan. 19

**Bull**, Kenneth, 76, Springfield, Ohio, March 14

**Burnside**, Versie, 91, Trotwood, Ohio, March 25

**Bush**, M. Della, 90, Curryville, Pa., March 18

**Buzzard**, Thomas D., 86, Johnstown, Pa., April 1

**Carlson**, Mildred L., 98, Haxtun, Colo., March 27

**Carpenter**, Alice, 90, Warrensburg, Mo., March 23

**Carson**, Virginia, 65, Waynesboro, Pa., June 7, 2004

**Childs**, Marjorie, 93, Vermontville, Mich., Dec. 19

**Claar**, Leora, 93, East Freedom, Pa., April 20

**Claytor**, Alma Louise, 65, Crimora, Va., Feb. 15

- Cline**, Pauline, 84, Frederick, Md., Jan. 2
- Coffey**, Thomas Norwood, Sr., 66, Strasburg, Va., Feb. 13
- Comer**, Harry A., 77, Fulks Run, Va., Feb. 28
- Cooper**, Helen L., 86, Johnstown, Pa., March 30
- Corbett**, Frederick J., 53, Orion, Ill., April 4
- Coursen**, Robert A., 34, Poland, Ohio, May 11
- Craig**, Frances Pauline, 94, Mount Jackson, Va., Feb. 2
- Craighead**, Sherman T., 89, Callaway, Va., April 19
- Craun**, Geneva Rexrode, 77, Bridgewater, Va., Feb. 21
- Creager**, Harry, Jr., 88, Middletown, Md., May 29, 2004
- D'Amico**, Grace, 80, Greensburg, Pa., May 15
- Davis**, Eunice, 94, North Manchester, Ind., Feb. 21
- Day**, Virginia Catherine Helsley, 87, Woodstock, Va., Feb. 5
- Deardorff**, Isabelle, 78, Nappanee, Ind., March 20
- Dell**, Mary Ellen, 89, Trotwood, Ohio, April 9
- Demere**, Bonnie Lou, 51, Franklin, W.Va., Dec. 8
- Depoy**, William Ralph, 89, Lacey Spring, Va., Feb. 7
- Derr**, Edna, 89, Ashland, Ohio, March 31
- Dick**, E. LeRoy, 81, Albany, Ga., May 11
- Doolen**, Fern, 93, La Place, Ill., May 2
- Dooley**, Stella, 95, Fayetteville, W.Va., April 1
- Driver**, Virginia Rhodes, 98, Broadway, Va., April 6
- England**, George H., 87, Everett, Pa., April 10
- Fitzwater**, Nancy Wilson, 65, Moorefield, W.Va., Jan. 22
- Fleming**, Bill, 83, Clearwater, Fla., May 16
- Fleming**, Rosalie, 84, Clearwater, Fla., May 3
- Fravel**, Muriel Jean Wheeler, 82, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 30
- Frederick**, Harry, 85, Newmantown, Pa., Feb. 17
- Fuhrman**, Ruth N., 78, Hanover, Pa., Feb. 22
- Ganger**, Delbert, 79, Goshen, Ind., March 2
- Garber**, Lennis Moyers, 89, Timberville, Va., Jan. 14
- Garwick**, Darlene M., 89, Nampa, Idaho, Dec. 29
- Geib**, Jackie, 77, Frederick, Md., Oct. 24
- Gibson**, George F., 83, New Market, Va., Feb. 21
- Gnagy**, Albert, 96, Diamond Bar, Calif., March 6
- Godfrey**, Katie, 102, Dallastown, Pa., March 9
- Good**, Anson, 79, Waynesboro, Pa., Aug. 4, 2004
- Good**, Lillian, 86, Waynesboro, Pa., May 6, 2004
- Gordon**, Garland D., 75, Frederick, Md., Sept. 17
- Gress**, Eileen, 55, Apex, N.C., Dec. 22
- Griffith**, Wilda Ruth, 73, Linville, Va., March 2
- Guzman**, Fabricio P., 85, South Bend, Ind., May 1
- Hahn**, Miriam, 93, Friedens, Pa., March 28
- Halterman**, Pauline Smith, 81, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 5
- Hampton**, Grace Huff, 86, Upper Tract, W.Va., Feb. 5
- Harig**, Marian, 87, Freeport, Mich., Jan. 25
- Harmon**, Elsie, 83, Cushing, Okla., April 26
- Hart**, Willard, 91, Haxtun, Colo., Feb. 21
- Harter**, Ivan, 89, Elkhart, Ind., Dec. 25
- Hawk**, Jess Williard, 88, Scherr, W.Va., Jan. 10
- Heign**, Ike, 72, Middlebury, Ind., May 4, 2004
- Hess**, Alfred, 97, Altoona, Pa., April 30
- Hess**, Robert H., 67, Fort Wayne, Ind., May 5
- Hildbrand**, Goldie, 92, Frederick, Md., Jan. 14
- Hitchcock**, Donald, 70, Fayetteville, W.Va., May 3
- Hoffman**, Jesse K., 94, Harleysville, Pa., April 5
- Hollar**, Joseph, Jr., 76, Goshen, Ind., May 6
- Huffman**, Mae Wampler, 89, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 9
- Hunter**, Mildred, 87, North Liberty, Ind., April 21
- Hupman**, Iva Lee, 95, Charlottesville, Va., Jan. 16
- Ickes**, Harry, 97, Washington, Pa., April 14
- James**, Vera, 100, Lansing, Mich., April 29
- Jarrells**, Minnie Ada, 85, Pulaski, Va., March 17
- Jones**, Bertha Irene, 85, Boonsboro, Md., May 9
- Jones**, Lloyd E., 83, Girard, Ill., March 15
- Joseph**, Earl, 89, Sebring, Fla., March 16
- Kauffman**, Floyd W., 82, Goshen, Ind., March 12
- Kehr**, Clyde E., Sr., 79, New Oxford, Pa., April 7
- Kennedy**, Jack L., 59, Waynesboro, Pa., March 11
- Kepner**, Raymond, 69, Sebring, Fla., Feb. 5
- Kercher**, William, 92, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 12
- Kinzie**, Catherine E., 98, Haxtun, Colo., March 9
- Kline**, Ina Belle, 79, Williamsburg, Va., Feb. 24
- Kreider**, Eleanor T., 92, Quarryville, Pa., Jan. 17
- Kreider**, Ginger J., 49, Paradise, Pa., Jan. 28
- Kreider**, Grace P., 85, Quarryville, Pa., Dec. 17
- Kreider**, Samuel H., 87, Quarryville, Pa., Feb. 18
- Krueger**, Norman Leland, 89, Casey, Iowa, April 5
- Krull**, Myrtle, 89, Goshen, Ind., April 27
- Kuhn**, Frances, 89, Palmyra, Pa., March 25
- Kurtz**, Stephan, 59, Frederick, Md., Oct. 22
- Kuykendall**, Russell M., 79, Fort Seybert, W.Va., March 1
- Lambert**, Byron, 93, Hagerstown, Md., Jan. 11
- Leer**, Delorus, 87, Goshen, Ind., Jan. 27
- Long**, H. Emerson, 98, Mount Morris, Ill., March 12
- Mann**, Josephine Alice, 86, Rossville, Ind., April 19
- Marinello**, Sirio J., 93, Troy, Ohio, April 15
- Martin**, Blanche F., 105, Bourbon, Ind., Feb. 7
- Martin**, John C., 90, Brookville, Ohio, May 4
- Mason**, Lewis, 79, Elkhart, Ind., March 12
- Masters**, Evelyn, 85, Adelphi, Md., March 6
- Mattern**, Betsy L., 56, Hollidaysburg, Pa., March 31
- Mauck**, Guy Eugene, 51, Edinburg, Va., Feb. 12
- McClain**, Merritt, 86, Frederick, Md., March 9
- Michaud**, Edith Turner, 84, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 15
- Middour**, Jack, 74, Waynesboro, Pa., June 1, 2004
- Mitchell**, Earl Leo, 77, Harrisonburg, Va., March 11
- Mitchell**, Roy Abraham, 77, Franklin, W.Va., Jan. 21
- Moore**, Joshua B., 21, Johnstown, Pa., April 10
- Murray**, Howard J., 86, Wooster, Ohio, April 15
- Netzley**, Barbara, 74, Covina, Calif., April 21
- Nininger**, Helen, 87, Roanoke, Va., April 17
- Peters**, Christine Flora, 88, Roanoke, Va., April 7
- Plank**, Everett M., 84, Seattle, Wash., Feb. 12
- Predmore**, Watie Cline, 81, Baltimore, Md., April 30
- Reger**, Sigrid Persson, 88, Mount Jackson, Va., Feb. 3
- Replogle**, Erma, 98, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Nov. 16
- Reynolds**, Virginia Dianna, 59, Edinburg, Va., Dec. 30
- Rice**, Clarence W., 78, New Market, Md., April 4
- Riner**, Paul, 81, Maud, Texas, May 10
- Ruckman**, Carrie Via, 75, Staunton, Va., Dec. 28
- Salyards**, Katherine Augenstein, 91, Haxtun, Colo., Feb. 7
- Samuel**, Bryant, 85, Dixon, Ill., April 14
- Schell**, Delmer Lindberg, 78, Scherr, W.Va., Jan. 1
- Seal**, Alice Elizabeth Coffelt, 77, Strasburg, Va., Feb. 12
- Shanholtz**, Virgil S., 83, Brandywine, W.Va., Feb. 25
- Shaw**, Orva Long, 95, Danville, Va., Feb. 11
- Shaw**, Robert H., Sr., 91, Uniontown, Pa., April 14
- Silvers**, James G., 83, Travelers Rest, S.C., May 9
- Simmons**, Gilbert Clinton, 82, Sugar Grove, W.Va., March 2
- Simmons**, Rhea May, 95, Franklin, W.Va., March 11
- Simmons**, Virgie Mae, 89, Franklin, W.Va., March 7
- Sloan**, Donald, 81, Dixon, Ill., April 5
- Smith**, David Lee, Jr., 51, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 27
- Smith**, John Ellis, 77, Harrisonburg, Va., Feb. 25
- Smith**, Susan L., 86, Virden, Ill., March 2
- Soderlund**, Ann, 85, Lansing, Mich., Feb. 5
- Stapleton**, Elva Showalter, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., April 28
- Stoops**, Helen, 79, Waynesboro, Pa., May 4, 2004
- Stotler**, Ralph, 81, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 12
- Stout**, Helen, 67, Waynesboro, Pa., Oct. 5
- Stump**, Esther Pote, 97, Cushing, Okla., March 23
- Tarver**, Carl, 58, Cushing, Okla., March 29
- Thompson**, Helen, 89, Oxford, Pa., Feb. 5
- Tincher**, Alberta, 78, Fayetteville, W.Va., March 14
- Turner**, Mabel E., 97, Fulks Run, Va., Jan. 16
- Vance**, Balford, 79, Kettering, Ohio, April 13
- Vandevander**, Hoy Abraham, 78, Franklin, W.Va., Dec. 31
- Vandevander**, Marie Elizabeth, 88, Franklin, W.Va., Dec. 23
- Wampler**, Byron J., 82, Bridgewater, Va., April 8
- Watson**, Creighton, 86, Montpelier, Ohio, Feb. 14
- Weaver**, Samuel E., Jr., 88, Altadena, Calif., Jan. 4
- Whetzel**, Ersley R., 78, Franklin, W.Va., Jan. 27
- Whisler**, Juanita, 90, Lowpoint, Ill., April 29
- White**, Betty L., 75, Harrisonburg, Va., March 6
- White**, James Hartford, 93, Bridgewater, Va., Jan. 3
- White**, Naomi, 86, Frederick, Md., Aug. 15
- Williams**, Nancy Jean Cline, 71, Harrisonburg, Va., March 19
- Wilson**, John N., 92, Dayton, Ohio, March 21
- Witter**, Ruby, 99, North Manchester, Ind., Jan. 1
- Yoder**, Richard, 58, Middlebury, Ind., Nov. 11
- Zimmerman**, Howard V., 87, Frederick, Md., Feb. 25

## Licensings

- Bashore**, Ronald M., Atl. N.E. Dist. (Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.), April 24
- Beekley**, Charles, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.), May 1
- Davis**, Leon Scott, S. Pa. Dist. (Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.), May 15
- Eby**, C. Earl, S. Pa. Dist. (Trinity, Waynesboro, Pa.), April 10
- Herber**, Kelli L., S/C Ind. Dist. (Loon Creek, Huntington, Ind.), March 20
- King**, Daniel Martin, Shen. Dist. (Mount Zion, Linville, Va.), May 15
- King**, Don, S. Ohio Dist. (Prices Creek, West Manchester, Ohio), April 24
- May**, Diane Marie, W. Marva Dist. (Westport, Md.), April 24
- Rhoe**, Dennis, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Johnsontown, Hedgesville, W.Va.), April 24

## Ordinations

- Yoder**, Lisa, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Burnham, Pa.), April 3

## Placements

- Bell**, Charles, team pastor, Buck Creek, Mooreland, Ind., May 1
- Cassidy**, Michael J., team pastor, Buck Creek, Mooreland, Ind., May 1
- Combs**, Daniel O., co-pastor, Romney, W.Va., March 13
- Douglas**, Lucinda, pastor, Living Peace, Sioux City, Iowa, May 6
- Encarnación**, Guillermo B., team pastor, Maranatha Multicultural Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 1
- Good**, Monroe C., team pastor, Maranatha Multicultural Fellowship, Lancaster, Pa., Jan. 1
- Herber**, Kelli L., pastor, Loon Creek, Huntington, Ind., March 1
- Longanecker**, Arlen, pastor, Hostetler, Meyersdale, Pa., April 10
- Lucas**, James E., from minister of Christian nurture, Waynesboro, Pa., to pastor, Meadow Branch, Westminster, Md., May 15
- Rhoe**, Dennis, from minister in training to pastor, Johnsontown, Hedgesville, W.Va., April 24
- Steele**, David A., from pastor, Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa., to district executive/minister, Middle Pennsylvania District, Huntingdon, Pa., March 1
- Stewart**, Kenneth A., from pastor, Lake View Christian Fellowship, East Berlin, Pa., to associate pastor, West Green Tree, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 1

# There's no business like no business

**W**hen word got out that no queries were coming to Annual Conference this year, some Brethren grabbed their chests as mild coronaries set in. Add in two "old business" study committees asking only for another year to do their work, and it was time to put the paramedics on full alert.

"An Annual Conference with no business? Oh no! What are we going to do?"

For those Brethren who "love business almost as much as they love Jesus," as one pastor put it, fear not. The agenda, while still light, has filled out a bit. Brethren Benefit Trust is planning to bring a resolution for study of the ailing Brethren Medical Plan. There are a few minor polity changes to consider. And all the usual reports are lined up like floats in the Macy's Thanksgiving Parade.



WALT WILTSCHKEK  
MESSENGER Editor

But is the idea of getting together without an overflowing agenda really such a bad thing? The proverbial "Protestant work ethic" is engrained in American culture and in church culture, equating industriousness with godliness. More and more, though, we are finding that constantly trying to do more is detrimental to both health and faith.

Author Thomas Merton, in his book, *The Violence of Over-Involvement* wrote: "There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence which is activism and overwork. . . . The frenzy of our activism destroys our own inner capacity for peace. It destroys the fruitfulness of our own work, because it kills the root of inner wisdom, which makes work fruitful."

Such realities have led some church observers to suggest "congregational sabbaticals," a year in which a congregation puts its normal committees, tasks, and non-essential activities aside. Instead, "spiritual life groups" (an idea developed by author Jan Linn) would concentrate on Bible study, prayer, silence, and dreaming about the future of the congregation.

Roger Kruger, a Lutheran pastoral counselor who has built on Linn's work, says this approach can be part of a church's witness to the world.

"One of the most significant ways a church culture ought to be different from a secular culture is in the understanding and experience of time," Kruger reflected in an Alban Institute publication last year. "Yet today we have often capitulated to the secular concept of time where 'time is money,' where one 'spends' and 'wastes' time. . . ."

"In contrast to the busy-ness of the world, where success is measured by the accumulation of things and the accomplishment of tasks, a congregation could offer a place that validates a way of life different from the culture around it."

This message came through in a recent Atlantic Northeast District "R&R event" for ministers, when keynote speaker Kirk Jones noted the connections between healthy rest and dynamic ministry. Jones, who preaches living life at a "savoring pace," says this outlook "challenges our frenzied pattern of paying attention to more with a gentle yet persistent appeal to pay more attention."

Brethren are frequently known as do-ers. We excel at service, at meeting needs, and in seeking to do the work of Jesus. Full schedules, however, can also be an easy way to avoid actually allowing

**Full schedules, however, can also be an easy way to avoid actually allowing God's Spirit to speak to us. As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, there is a time for everything, and that includes a time for doing nothing, for simply being with God.**

God's Spirit to speak to us. As the writer of Ecclesiastes said, there is a time for everything, and that includes a time for doing nothing, for simply being with God.

In 2002, then-moderator Paul Grout dreamed of an Annual Conference with no business. He envisioned a gathering where Brethren could instead focus on prayer and repentance. He, of course, instead received one of the heaviest agendas in years.

This year, though, Brethren have a chance to realize such a vision, at least in part. If the agenda isn't overflowing, maybe the presence of the Holy Spirit more easily can be. And if we aren't so busy scanning queries and reviewing proposed amendments, maybe we really will be able—in the words of our theme—to "fix our eyes on Jesus."—Ed.

**COMING NEXT MONTH:** Coverage of Annual Conference 2005, *Chicken Soup* with a Brethren twist, looking at the book of Ruth, movie review, and more.

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