

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2005 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Something to *smile* about
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2005

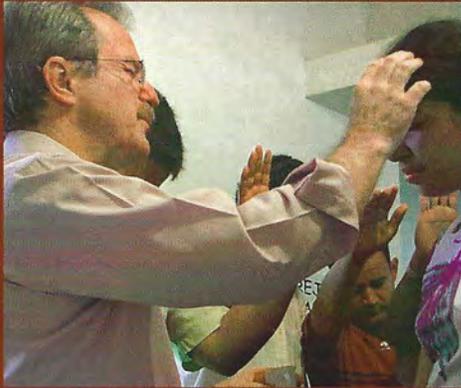
HOTEL RWANDA • THE BOOK OF RUTH • 'CHICKEN SOUP' BRETHREN STYLE

Alive to Mission

I came that they might have life... (John 10:10)



Annual Conference Moderator Jim Hardenbrook urged each person at Mission Alive 2005 to really see brothers and sisters around us, to be willing to go into our communities and into the world to serve, and to love as Christ has taught us to love.



Marcos Inhauser, co-national director in Brazil for the General Board, performs an anointing.



The whole family of Irv and Nancy Heishman, co-mission coordinators in the Dominican Republic, gets involved in mission work—including their children Timothy and Jennifer. The Heishmans have been in the Dominican Republic since 2003, guiding our partnership with the Dominican Church.

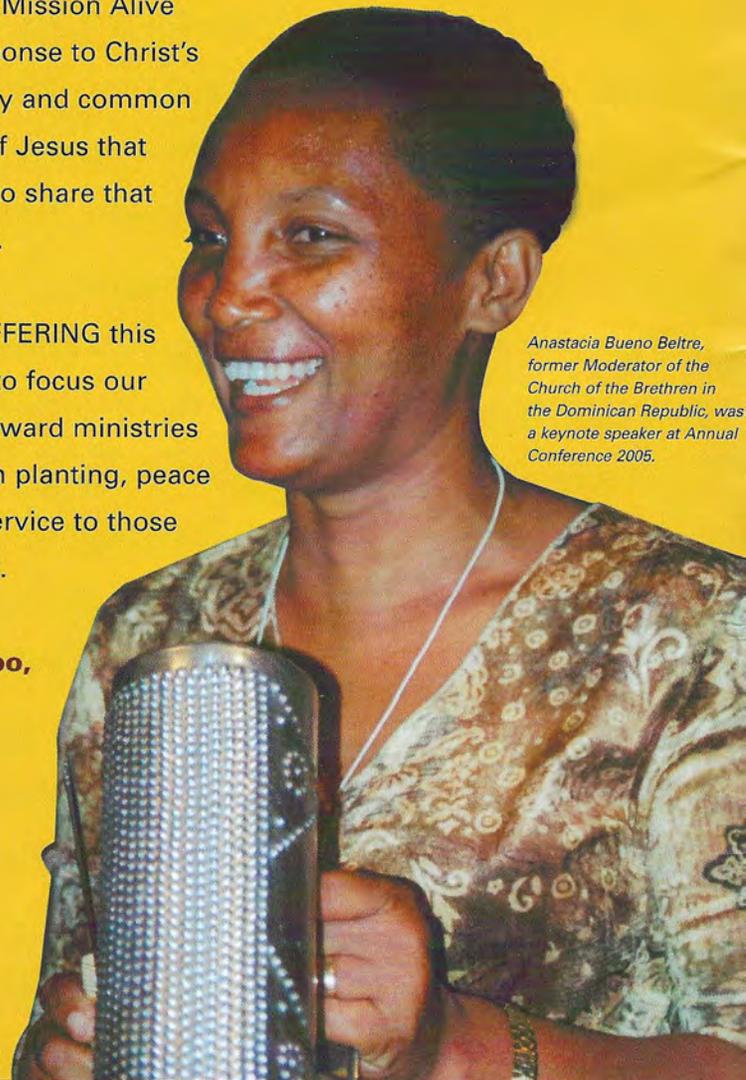


A young teacher from Can Tho in the Mekong Delta in Vietnam has not been able to secure a job teaching English because of her physical disabilities. Here, she looks to Grace Mishler, General Board mission worker, for hope. Grace served in Vietnam from 2001 to 2005.

Brethren gathered at Mission Alive 2005 to reassess our response to Christ's call, and drew new energy and common ground from the words of Jesus that invite us to new life and to share that abundant life with others.

The WORLD MISSION OFFERING this October provides a time to focus our prayers and our giving toward ministries of evangelism and church planting, peace and reconciliation, and service to those in need around the world.

**Give—so that others, too,
may have life.**



Anastacia Bueno Beltre, former Moderator of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic, was a keynote speaker at Annual Conference 2005.



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

Church of the Brethren

MESSENGER

Editor: Walt Wiltschek Associate Editor/News: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford Publisher: Wendy McFadden Subscriptions: Diane Stroyeck Design: The Concept Mill



Hannah Edwards



Regina Roberts



Regina Roberts

ONTHECOVER

During this year's Annual Conference week, someone asked lead photographer

Regina Roberts



Regina Roberts if she was getting any good pictures. Her response: "All of them are good." Why were they so good this year? "Everyone is smiling," she said. Things flowed

smoothly in Peoria, Ill., and with no controversial business or other stress-causers, 2005 was indeed a time for Brethren to smile.

8 Delegates find light agenda in Peoria

Unlike some recent years, the agenda before delegates had few major items on it. A resolution to study the Brethren Medical Plan led a list that also included some minor polity changes and updates from several existing study committees.

9 'Live report' gets a makeover

Ever since the agency redesign of the late 1990s, Annual Conference has been searching for the right recipe to present highlights of activity in the denomination. A new format worked at a more cohesive approach this year in the form of Alive '05.

12 When an arena becomes a church

Amid the business, the meal events, and other activities, worship is still what draws many people to Annual Conference. Four-part harmony, energetic worship elements, and challenging speakers fill the hall with a spirit of large-scale corporate worship that still remains intimate.

14 Speakers challenge Brethren to reach out

A series of guest speakers offered insights on a host of topics at this year's slate of meal events and insight sessions, ranging from postmodern trends to media issues to peace and justice concerns. An overview of some of the major presentations provides a glimpse into the many thoughts shared.

16 Walk this way

It was hot. It was sweaty. It wasn't easy. But a group of youth and their advisors stayed the course on a 100-mile hike to Peoria, one of the Church of the Brethren youth workcamps offered this year.

17 When Annual Conference comes home

Conference is often a time to travel; some families plan their summer vacations around it. But when the annual meeting comes calling to your hometown, it's a whole different animal.

18 Ruth: An uncommon story in an ordinary village

The book of Ruth isn't about flash and sparkle or smoke and mirrors. It's a quiet, simple tale of God's redeeming work, told via the life of a foreign woman who finds herself among the Israelites.

20 'Chicken Soup for the Soul,' peacemaker style

Nearly everyone has heard of the Chicken Soup series of inspirational books. The 101st book in the series focuses on peacemaking, and it had some significant Brethren and Mennonite input.

DEPARTMENTS

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W

ith this year's light business agenda, the only real debate at Annual Conference took place off the floor. After Sunday morning preacher Galen Hackman declared his sense that God has stopped smiling on the Church of the Brethren because "he is not pleased with what he sees," opinions about God's smile were tossed around the rest of the week. He allowed that this was an "audacious" thing to say, and it seemed many people agreed with at least that part of his sermon. (Read this and other Annual Conference sermons at www.brethren.org.)



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

Now why would this audacity get so many people upset? Perhaps because so many could find their areas of deepest Christian commitment in his list of the activities that miss the mark. Perhaps because the list was actually, for many people, a pretty good description of how to go about "making disciples." Perhaps because those listening were trying to figure out how his Bible did not have Jesus telling us to feed the hungry. Whatever the reason, the declaration of who does not merit God's approval had a lot of people squirming.

To be honest, this preacher is not the first to make judgments about God's favor. In fact, I dare say we all are prone to thinking that God smiles a little bit more on some activities, people, and beliefs than on others. And we would probably agree that God frowns on occasion, though we certainly wouldn't agree on which Christians deserve the scowl. But in this case the whole gathered assembly was castigated, and there's nothing so unifying as to all be in trouble together.

No, what ruffled the sensibilities most was not the idea that we were remiss in our dedication to the call of Jesus. It was the subjugation of the rest of scripture to Matthew 28. Brethren pay attention to the Great Commission, but we get there through Matthew 25 and the Sermon on the Mount. In fact, we believe we have to wrestle with the entire New Testament. That's why we're noncreedal.

When we reread the Gospels, we see that the Jesus upon whom we are fixing our eyes is less predictable than we might like. When some were looking for strict adherence to religious law, Jesus focused on grace. When some needed to know about the end of time, Jesus told them not to worry about that. When some wanted to know how to get to heaven, he advised giving up wealth.

How do we gain God's favor? We don't earn it, that's for sure. None of us would measure up. Did we see signs of it in Peoria? All over the place. In fact, the graceful spirit modeled there by moderator Jim Hardenbrook was one that could transform the church.

One day during Annual Conference, a much-needed rain shower came to that section of parched Illinois. After the rain a dramatic double rainbow arched over the Civic Center, touching ground on both sides. Not every rainbow is necessarily a special message from the Creator, but perhaps this one was a reminder that God honors our desire to be, and make, disciples.

Wendy McFadden

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Subscription rates:

\$16.50 individual rate
\$13.50 church group plan
\$13.50 gift subscriptions

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MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Entered as periodical postage matter Aug. 20, 1918, under Act of Congress of Oct. 17, 1917. Filing date, Nov. 1, 1984. Member of the Associated Church Press. Subscriber to Religion News Service & Ecumenical Press Service. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. MESSENGER is published 11 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren General Board. Periodical postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and at additional mailing office, September 2005. Copyright 2005, Church of the Brethren General Board. ISSN 0026-0355.

Postmaster: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)

AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: The district board has approved a sabbatical for executive minister Craig Smith from January to March 2006.

Atlantic Southeast: St. Petersburg (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren is building the Vera Hoffman Memorial Prayer Garden. Conceived by the congregation's youth, it is slated for completion this fall.

Idaho: District conference will be held over Labor Day weekend this year. It is scheduled for Sept. 3-4 at Camp Wilbur Stover in New Meadows.

Illinois/Wisconsin: A new district position will bring an "apostle" who will work with the New Church Development Board to help start new churches. The board will be conducting interviews this fall.

Michigan: Onekama Church of the Brethren hosted a sectional fellowship for congregations in the northwest part of the district on July 16. It included hikes, swimming, a meal, and a campfire.

Mid-Atlantic: Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministries Center near Sharpsburg, Md., planned an open house on Aug. 27, with games, hikes, food, and swimming, plus assembling health and school kits for the summer offering project.

Middle Pennsylvania: District clergy and their families were invited to an annual pastors' picnic with a potluck meal and swimming Aug. 5 at Camp Blue Diamond near Petersburg.

Missouri/Arkansas: District conference, the first in the denomination this year, was held July 22-24 at Southwest Baptist University in Bolivar. The theme was "Keys to the Kingdom."

Northern Indiana: The Wakarusa congregation voted on June 7 to disorganize by the end of 2005. A celebration of the congregation's life will be held on Oct. 9. The currently building dates to 1895.

Northern Ohio: This year's district conference, held July 29-31, included a silent auction for the district's peace endowment. Those attending were invited to bid on various hand-crafted items.

Northern Plains: District conference took place at the University of Northern Iowa Aug.



Forty-four people from seven Brethren and Mennonite congregations in the Mid-Atlantic District's region attended a workshop on "Creating a Healthy Congregation" May 1 at Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Va. Fred Bernhard, a retired pastor and current Bethany Theological Seminary staff member, led the all-day workshop, which was planned and coordinated by Christian Community Inc.

5-7 with the theme "With Christ, Without Fear." Tim Peter served as moderator.

Oregon/Washington: A "Vital Pastors" meeting was held June 3 at Camp Koinonia, near Cle Elum, Wash.

Pacific Southwest: The Imperial Heights congregation in Los Angeles is organizing a community orchestra. The debut performance was scheduled to be held Aug. 21 during district board meeting.

Shenandoah: The Valley Brethren-Mennonite Heritage Center (CrossRoads) offered a series of outdoor vesper services over the summer, part of an increasing array of activities at the center.

South/Central Indiana: The Upper Fall Creek congregation in Middletown held an "old order service" on May 22 with an elders' table, a capella singing, traditional dress, and three preachers.

Southeastern: Churches in Alabama came through Hurricane Dennis unscathed, with damage limited to a temporary loss of electricity at the Cedar Creek congregation in Citronelle.

Southern Ohio: This year's women's retreat, Sept. 16-18 at Camp Woodland Altars, will focus on the theme "Thirsting for God with a Leaky Cup." Mary Sue Rosenberger is leading the event.

Southern Pennsylvania: The district teamed up with Mid-Atlantic to prepare a

total of 83,072 pounds of meat during an annual canning project. It produced more than 46,200 cans for distribution to those in need, domestically and abroad.

Southern Plains: The thriving Family Faith Fellowship church plant in Enid, Okla., sent delegates to district conference for the first time in July and brought proposals for further growth.

Virginia: Members were summoned to an in-district mission project in July, helping the Lighthouse congregation near Roanoke finish its new facility before a construction loan expired July 31.

West Marva: A district core values committee has begun compiling "a list of basic Christian beliefs that form the foundation of faith," according to executive minister Stephen Abe.

Western Pennsylvania: The 23rd annual Brethren Heritage Festival—featuring a quilt auction, a Brethren history exhibit, a pie-eating contest, and entertainment—will take place Sept. 17 at Camp Harmony near Hooversville.

Western Plains: District conference was held Aug. 5-7 in Pueblo, Colo. Jim Hardenbrook spoke at two worship times, and Jim Kinsey led a workshop on "Vision and Mission: The Key to Vitality."

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.

Pennsylvanian earns gold in wheelchair competition

Kelsey Yost, a member of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa., returned from the 2005 National Junior Games for the Disabled in Sydney, Australia, in April with four gold and two silver medals in track and swimming. Weight training and a special racing wheelchair, plus constant training, helped prepare Kelsey for the event.

Kelsey earned a place on the 44-member US team by picking up 11 gold medals in track, swimming, and archery and a bronze in table tennis at the National Junior Disability Sports Championships last year. At that meet, Kelsey also set new national records in swimming in her classification.

Born with spina bifida, Kelsey has been competing in swimming and track since she was 10. A distinguished honors student in advanced placement classes, she is looking at colleges with wheelchair sports programs. She expected to enter several more competitions before the USA national championships in July.—*Evelyn Frantz*



Regina Roberts

Micah Stapleton told an Annual Conference audience about his work to raise funds for wells in Africa. His report, which drew a loud ovation, came during the Sunday afternoon "Alive '05" presentation.

cans while picking up litter off area roads. Micah expanded on that idea this year for his high school senior project, and it has taken off.

Despite a reluctance to speak in front of groups after overcoming a stuttering problem as a child, he developed a program for area churches, doing 12 presentations—five of them at area Church of the Brethren congregations—according to an article in the *Morrison's Cove Herald*.

Bags and bags of cans began coming his way, along with cash donations. Nearly \$12,000 was raised. Youth at a Middle Pennsylvania District retreat at Camp Blue Diamond contributed another \$980. In all, it was enough to more than three wells.

"What makes this whole thing even more remarkable is the kind of young man Micah is," Woodbury secretary Nancy Barton says. "He is a teen who stands strongly for his faith in Christ and is a role model for his peers and those younger than him."

Micah, who is considering a term in Brethren Volunteer Service, according to Barton, received a Caregiver Award at the Association of Brethren Caregivers recognition dinner at Annual Conference in Peoria.

Woodbury youth builds wells with 'can-do' attitude

What began as a family project turned into a major outreach effort for Micah Stapleton, president of the Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren youth group.

Micah's family has been recycling aluminum cans for years, trying to raise enough money, about \$3,600, to drill a well in Africa. They gather the

in Nigeria from 1941 to 1979, and helped to establish the Hillcrest School in Jos for mission children. She was nursing superintendent at Garkida General Hospital, worked with numerous other programs, and delivered many of the babies born to Brethren

Courtesy of BHLA

missionaries during her tenure.

A memorial service was planned at Brethren Hillcrest Homes in July.

A young Mary Dadisman holds one of the many babies she delivered while on the mission field in Nigeria.



REMEMBERED:

Mary Dadisman

Mary Dadisman, 92, a former mission nurse and teacher for the General Board, died June 5 at Brethren Hillcrest Homes in La Verne, Calif. She was 92. A graduate of Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.), she received nursing training at Bethany Brethren Hospital in Chicago and studied midwifery at the Frontier Nursing School in Kentucky.

Dadisman was a nurse with the Brethren mission

Pastor puts it in reverse to raise funds for COBYS

How can someone help COBYS Family Services go forward? Atlantic Northeast District moderator Larry O'Neill decided to do it by going backwards.

O'Neill walked COBYS' May 1 Family Fun Walk at Peter Becker Community in Harleysville, Pa., backwards from beginning to end. O'Neill said he would do the feat if he gathered at least \$1,000 in pledges from sponsors. He ended up with \$1,400. He joked to some of his late sponsors who were

• **MESSENGER won three awards** in this year's Associated Press competition, which includes many of the nation's church-related magazines. MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek received the first-place award of excellence for his November 2004 editorial, "Politics and Polarization," in the category of editorial and opinion for magazines. MESSENGER and designer Paul Stocksdale also received an award of merit (second place) for the December 2004 cover and an honorable mention for overall design of the January/February 2004 issue.



• **The Something Else Lady**, a children's book about Anna Mow, received a Best in Print Award of Excellence from the Printing Industries of Virginia. The book was written by Earle Fike Jr. of Bridgewater, Va., and illustrated by Yolanda Wegner, Mow's great-granddaughter. It was published as part of Bethany Theological Seminary's centennial celebration. The book includes a CD with the song "Sister Anna, Beauty Queen," written for Mow by Andy and Terry Murray. The book/CD combo is available from Brethren Press for \$12.95 plus shipping and handling. Call 800-441-3712.

• Three Bridgewater (Va.) College seniors, including Antioch Church of the Brethren (Rocky Mount, Va.) member **Jonathan P. Emmons**, were recognized for their excellence in the performing arts at the college's annual Academic Awards Convocation on May 3. Emmons, a music major, served as accompanist for the 2004 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Charleston, W.Va. Emmons received the Nelson T. Huffman Award for Musical Excellence, the Outstanding Member of the Chorale award, and the Outstanding Member of the Concert Choir award.

• **Chris Detrick**, a member of Codorus Church of the Brethren (Loganville, Pa.), had a photo selected for publication in the *Life* magazine book *Photography Exposed: The Story Behind the Image*. Detrick graduated from the University of Missouri this spring with a degree in photojournalism. He has served as photographer for a number of Brethren events.

• **Tracy Knechel**, who graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary this spring, was featured in an April 30 *Dayton (Ohio) Daily News* article. It highlighted her joint service as senior pastor of Mack Memorial Church of the Brethren and associate pastor of nearby First United Methodist Church.

• **Little Pine Church of the Brethren** (Ennice, N.C.) marked its 100th anniversary June 11-12 with concerts, sharing, a historical exhibit, a barbeque dinner, and a celebratory worship service.

• **English River Church of the Brethren**, South English, Iowa, will hold its 150th anniversary celebration Sept. 24-25.

• "Unity in Community," a community group begun by **Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren** to address diversity and intolerance, marked its 10th anniversary this year. A celebratory event took place May 14. . . . Also at Manassas, Brethren Housing Corporation dedicated a new Nokesville Road apartment complex this spring. It will house four families in a transitional housing program. Several other projects are under way.

• The **60th annual Eastern Civilian Public Service Reunion** took place Aug. 4 at Chambersburg (Pa.) Mennonite Church. The reunion gathers those who served in CPS during World War II.

SCHOLARSHIP • PARTICIPATION • SERVICE



2005-06 Visit Days

Oct. 8, 2005 - Bulldog Day

Nov. 12, 2005 - Presidential Scholarship Competition and Fine Arts Scholarship Day

Feb. 18, 2006 - Presidential Scholarship Competition* and Fine Arts Scholarship Day

(dependent upon the availability of awards after Fall competition)

May 6, 2006 - Bulldog Day

Personal Visits offered
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Sat. 9:00am-12:00pm.

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bent on putting him over the top, "You must really want me to suffer!"

"It was crazy," said O'Neill, pastor of Skippack Church of the Brethren in Collegeville, Pa. "I've never been so sore in my life."

His son, Shawn, served as his "spotter" for the 5K walk, making sure he didn't run into or fall over anything. O'Neill, who has done the walk forwards several times in the

past, said he hopes his "wackiness" will help to inspire others to do something unique to benefit a favorite cause. The COBYS walk raised a record \$7,500-plus this year.

COBYS, originally founded by Atlantic Northeast as a teen foster care agency (Church of the Brethren Youth Services), is celebrating 25 years of ministry this year. It launched a \$600,000 "Building for the Future" campaign this summer.

Blessed, broken, and being transformed

Moderator Jim Hardenbrook, speaking at Annual Conference in Peoria, prayed that God would “bless us, and break us, so that we might feed a hungry world.” The Holy Spirit is breaking us. Like green shoots breaking old concrete, the Holy Spirit is breaking the institutional church by raising up new believers, new churches, and new ways of being the church.

That is happening in Illinois/Wisconsin District. Three years ago we established and funded a New Church



JIM YAUSSY ALBRIGHT

Development Board (NCDB) with the sole mission of starting new churches. We had no idea what impact that would have on us. We looked up from our preoccupation with ourselves and our internal problems and quarrels and realized that the mission of renewing the church by starting new churches was already happening. God had started without us.

Though we tried to downplay it, a strong motivation for the NCDB in the beginning was survival. We thought survival depended on making more clones of the churches we had. What we didn't realize was that it depended on allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us, person by person, and congregation by congregation.

That taste of transformation helped us realize that new wine could not be contained in old wineskins. We asked God to bless and break us, and dismantled our old structure and built a new one, and balanced our budget to make it more reflective of our mission priorities, and of our commitment to that mission as expressed in dollars.

We thought survival depended on making more clones of the churches we had. What we didn't realize was that it depended on allowing the Holy Spirit to transform us, person by person, and congregation by congregation.

So we have been blessed, we have been broken, and all we have now is our mission to feed the world. We are still the same people in the same congregations with the same problems. And yet we aren't. God has brought new people and new gifts into our district, and the result has been that our vision of what is possible is changing and growing. Perhaps we are beginning to see ourselves more through God's eyes than through our own. What we are beginning to see is that we are all people blessed and broken by God, standing together on the common ground of our desire to be faithful to Christ and his mission to the world. That changes everything.

The walls that have divided us are cracking and crumbling. That doesn't mean we are all of one mind. It certainly doesn't mean we won't stumble and do hurtful things to each other. But it does mean we are frustrated by the old divisive labels and categories and ready to reclaim the

designation of “brothers and sisters in Christ.” It means we are increasingly impatient with the drawing of lines in the sand and yearn to be like the One who wrote with his finger on the ground and then said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.” It means that all of us want to be faithful followers of Christ.

The old way is to allow our internal disputes and divisions over issues to cripple the Body of Christ and its mission. In such a broken and bleeding world that is blasphemy. The new way is to judge and resolve our disputes and divisions in the light of Christ's call to be his Body in mission.

The old way is for us to define the mission of Christ to fit our own notion of entitlement with its self-serving assumptions of who is in and who is out, who is saved and who is lost. That is the arrogance of the institution. The new way is to let the mission of Christ defines us in radical new ways.

The old way sets congregations against one another. It assumes there is a separate entity known as a “district” over which opposing viewpoints and congregations must vie for favor, influence or control. The new way sets congregations before each other to encourage and empower fellowship, mutual support, and discernment of the Spirit.

If there is no “district” to fight over, if the district is indeed us, then our shared ministry depends on how well congregations can partner with each other. It requires commitment to a covenant.

All points of view are important and must be heard, and all points of view must be equally respected and valued. A covenant allows that to happen by providing a framework of fellowship within which we can discuss our differences and the topics over which we disagree, and mutual ground rules to guide us in the most helpful ways to shape that discussion.

But another essential function of a covenant is to help us discern together when we cannot be in fellowship with those who disagree with us and still live out our faith with integrity. We are discovering that the real question is not what we believe about issues, but what we believe about the nature of our covenant.

A young pastor agonized over the energy the church expends fighting itself over the topic of homosexuality. While he agrees scripture teaches that homosexuality is a sin, he disagrees with those who would make it a “line in the sand” issue in the church, because the primary mission of the church is compromised or lost. “Why do you think there aren't more young pastors in the church?” he asked me. “All I want to do is be Christ to people!”

We promote this prayer in Illinois/Wisconsin: that God will continue to bless us and break us so we can above all be Christ to people. 

Jim Yaussy Albright is district executive for Illinois/Wisconsin. He lives in Oak Park, Ill.

QUOTE WORTHY

“In that act of service and humility, we say to each other, ‘I value you.’ . . . In that act of kneeling and embracing, we say to one another, ‘I love you with the love of the Lord.’”

—Manchester College campus minister Jim Chinworth, sharing with Regional Youth Conference participants about the Brethren love feast

“I can give up the game-winning three-run home run and I can come off the field and I can be dejected and I can have a broken heart and feel like the worst guy in the world and (my kids) still run up to hug me. That’s what God does. He’s still going to run up and hug me no matter what.”

—Boston Red Sox pitcher Mike Timlin, quoted in the March/April issue of *New Man* magazine (RNS)

“There is no exit unless we defeat the pillars of injustice through the power of nonviolence.”

—Husam Jubran, working in Palestine with the Holy Land Trust to do nonviolence trainings. He was quoted in an article in *Crossroads* magazine.

“Our spiritual life needs quality time spent with the One whose existence transcends and transforms time. . . . Failure to recognize God’s presence diminishes our lives.”

—York (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren pastor Dave Yingling, writing in the Southern Pennsylvania District newsletter

“We will never unite the world in support of the idea that Americans have a unique relationship with God or a better understanding of God’s will than do worshipers from other cultures or lands.”

—former US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in a speech at Yale Divinity School. She was quoted by Martin Marty in *Context*.

“We cannot be a fair-weather group of folks who sort of like each other some of the time if things are going well. We are the body of Christ, and we are called to be faithful to one another even if we don’t always see eye to eye.”

—The Rev. William Chris Hobgood, general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples), writing in a May pastoral letter about recent difficulties in the denomination (RNS)

CULTUREVIEW

• The Rev. Thomas Reese, editor of the Jesuit magazine *America*, was forced by the Catholic Church to resign this spring for publishing articles “that questioned the church’s teachings,” according to the *Chicago Tribune*. *US Catholic* editor Meinrad Scherer-Emunds said the move sent “a chilling message” to others in the church’s publishing arms.

• United Methodist bishops approved an agreement to share the sacrament of communion with Episcopalians and Lutherans, the first step in moving the three churches toward “full communion,” while meeting in Arlington, Va., May 5. Church officials expect similar agreements to be approved by the Episcopal Church and

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America within a year. The three-way agreement allows the three denominations to share communion and join in ministry together. (RNS)

• A three-point agenda for further collaboration—understanding of the church, spirituality, and ecumenical formation—was proposed by World Council of Churches general secretary Rev. Dr Samuel Kobia to Pope Benedict XVI during a June meeting at the Vatican. Kobia also invited the pope to visit WCC headquarters “as yet one more concrete step in our long journey towards visible unity.”



JUST FOR FUN: TOP 10

DOLLARS AND NONSENSE This top 10 list was shared by MESSENGER editor Walt Wiltschek at this year’s Annual Conference MESSENGER Dinner in Peoria, Ill.:

The top 10 ways for the Church of the Brethren to solve its financial difficulties:

10. Bloodmobile will be stationed outside denominational offices so staff members can sell plasma.
9. Exorbitant Brethren Volunteer Service monthly stipends will be cut in half, to \$30 a month.
8. Corporate sponsors will be secured for Brethren events. Picture “Annual Conference brought to you by Metamucil.”
7. All potlucks will now be made ‘pay-by-the-pound.’
6. We claim the Mennonites stole our idea and sue them for copyright infringement.
5. Since Christians are all children of God, we claim all 130,000 members as a tax deduction for dependents.
4. We build luxury skyboxes in congregations and sell season tickets for valuable pew space.
3. We relocate all Church of the Brethren offices and operations to general secretary Stan Noffsinger’s basement.
2. We install a few extra toll booths on area expressways and see if anyone notices.
1. We hold all Annual Conference attendees hostage and see how much family members are willing to pay to get them back—or perhaps how much family members will pay for us to keep them!

Delegates find light agenda in Peoria

Brethren Medical Plan leads business items for 2005 Annual Conference

A delegate body of 858 church representatives from across the US and Puerto Rico considered the business of the denomination at the 219th recorded Annual Conference of the Church of the Brethren, in Peoria, Ill., July 2-6. Total registration for the Conference was 3,341.

Business sessions held in the Peoria Civic Center's Carver Arena were led by moderator Jim Hardenbrook, pastor of Nampa (Idaho) Church of the Brethren. Also at the officer's table were moderator-elect Ronald D. Beachley, executive minister of Western Pennsylvania District, and Conference secretary Fred Swartz of Bridgewater, Va.

Heading the list of four new business items on a fairly light and controversy-free agenda was a resolution from Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) on the Brethren Medical Plan, a health insurance plan for church workers and families. Other items of new business were changes to General Board bylaws, an update of Annual Conference polity, and a "New Mandate for the Review and Evaluation Committee." The delegates also voted on the ballot and received reports.

Studying the Brethren Medical Plan

The 2005 Annual Conference adopted a resolution on the Brethren Medical Plan brought by Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT). The Brethren Medical Plan is a health insurance plan for Church of the Brethren pastors and church employees, district employees, employees of Annual Conference agencies and affiliated agencies and institutions, and their families.

BBT has said that the plan is in a "death spiral" of decreased membership, erosion of a good spread of risk, increased health care costs, and increased premiums. BBT brought the resolution for three reasons, said board chair C. Richard Pogue: "One, the Brethren Medical Plan is important to the church. Two, the Brethren Medical Plan's future is in peril. And three,

the plan belongs to the church."

A committee of four was elected to answer questions raised in the resolution: James C. Gibbel, an insurance agent and former member of the BBT board from Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Brian Markle, a licensed minister from Bermudian Church of the Brethren, East Berlin, Pa.; Willie Hisey Pierson, an insurance marketing manager from Neighborhood (Boulder Hill) Church of the Brethren, Montgomery, Ill.; and Donna Shumate, a lawyer and retiring General Board chair, of Peak Creek Church of the Brethren in Laurel Spring, N.C.

The resolution asked for evaluation of the plan and assessment of "the continuing need for and feasibility of a denominational medical insurance plan for employees of congregations, districts, and church-related agencies." It also called on eligible congregations, districts, and church-related agencies to participate in the plan from 2006 through at least the conclusion of the study.

During a short discussion, delegates expressed concern for those who are uninsurable elsewhere, asked for consideration of working with other denominations on the issue, and added a question to a list that will be presented to the committee, asking for assessment of the possibility of a denominational plan for church members as well as employees.

Doing denominational 'housekeeping'

Annual Conference delegates made changes in the polity of the Conference and the General Board, among other business transacted in Peoria.

The relatively minor polity changes bring polity documents into conformity with current practice. Delegates added an item to a list of purposes and functions of the General Board, to "provide leadership in prophetic social policy development for the denomination."

A "New Mandate for the Review and Evaluation Committee" expands this regularly scheduled review of the denomination's ministries, which occurs every 10 years. The mandate was revised to include total denominational structure and program in light of the multiple-agency structure put in place in recent years. A five-member committee was elected (see election results).

The Doing Church Business Study Committee and the Intercultural Study Committee brought interim reports and received extensions.

The Cross-Cultural Ministries Team gave a brief report called for by the Caring for the Poor decision of the 2000 Annual Conference, which had asked for an update in 2005. A more complete report will come in 2006.

During a report from the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, delegates approved a 2.8-percent pastoral scale increase.

The body welcomed 10 new congregations and fel-

Regina Roberts



Representatives of Church of the Brethren congregations and districts from across the country consider the business of the denomination over four days of meetings at Annual Conference. Here, delegates listen attentively to a report from the "Doing Church Business" Study Committee.

lowships: La Casa Del Amigo, Arecibo, P.R.; Lirio de Los Valles, Lebanon, Pa.; New Beginnings, Manheim, Pa.; Maranatha Multicultural, Lancaster, Pa.; Trinity, Shippensburg, Pa.; Jesu Cristo El Camino, Hendersonville, N.C.; New Creation, Morrisville, Pa.; Mountain View, McGaheysville, Va.; Living Faith, Concord, N.C.; Knight's Chapel, Barboursville, Va.

Reports highlight Brethren ministries

A multimedia report titled "Alive '05—Making Glad the City of God," opened the business sessions with what Hardenbrook called "a thumbnail sketch of what God is doing through the work of this denomination."

The presentation featured testimonies of a variety of ministries of Brethren individuals, congregations, and the denomination, interspersed with music. Psalm 46 punctuated the presentation: "There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God." Stories of personal and communal transformation included that of Felix Lohitai, a former soldier in the Sudan People's Liberation Army who is now a peace studies student at



Nevin Dujabaum

Manchester College; Richard Propes' wheelchair tours on behalf of abused children; Nick Kauffman's experience as a young conscientious objector; and the responses of the Brethren to the tsunami, among many others (see story below).

Bethany Theological Seminary's report highlighted its centennial. A slide show and readings reviewed the history of the seminary, structured around the

(Continued on page 10)

Marian Thornton of Skyridge Church of the Brethren in Kalamazoo, Mich., raises the issue of opening the Brethren Medical Plan to church members as well as employees, during discussion of a resolution on the plan brought by Brethren Benefit Trust.

'Live report' gets a makeover by Nick Kauffman

Alive '05 provides more cohesive overview of church's ministry

Annual Conference veterans are no strangers to the Sunday afternoon "live report," but they found some format changes in the presentation this year.

In recent years, Brethren Ministries Live was a report by the agencies of Annual Conference, each of which showcased its own highlights with transitional pieces joining those segments. This year, however, the agencies gave the go-ahead for an independent committee to be formed, giving birth to "Alive '05."

The live report concept began approximately 25 years ago as the "General Board Live Report," designed to highlight General Board programs. About five years ago, the report became Brethren Ministries Live; representatives from each of the five Annual Conference agencies worked jointly on the presentation. This year the agencies gave their reports separately during other business sessions.

One noticeable difference was the flow of the report. "We had a lot of shorter segments (this year)," said Beth Sollenberger Morphew, who has worked with the live report for close to 10 years and who chaired the planning of the presentation this year.

Also helping with Alive '05 was Howard Royer, who had coordinated the production for its first 20 years. He feels that this year's format change was a significant improvement.

"The live report has always been a mix of information, interpretation, mission, and worship, and there

are many ways to formulate that mix," Royer said. The more recent Brethren Ministries Live format, he said, "was an unnatural mix of business and worship. Some agencies had to have budgets approved, and you just don't do that with a report intended to inspire. We really wanted to reflect the cross-currents in the church."

Morphew agreed. "I have enjoyed working on the report all along the way," she said, "but I enjoyed the kind of freedom we had this year to showcase eclectic stories."

Others serving on the Alive '05 planning committee with Morphew and Royer were Julie Garber, Russell Jensen, and David Sollenberger. They worked with a theme from Psalm 46, "Making Glad the City of God." Joseph Helfrich coordinated a team of musicians that included Kris Brownlee, Dan Petry, and Shawn Storms. The adult choir of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren (Elgin, Ill.) closed the program with an upbeat rendition of "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee."

Nick Kauffman is a member of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren. He is beginning this fall as a freshman at Manchester College in North Manchester, Ind.

Regina Roberts



The Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren adult choir, from Elgin, Ill., closes the "Alive '05" report with a performance "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee." Wil Nolen directed the choir.

tenures of its presidents, followed by stories of the ministries of its alumni. Some of the "nameless servants" who have had an impact on the school were recognized. "Bethany has lived on the trusted work of servants whose names are little known or not remembered," president Eugene Roop said. Academic dean Stephen Reid reported that more than 2,000 people have studied at Bethany since 1905.

The delegate body also received a report of a trip to Sudan by Hardenbrook and Brethren Witness/Washington Office director Phil Jones. The two were part of a small delegation of interfaith leaders from the US who visited the capital city of Khartoum and a camp of refugees fleeing violence in Darfur. The visit included a meeting with the president of Sudan. "There is a deep hope for peace throughout Sudan," Hardenbrook said. "I don't think this was true six months ago, a year ago. There is a window of opportunity there." The General Board approved a resolution expressing support for the people of Sudan and renewed peacemaking efforts there.

Other reports were given by the Association of Brethren

Caregivers, Brethren Benefit Trust, the General Board, On Earth Peace, those working on the "TOGETHER: Conversations on Being the Church" ecclesiology process, the 300th Anniversary Committee, the Committee on Interchurch Relations, the National and World Councils of Churches, Standing Committee, and those developing a new interagency Outreach Planning Packet for congregations and districts, titled, "As One Church." Delegates also took time to share stories of how Brethren are a living peace church.

Program and Arrangements Committee reported that the 2010 Annual Conference will be held in Pittsburgh, Pa., July 3-7.

In other business

- Standing Committee adopted a "**Strategic Plan to Guide the Staff and Volunteers of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.**" The plan's mission and vision statements, core values, and objectives were shared with the delegate body.
- The **General Board** issued a resolution com-

Elections and appointments

Moderator-elect: Belita D. (Brewington) Mitchell

Annual Conference Council: James F. Myer

Program and Arrangements Committee: Kristi A. Kellerman

Regina Roberts



Annual Conference leaders for the next two years are consecrated with laying on of hands and prayer. Ronald D. Beachley (kneeling left) will serve as moderator in 2006. Belita D. Mitchell (kneeling right) will serve as moderator in 2007.

Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee: David Shoup

Review and Evaluation Committee: Michaela Camps, Rebecca Baile Crouse, Craig L. Gandy, Paul Hoffman, James Edward Martinez

Committee on Interchurch Relations: Ilexene Alphonse

Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC): Brian S. Black, Heather L. Neff. Appointments of Allegra Hess, John Katonah, and Dan McRoberts to the ABC board were affirmed.

Bethany Theological Seminary Trustee—Ministry: John David Bowman; **Laity:** Ted Flory. Appointments of trustees Elaine L. Gibbel and J. Paul Wampler were affirmed.

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT): Carol Ann Jackson Greenwood. Appointment of Gail Morgan Habecker was affirmed.

General Board: District nominees Bruce Holderreed (Idaho) and Ramona Pence (Shenandoah), and at-large nominees Marian Thornton and Kate Spire were approved. During board reorganization, Glenn Mitchell was chosen as chair.

On Earth Peace: Sarah Quinter Malone. Appointments of Ken Edwards and Debbie Roberts to the On Earth Peace board were affirmed.

Awards

• The **Association of Brethren Caregivers** honored Phyllis Harvey of Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; Carl and Doreen Myers of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.; Micah Stapleton of Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; and Black Rock Church of the Brethren in Glenville, Pa.

• The **2005 Ecumenical Citations** given by the Committee on Interchurch Relations went to Colleen Hamilton of Hope Church of the Brethren in Freeport, Mich., and Marisa de Oliveira of Campo Limpo Preaching Point in Campo Limpo, Brazil.

• The **Outdoor Ministries Association** recognized volunteer Shari Hoopingartner and camp staff Dean and Jerriann Heiser Wenger of Camp Blue Diamond.

• The **Women's Caucus** gave its Friend of Caucus award to La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren.

mending the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, Japan—a long-time Brethren Volunteer Service project—on its 40th anniversary. General Board staff Dan and Wendy McFadden traveled to Hiroshima in August to deliver the resolution and be part of the observances. A 2006 General Board budget parameter of \$5,618,000 was set. The Executive Committee announced that the director of Ministry would be elevated to a Leadership Team-level position; Mary Jo Flory-Steury currently serves in that position.

- The **Ministers' Association** approved changes in its constitution and bylaws. Formerly, officers served single three-year terms; now they will serve four years and be eligible to serve two terms. Also, one officer will be added so that the leadership team will have five members. New officers will be named through a process of discernment and affirmation rather than a ballot. The group's description of purpose was amended to clarify its aims, including to offer continuing education to ministerial leaders, to serve as an advocate for ministry issues in the denomination, and to support the work of the Ministry Assistance Fund. An offering of

\$1,112.33 was received for the fund, which helps pastors with crisis needs. David W. Miller, pastor of West Richmond (Va.) Church of the Brethren, was affirmed as the newest officer.

- Appreciative comments from the floor followed an interim report from the committee planning the Church of the Brethren's **celebration of the 300th anniversary** of the Brethren movement in 2008. When it was announced that the committee has no budget for its work, Hardenbrook introduced a letter to the denomination soliciting donations in the units of 300—300 cents, 300 dimes, 300 quarters, 300 dollars. "Matter of fact, I have a check in my pocket right here as a gift to that celebration," Hardenbrook said. "We can take care of this and have a wonderful party." He said that the committee is looking at a \$37,000 total budget for its work, but that \$9,500 is needed to take care of what has been planned so far. **W**

General Board director of news services Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford coordinated the Annual Conference news team. Other writers on the team were Kathleen Campanella, Karen Garrett, Jill Kline, Frank Ramirez, Frances Townsend, and Sarah Leatherman Young.

Peoria bits and pieces

- The **blood drive** for the American Red Cross received donations of 237 units.
- The annual **Quilt Auction** sponsored by the Association for the Arts in the Church of the Brethren (AACB) raised \$21,450 for hunger relief.
- Four new members of the **Cross-Cultural Ministries Team** were announced: Marisel Olivencia of Harrisburg, Pa.; Alice Martin-Adkins of Asheville, N.C.; Renel Exceus of Orlando, Fla.; and Dennis Webb of Naperville, Ill.
- The **Church of the Brethren Credit Union** announced that it will donate \$5 to Heifer Project for each new account opened until next year's Conference.
- Top finishers in the **Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT) 5K run and walk** were Maggie Carroll, women's overall winner, and Scott Huffman in the men's division. Don Shankster had the best overall time for a walker. In his first race ever, 4-year-old Seth Spire finished with a time of 1:01:11. A total of 175 Conference

attendees were among the 651 participants in the race, this year hosted jointly by the Peoria Jaycees and BBT.

- A **presentation to moderator** Jim Hardenbrook was made by the AACB. The presentation included the traditional quilted wall hanging, this year made from leftover scraps from Conference quilts of the past 16 years, and a walking staff made in Cameroon.

- **Ronald D. Beachley** was consecrated to serve as moderator of next year's Annual Conference in Des Moines, Iowa, July 1-5, 2006. In his first statement as moderator, he called the denomination to prepare for the 2006 Conference with three disciplines: reading aloud of a chapter in the New Testament each day; fasting from food, television, the Internet, or another aspect of daily life the first day of each month; and praying daily for someone who does not know Christ.

- **Belita D. Mitchell** was consecrated as moderator-elect. She will serve as moderator of the Annual Conference in Cleveland, Ohio, June 30-July 4, 2007.

During Monday night's worship, children were invited via their daily worship packet to write or draw something about their time at Annual Conference. Lidia Yaussy Albright, 12, of Oak Park, Ill., gave the following list:

Annual Conference means:

- *A long drive
- *Fun children's activities
- *Fun field trips
- *Two new friends
- *Learning new things about Jesus
- *Nice hotels

Annual Conference make me feel:

- *Happy
- *Excited
- *Fantastic
- *Excellent

Annual Conference makes me want to:

- *Come again and have more fun!

Andrew Bollinger of Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater, Va., makes paper chain people at the General Board's booth in the Exhibit Hall.



Regina Roberts



Hannah Edwards

Richard Kyerematen, pastor of Germantown Church of the Brethren in Philadelphia, Pa., welcomes Anastacia Bueno Beltre to the Peoria Civic Center. Beltre is a pastor and past moderator of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic. Looking on are Irvin and Nancy Heishman, Dominican mission coordinators for the General Board.

When an arena becomes a church by Jeff Carter

Conference worship engages, challenges, binds us together

Walking down the street in Peoria on my way to worship, I was struck by a somewhat odd couple traveling a similar path to our shared destination. Right in front of me was a young man wearing a bright shirt, shorts, and flip-flops, carting his laptop in a backpack. He was engaged in cheerful conversation with a mature sister, wearing her prayer covering, simple blue dress, plain black shoes, and carrying a well worn, leather-wrapped Bible. The two talked, laughed, and parted ways after embracing in a know-

'If he is Lord, we must take all of him, not just what we like.'

—Jim Hardenbrook, Saturday evening worship

ing hug. We each entered the arena through a different causeway and found our place for worship.

Yes, it might be the business of the church that called the 219th recorded Annual Conference to session, but it is the Spirit that beckons the body of Christ to join in common witness through worship. Flip-flops, prayer coverings, Bibles, and laptops speak of our diverse ways, but worship—worship speaks to our common calling.

As Brethren gather for worship, I believe we expect to be engaged in such a way that our thoughts are challenged, our faith strengthened, and our lives are then lived in response to the proclaimed gospel of Jesus Christ. This was true in 1708 when five men and three women, in response to their felt call to imitate Jesus as they studied his life and teachings in the New Testament, were led to the Eder River in Schwarzenau, Germany, and were baptized.

Today, as represented by Annual Conference, the Church of the Brethren has grown both in numbers and in its variety. To speak of the Church of the Brethren in monolithic terms, does not do justice to

the rich pattern of diversity embraced in the one Spirit. Urban and rural, traditional and contemporary, large and small, mature and young—the Church of the Brethren is a study in contrasts.

Even the once simple worship of the Schwarzenau Brethren, a worship without formal liturgy and focused simply on Bible study, prayer, and singing, has changed throughout the years to reflect a variety of styles and traditions. Worship today is both individual and corporate; a time of celebration and remembrance; thanksgiving and petition; enthusiastic praise and quiet reflection.

While these themes are eternal, it is the ways in which they are expressed that speak to diversity. Lined hymns, guitars, drums, choirs, organ, piano, liturgical dance, drama, responsive readings, scripture, prayers both silent and heard aloud, sermons, and the use of multimedia, may singularly be found in some churches, but at Annual Conference they are mixed together in corporate worship, giving expression to the "one body and one Spirit, just as (we) were called to the one hope of (our) calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism . . ." (Eph. 4:4-5).

After spending the day hearing reports, discussing policy and polity, and noting the points of convergence and divergence among the church's interpretation of program, worship is the place where the many members of

"I've had this gnawing sensation that God has stopped smiling on us as a people. I believe in many ways we have forgotten who Jesus is."

—Galen Hackman, Sunday morning worship

the church come together for edification and praise. Yet worship at Annual Conference presents particular challenges to preachers, worship leaders, and particularly to Program and Arrangements Committee.

First, the space is vast and lacks a certain intimacy

that Brethren value. Second, although we gather as friends, the convention center discourages personal connection with those with whom we worship. Third, many of the comforts of worship, whether images of stained glass, chancel construction, or common liturgy, are missing. Combine the arena venue with the vast diversity of liturgical expression and what we find is an atypical opportunity for corporate worship. And yet, by keeping to our core values of community, sim-



Regina Roberts

Moderator Jim Hardenbrook (right) and his son, Joe Hardenbrook, are in a congregation that responds enthusiastically to worship on the last morning of the Conference. At left is Linda Beachley, wife of 2006 moderator Ron Beachley.



Preachers for the Conference included (from left) Galen R. Hackman, pastor of Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren; Anastacia Bueno Beltre, a pastor and past moderator of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic; Sandra Leach Bosserman, executive of Missouri/Arkansas District; and Chris Douglas, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the General Board.

licity, and a practical centeredness upon scripture, worship at Annual Conference challenges our thinking, strengthens our faith, and sends us forth to serve.

At this year's Annual Conference, I was struck by the intentional seeking of continuity within each worship service. It was clear that each service had a theme, the theme was scripture-bound, the hymns, as good hymns do, proclaimed the text, and the sermons both spoke to the selected text and incorporated the Conference theme in a unique way.

Moderator Jim Hardenbrook not only reminded us of the Conference theme, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus"; he reminded us of the gospel story. Weaving stories of Jesus, he illuminated a natural drama present in the Gospels. By "Fixing our eyes on Jesus," we were reminded of the ebb and flow, ups and downs, give and receive already present in the New Testament. Rather than planning worship like Monty Hall, where what is behind curtains one, two, and three have nothing to do with one another and are just for show, the different and often varied elements of worship were tied together by our greatest spiritual commitment, the New Testament.

Tom Long, Bandy Professor of Preaching at Candler School of Theology, notes that vital worship makes visible the drama inherent in Christian worship while creating sacred space for the mystery of God. Conferencegoers were reminded of God's mystery every time the Christ candle was lit. The presence of the lit candle centered us and, for a short time, gifted the large room with intimacy. We were together, in God's presence, to worship.

In our opening to God's mystery we see God's embrace. This embrace, knowing God's grace, is then shared with others, creating a sense of belonging through the gift of hospitality. This year's use of multimedia invited greater participation, particularly for those unfamiliar with the different songs, prayers, calls to worship, and biblical text.

I knew many of the old hymns, but having the music up where I could see it gave me a sense of belonging at times when the musical style was unfamiliar. The words invited my participation, and the eclectic style planned into each worship added to the worship experience rather than distracted because it was done with excellence. I admit I didn't sing every song with the same committed gusto as "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," but that had more to do with my singing than with the leadership of the musicians. Their commitment and excellence invited me to try something new. And because there was connection with a larger theme, even though a

song was unfamiliar, I knew why I was singing.

Congregational singing at Annual Conference is always wonderful. It is during congregational singing that the arena is transformed into a church. The walls come closer, the separation of the seats disappear, and, like our many voices, the closeness of worship fills what is a vast and open space. In many ways, the music reminds of us who we are, who we have been, and the transformation that is happening as God moves in our midst. Worship is about remembering and then moving; moving from the invitation to be in worship to being sent out with blessing and in celebration.

Sandy Bosserman, district executive of Missouri/Arkansas, reminded us why we are sent from worship with a blessing. It is because of the commitment we made when we were first baptized. In my remembering of that special moment, I celebrated the life to

which I have been called, and I was made ready to celebrate our Christian vocation. And celebrate we did, as we stood up and claimed our identity in Christ.

Anastacia Bueno Beltre of the Church of the Brethren in the Dominican Republic, with her strong presence and enthusiastic pattern of speech, encouraged us to run with perseverance the race that is set before us. Her strong leadership was inspiring and illustrated the power of conviction. Her presence and conviction spoke to the power of God's Spirit.

Galen Hackman, pastor of Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, asked us to remember. He asked us to remember our mission and our focus. Then, in Wednesday's closing worship, the mission of the church was seen, heard, and shared. Through the use of vibrant images cast upon the large screens, the arena was nearly dominated by the cross and then filled with the images of creation illustrating God's gift of abundant life. The drama of worship flowed in and out of a three-part message as Chris Douglas, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the General Board, encouraged us to not lose heart as we fix our eyes on Jesus.

Good music, good preaching, good singing wrapped tightly with one theme: "Fixing our eyes on Jesus." Worship engaged, challenged, and strengthened our faith in such a way that our response might be known by the manner of our living. **W**

"The abundant life that Jesus invited people to is a way of life that is deeply centered in Jesus and grounded in God." —Chris Douglas, Wednesday morning worship

Worshippers were invited to pray with each other during the closing service of the Conference. Hannah Button-Harrison, left, and Sarah Neher join hands in prayer.



Jeff Carter is pastor of Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

Speakers challenge Brethren to reach out

by Eric Miller

Meal events, insight sessions provide ample opportunities to hear viewpoints

Speakers provided food for thought at meal events and insight sessions during Annual Conference, with many saying that the Church of the Brethren has much to offer the larger church and the world.

Brian McLaren, a pastor and author of several popular books, spoke at two standing-room-only insight sessions and a dinner sponsored by Congregational Life

Ministries. He discussed the church in the postmodern age not as a church that needs to abandon gospel truths, but as a church that needs to free itself of understandings that were wrongly tied to the Gospels in the past.

He shared his vision of a church that remembers not only that we have been blessed by God, but also that we are blessed in order that we may be a blessing to all nations. Our faith needs to focus not just on ourselves, or on following the rules, but on the church and the world. The church should rediscover the gospel: that "the Kingdom of God is at hand."

McLaren stressed the importance of remembering this, realizing its critical importance to the world and that our role as believers is to get out and save the world from evil and sin. "It calls for courageous, radical, world-changing people who are willing to sacri-

fy to make the world a better place. What would happen," he asked, "if people who believe in peace were actually to act as if the world depends on their getting out that message?"

"What would happen, if people who believe in peace were actually to act as if the world depends on their getting out that message?." —Brian McLaren

The world is shaping the church, so we should be asking how we can form a church where the church is instead influencing the world. He noted that you need a king to have a kingdom. He challenged liberals who believe in the kingdom, but not in the king, or who believe the problem in the world is just that we are not nice enough: "If the world is in trouble because of just a lack of niceness, then that isn't enough," he said.

On the other hand, McLaren said that conservatives believe in the king, but there is no kingdom until you die. "It's convenient," he said. "There's not a lot of work to do" if you believe that. He noted that Brethren bring together a focus on the King (Pietism) with a focus on the Kingdom (Anabaptism). He also noted that much of what may be needed is getting back to simplicities. McLaren pointed out that "Alexander Mack said to boil it down to 'Love God and love one another.' "

. . . .

Stewart Hoover, a journalism professor at the University of Colorado, addressed an audience of about 250 people at the MESSENGER dinner. Speaking on "Religion in the Media Age," he traced the impact of the media in shaping our religious thinking today. While lamenting the trivialization of the Christian message that can happen in the media, he also noted that "these media are a central place where we work out our place in society."

Religion has always been marketed, but Hoover noted that "increasingly it is the marketed pieces that we commonly know as religion" and that what we discuss about religion is increasingly something that can be described in "one sentence over lunch."

In this environment, he said, "Distinctiveness is more important than ever." In 1957, this was expressed by beards, dark clothes, and positions on war and service. Who we are today is as important a question as ever. Hoover also noted that people across the religious spectrum watch the same amount of television and watch the same programs. *The Simpsons* was the most-often-referred-to program with religious content in his research, and televangelists were not popular with any group, including conservatives. We are strongly influenced by the same forces and media influences that are impacting the rest of society, and it is important to be aware of them, Hoover said.



Hannah Edwards

The influence of media on religion was the topic of a presentation by Stewart Hoover at the Messenger dinner. Hoover teaches journalism at the University of Colorado.



Hannah Edwards



Jesse Reid

At the Brethren Press breakfast, former Bethany Theological Seminary professor Bob Neff interviewed former colleague Dale Brown about Brown's new book, *Another Way of Believing*.

Brown presented a very distinctive view of the Brethren, with a theology focusing on relationships rather than propositions, a people who combine emphasis on love from Pietism and on discipleship from Anabaptism. The relational focus was evident from the first Annual Conference, when a conflict was addressed with the conclusion, "We should all have more patience with each other." Later, a member of another Brethren body said of the Church of the Brethren, "You have so many differences, but you act happy to see each other!"

Brown defended the peace position of the Church of the Brethren, saying that while we don't coerce anyone, we have no excuse to exist if we are not a peace church. Brown said that he wants to bring people into the church, "but the basic is to be faithful . . . and we might lose a lot or we might gain a lot of people as a result. I've never been impressed by Madison Avenue techniques. We should stick to what we do best: to love and to serve." He also noted that many outsiders understand Brethren better than Brethren understand themselves.

. . . .

Brethren minister Jim Myer spoke at an insight session sponsored by Brethren Revival Fellowship (BRF) titled, "What would Jesus say to the Brethren?" He addressed the group in the format of "Beatitudes for the Brethren," beginning with "Blessed are the Brethren who are very cautious about thinking they can speak for me."

Myer noted that he did not choose the title of the session and that he could make it sound like Jesus joined the BRF Committee, but was not sure that is what Jesus would say.

In the imagined beatitudes, Myer stressed the value of continual repentance, understanding that God is a holy God, reflecting Brethren heritage, knowing that peace involves more than not being a soldier, being diligent about fulfilling the Great Commission, and knowing that God still loves us.

Speaking of God's holiness, Myer said that Jesus

might remind us that we are standing on holy ground, and that even a quarter-inch of shoe leather is too much to place between ourselves and that experience of God. He said Jesus might remind us that we are a nation at war, and that the world has squeezed us into its mold.

On Brethren heritage, Myer said, "I may sound different than some voices that say all we need is Jesus, we don't need our heritage, but Jesus never said forget Moses or the Jewish tradition. I think Jesus likes our heritage." Myer also noted that we need to find new ways to go out into the world and save souls, instead of building comfortable churches and expecting people to come to us.

He concluded his presentation by saying, "I submit to you that Jesus still has a message for the Church of the Brethren." That message could well sum up any of the diverse messages heard in a sampling of insight sessions at Annual Conference in Peoria, along with Matthew 5:13: "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled by men," a verse cited by both McLaren and Myer.

. . . .

Although the speakers represented approaches from left and right, Brethren and those of other denominations, academics and pastors, there was much common ground. There was a common theme that the Brethren need to understand the influences of the world—not to become like the world, but in order to reach out to the world and offer its people hope.

The various speakers stressed the importance of staying on message, being obedient, being distinctive, and sharing our vision of the gospel with the world. They held up the Brethren heritage and peace witness not as distractions from the gospel, but as a faithful witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Perhaps Jesus really was speaking to us at Annual Conference in Peoria. ❧

Eric Miller is a member of Pittsburgh (Pa.) Church of the Brethren currently living in New Haven, Conn. He works for the Yale Law School.

*Above left: Bob Neff (left) and Dale Brown, former colleagues at Bethany Theological Seminary, share a conversation about Brown's new book, *Another Way of Believing*, at the Brethren Press breakfast.*

Above right: Brian McLaren, a pastor and author of several popular books, speaks at the Congregational Life Ministries dinner, among other events.



Hannah Edwards

Myra Martin-Adkins and Will Patch enjoy a games night, one of the young adult activities offered in Peoria.

Walkcamp

Walk this way by Walt Wiltschek

Youth workcampers endure difficult conditions to raise relief funds

So, what did you do on your summer vacation? Ten senior high youth and six advisors can tell about the 100 miles they walked across central Illinois in late June.

One of the two dozen-plus workcamps offered this summer by the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office, the "Walk Across America" workcamp was unique. Rather than working on a specific hands-on project, participants gathered sponsors in advance of the walk, with proceeds going to the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund and Emergency Disaster Fund.

"That's kind of what drew me to it," said Keith Morphew of New Paris, Ind., who had been to several traditional workcamps in past years. "It was very atypical." Three days into the walk, he noted another difference from other workcamps, as well: "It's definitely more tiring."

The group hit a hot week to walk, with temperatures in the 90s most of the week and reaching 105 degrees one day. The trek began in Beardstown, Ill., and ended amid applauding onlookers outside the Civic Center at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Peoria.

In between were many grueling miles and many early-morning stops, with overnight stops at Camp Emmanuel, Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, and several other churches.

"I thought it would be easy, but it's not," said Nell Smith of Bakersville, N.C. "It's hot, it's tiring, but the people who are here make it really worthwhile."

"I didn't think it would be this hard," echoed her friend, Caleb Mitcler, of Green Mountain, N.C. "But I love walking. That's what I do for fun, and we're helping other people, too."

Some unexpected blessings helped to spur on the walkers. During a rest stop on that 105-degree day, a woman came out of her house and offered them raisins, drinks, and other snacks. When she heard what they were doing, she gave them \$100, too, and asked to pray with them. Later, a man pulled over and took out two 20-dollar bills and a five to donate.

That night, a men's group at a Methodist host church made a huge grill dinner for the workcampers; later in the week a youth group at another Methodist church brought them dinner and took them swim-



Walt Wiltschek

The walking workcamp identified itself with the Church of the Brethren via signs carried along the 100 miles of road between Beardstown and Peoria, Ill. Harry Rhodes, right, one of the workcamp directors, walking with Miles Smith, left, and Reid Merryman, carried his share of the burden during the week.

ming. Elsewhere, a man brought cold water bottles out for everyone in the group as they rested under a tree in his front yard. His sister, as it turned out, was a member of the Church of the Brethren.

The advance pledges plus the cash gifts along the way added up to more than \$4,000 in donations for the two special funds. Original plans to walk alongside long-term Walk Across America walker Don Vermilyea didn't work out, but that didn't dampen the walkers' resolve. Becky Rhodes of Roanoke, Va., who served as director of the workcamp along with her husband, Harry, said she was proud of the effort the youth displayed.

"They're very dedicated. They're persevering," she said while walking midway through the week. "They're very serious about it. People gave them money to do this, and they're bound and determined to do it."

It had some life-changing effects, too. James Funkhouser of Warrenton, Va., said he almost didn't go on a workcamp this year until he spotted the walk. Despite heat exhaustion and blistered feet, he said doing the workcamp helped him sort out his college choices, his calling, and other issues.

"I was able to reflect and answer a lot of questions," he said. "If you have a problem or questions, take a walk. Take a long walk; get close and dirty with God's creation, and he'll come down to you. You can talk to him for a while."

As for the workcamp as a whole: "I think it went beyond what I could have ever expected," Funkhouser said. "I've never grown quite that close to people in a workcamp, because you had to depend on them for everything. That verse of walking the extra mile has a whole new meaning now." 

Walt Wiltschek is editor of MESSENGER. He joined the workcamp group for 10 miles on one day of their walk.



Eddie Edmonds

"Walkcampers," including this group from Southeastern District, seem happy to be done with their trek on arrival in Peoria.

Brethren gather to sing, pray, and share in words and silence at the peace vigil organized by the Brethren Witness/Washington Office of the General Board.

Reflection

When Annual Conference comes home

by Wendy Matheny

For many in the Church of the Brethren, going to Annual Conference is a lot like going home—that one place where you can feel warm and comfy, surrounded by 3,000 to 5,000 of your closest friends and family singing four-part harmony on “Move in Our Midst” (You know, a typical Saturday afternoon sitting on the front porch . . .). But what happens when going to Annual Conference really *is* going home?

Conference has always been an exciting part of my summer: a chance to catch up with old friends, an excuse to eat as much ice cream as possible in the name of “good fellowship,” and a wonderful opportunity to learn more about the denomination that I love so dearly. All of my expectations were met at this year’s Conference, but oh, how things change when the annual Brethren shindig comes to you. At long last I didn’t have to explain to anyone where on God’s green earth I came from because we were in my hometown.

For the past 10 years of my Conference-going, whenever I tried to explain where I was from, the conversation generally boiled down to something along the lines of: “I’m from Peoria, not Elgin. . . . No, it’s not really that close to Chicago. . . . Peoria’s sort of in between St. Louis and Chicago; well, it’s about the only thing between St. Louis and Chicago.” But not this year! Peoria is now known from Jos to Hershey and Glendale to São Paulo and has finally found its place on Brethren maps the world over!

Arriving at home in Peoria, I quickly learned just how different Conference was going to be for me this year. Although the buildings and streets were relatively familiar, everything changes when the Brethren come to town. Not only were others giving me directions to local hotels and restaurants (directions that I should have been giving them), but folks who had been in town for two or three days had already spent more time in my hometown than I had in the past six months! Two of the most comfortable aspects of my life, “home” and Annual Conference, had finally found their way to the same locale, only to confound me when neither seemed to fit the image in my head.

Coming to terms with the fact that Annual Conference really was “playing in Peoria,” I began to recognize the rapid “Brethrenization” of my hometown. The usually bustling downtown streets were emptied of locals during the 4th of July weekend and replaced by folks with colorful name tags, cars with peace-loving bumper stickers, and countless friendly faces in every direction. The suits, ties, and briefcases that normally swarm around City Hall transformed into T-shirts, shorts, and bare feet chasing after a frisbee on the fly. And most startling of all, “Brethren beards” and white prayer caps could be found at almost every corner in the downtown area! As the weekend rolled into the

new week, downtown Peoria had officially become the temporary capital of all things Brethren—an honor the Elginites were willing to grant us, just this once.

Although the week seemed to fly by, each day held something new. One friend informed me that Peoria wasn’t as “podunk” as he had imagined it to be—



Dale Sreese

good for us! Another noted the surprising array of international restaurants not too far off the beaten path. Many inquired about grocery stores and non-chain restaurants while others simply wanted to know where to find a quiet park. I found myself fielding all sorts of questions—everything from riverfront activities to Peoria’s poverty rates—and without fail, someone was always asking a new question I’d never even considered before. After four days of serving as an ad-hoc information center, I realized that when the Brethren come to town, they go to town!

These Brethren don’t just eat, sleep, and meet at Conference; they become a part of the surrounding community. The junior and senior high youth volunteered at local parks and schools. More than 100 people donated blood through the local Red Cross. The Brethren Witness/Washington Office peace vigil attracted more than just the eyes and ears of Conferencegoers, while the senior high workcamp (who walked 100 miles to get to Peoria!) called attention to issues greater than their miles walked. Unlike so many other conferences and conventions that come to Peoria, the Brethren sought out homeless people looking for a meal; they picked up trash along the road; they asked strangers how their day was going and actually waited for the answer.

It’s not every day that you get to literally go home to Annual Conference, but what an experience it is when it happens! I definitely enjoyed sleeping in my own bed and having a six-minute commute in the morning, but more than that, I relished the chance to welcome the Church of the Brethren to my home. I don’t know how the folks in Iowa are preparing for next year’s gathering, but get ready for some fun when you, too, get to come home to Annual Conference. **W**

Wendy Matheny, a proud Peorian, is a member of Peoria Church of the Brethren. She graduated from Manchester College this past spring.



Ruth:

An uncommon story in an ordinary village

by Eugene F. Roop

The story of Ruth has charmed readers throughout the centuries: the sights and sounds of village life at harvest time; the sweat of those cutting the grain by scythe or sickle; the shouts of children and the chatter of women gathering the grain; the smell of freshly cut barley and freshly baked bread. That village life has virtually disappeared in the US, but not for the Brethren in Nigeria, India, Brazil, the Caribbean islands—and not in our imagination.

The relationship between Naomi and her daughter-in-law inspires conversation about friendship between women, about the relationship between mothers and the wives of their sons, about

intimacies that cross ethnic, national, and racial boundaries. The narrative of Ruth is one of those long-ago stories that never grows old.

Home and away

This short story falls naturally into four scenes, corresponding to four chapters in the Bible. The first scene (chapter 1) describes the misery resulting from several “natural” disasters. The story opens with a famine that forces a Hebrew family to flee across the border to Moab, their long-time enemy. Two Hebrew sons married local women. Astonishingly all the men died, the father and both sons, leaving Naomi

with two Moabite daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth!

Hearing that the drought in Bethlehem was over, Naomi resolved to return home. She convinced Orpah to stay in Moab, her native land, but Ruth insisted on joining Naomi on the journey to Bethlehem. Arriving home Naomi made sure the village women knew of her anger at God for the deaths that had destroyed her life.

The barley fields

In scene two (chapter 2) the narrator moves the focus to the barley fields with workers harvesting. Determined to do something about their plight,



Ruth went to the field to gather some of the “dropped” grain.

As it happened Ruth arrived at the field of Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi. Being a Moabite in a Hebrew village was not an advantage! Nevertheless Boaz, the landowner, made sure that Ruth was protected from inappropriate actions by the field hands. Boaz also made sure this young foreigner had grain to take home. An astonished Naomi was ecstatic with the grain Ruth brought home.

The threshing floor

The third scene (chapter 3) shifts to the threshing floor. Convinced that they would have enough food, Naomi decided to do something about the long-term security of the family. She directed Ruth to get dressed up and go to the party that accompanied threshing and winnowing the newly harvested grain.

The narrator keeps us far away from the drama that followed. Arriving at the party, Ruth hid and followed Boaz where he would lay down for the night. In the dark of night Ruth’s presence beside him startled Boaz awake. Never shy, Ruth told Boaz that she wanted his “protection.” Boaz agreed to do what he could and sent Ruth home before anyone could see them.

The village square

The final scene (chapter 4) takes us to the village square where village elders sit to resolve disputes. Through a shrewd legal maneuver, Boaz convinced Naomi’s nearest relative to surrender any claim to the family inheritance. Then Boaz stepped forward as next in line, choosing to

own disadvantage.

But this is not simply a heroic story. In this narrative God opens the future—not by dramatic intervention, but by quiet participation in the lives of ordinary people: destitute widows, dubious foreigners, and cautious landowners. The crucial drama plays out not on battlefields or in palaces,

In this narrative God opens the future—not by dramatic intervention, but by quiet participation in the lives of ordinary people: destitute widows, dubious foreigners, and cautious landowners. The crucial drama plays out not on battlefields or in palaces, but in grain fields and village squares.

marry Ruth and if possible continue the family “tree.”

In a surprise ending, the child born to this marriage, Obed, became the ancestor of Israel’s legendary king, David!

• • • •

This story of famine, pain, and futility ends with food, pleasure, and fertility. But this is not just a “happily-ever-after story.” The story points to a foreign woman whose compassion, commitment, and courage exceeds that of all the men and women of Bethlehem. It features a man who, though “trapped” in a compromising situation, acts to preserve a branch of the family, even should it work to his

but in grain fields and village squares. The future appears not on a mountaintop announced by thunder and lightning. The future arrives with the birth of a baby in Bethlehem, announced by the women of the village. 

Eugene F. Roop is president of Bethany Theological Seminary. He lives in Richmond, Ind.

MESSENGER’S “Journey through the Word” series will provide a brief overview of a different book (or books) of the Bible each month through December 2009. Coming in October: 1 Samuel, by David Leiter.



RUTH: A CLOSER LOOK

When written: Ruth likely originated as an oral story passed on from generation to generation in the village squares and sanctuaries.

Well known verses: Ruth’s insistence in chapter 1, verses 16-17 that she go with her mother-in-law back to Bethlehem: “Where you go, I will go; where you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die, I will die—there will I be buried. May the LORD do thus and so to me, and more as well, if even death parts me from you!”

Other notes: Ruth is one of only two books of the Bible named for a woman. . . . Boaz and Ruth are noted in the genealogy at the beginning of Matthew’s Gospel as ancestors of Jesus.

'Chicken Soup for the Soul,' peacemaker style

by Audrey Osborne Mazur

Ever wonder if nonviolence is a real solution for real-life problems? Linda Williams knows that it is. And she has more than 1,000 stories, songs, and poems to prove it.

As word spread from friend to friend and eventually around the globe that she and others were collecting stories about peacemaking, Williams says her biggest problem "was selecting from over 1,000 dynamic stories . . . sharing extraordinary experiences of their nonviolent reactions to threatening situations, and about their inner peace under fire." One hundred and one of these stories

now appear in the newly released book, *Chicken Soup for the Soul . . . Stories for a Better World*.

After the murder of an elderly relative and the Columbine school shootings in 1999, Williams—a member of San Diego First Church of the Brethren—felt compelled to take action. She was convinced that a *Chicken Soup for the Soul* book would be the best possible way to bring a message of nonviolence into mainstream culture. Williams proposed the idea to the publishers of the famous series of books and, along with her three co-authors—Dr. Candice C. Carter, Susanna Palomares, and Dr. Bradley Winch—has been hard at work birthing this book ever since.

Health Communications Inc., publisher of the *Chicken Soup for the Soul* series by Jack Canfield and Mark Hansen, calls this a "celebration" book and grants it a place of honor as the 101st book in a series known for books that each contain 101 heart-warming, inspirational stories.

Williams' hope for the book is that "these stories will help all of us imagine how we can make our

world a safe place for our children, help us learn ways to resolve conflicts without violence, and inspire all of us to strive for a world where every individual is treated with respect and compassion."

Inspired by her passion for peace, Williams has written and recorded more than 100 songs on themes related to

conflict resolution and inner peace, and has co-authored a curriculum called "Caring and Capable Kids." She has compiled resources for educators and parents and makes them accessible through the peacemaker.st website. Her respect for children and their capacity as peacemakers shapes her daily interactions as a first-grade reading specialist in an inner-city school. Williams shares her life with her husband, Rob, and daughter, Cherilyn.

Williams may be known most widely from On Earth Peace's popular bumper sticker that borrows a line from one of her songs: "When Jesus said, 'Love your enemies,' I think he probably meant don't kill them."

Many people in Williams' home congregation helped and encouraged her through the *Chicken Soup* book process, which also benefited from the work of volunteers across the denomination.

Those volunteers read and rated stories during the four-year selection process. They helped to narrow down more than 1,000 original submissions to 160 stories from which the publisher then chose 101 for publication. Brethren volunteer readers included Florence Crago, Evelyn Frantz, Susie Glass, Meagan Harlow, Sally Kurzdorfer, Laura Miller, Vernon Mitchell, Jennie Ramirez, Victoria Turner, Cherilyn Williams, and Christine Wills.

One outstanding volunteer, Barbara Smythe of La Verne, Calif., gave thousands of hours to the project. A gifted writer, Smythe submitted her own stories; served as a ghost writer for others' taped interviews; and edited, re-wrote, and polished numerous stories. At one count, Williams' in-box contained more than 560 project-related e-mail messages from Smythe, who provided crucial support throughout the arduous journey to final publication.

Authors with Brethren connections whose stories appear in the final version of the book are Sylvia Boaz Leighton, Crago, Andrew Murray, Gilbert Romero, Smythe, Michael Stern, and Williams. Their stories comprise a significant 12 percent of the book.

Other authors include well-known peace activists and educators George Lakey, James McGinnis, President Jimmy Carter, Howard Zinn, and Thich Nhat Hanh. The majority of stories, however, are by lay people who have found creative and transformative ways to respond to violence in everyday life.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Desmond Tutu wrote a prayer specifically for inclusion in the book. He provides this endorsement: "What a splendid anthology of stories that tell so eloquently how each of us can make a difference as a peacemaker, sometimes spectacularly on the international level, but more often no less spectacularly on an intimate, personal level." 

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

ABOUT THE BOOK:

Release date: August 23, 2005

Price: Paperback \$12.95 (ISBN 0-7573-0312-9)

To purchase: Available through Brethren Press (800-441-3712) or at local bookstores

What they're saying: Thich Nhat Hanh, an internationally renowned Buddhist monk, author, and human rights activist who contributed a story to the book comments, "This collection of stories of real people making the world a better place by practicing non-violence demonstrates that it is always possible to actively cultivate understanding, love, compassion, and forgiveness, even in the face of misperception and conflict. These stories also confirm that practicing non-violence is far from passive, and requires courage."





Olga Tumax cuts cucumbers at her group's greenhouse, where tomatoes and bell peppers also are grown. She said that the women who work at the greenhouse eat the vegetables themselves or grow the produce to make a little income. Tumax represents the Women's Ecumenical Network, a group benefiting from the new Totonacapan Food Security Project in Guatemala.

Denomination is lead sponsor for Guatemalan food program

The Church of the Brethren is the lead sponsor of a new interchurch Food Security Project in Guatemala. Located in Totonacapan, in western Guatemala, the three-year project is aimed at developing food security for 570 Mayan families in 20 rural communities.

Components of the project include diversifying food production, introducing greenhouse and patio garden techniques, training in soil and water management, protecting watersheds and the environment, developing local markets, and strengthening indigenous women's organizations. "Given the small parcels of land and lack of alternatives for compensated work, the Totonacapan project strives not only to introduce sustainable agricultural practices but to strengthen the voice of local peasant groups," said Howard Royer, manager of the General Board's Global Food Crisis Fund.

A coalition formed by Foods Resource Bank and Church World Service has enlisted several Guatemalan partner

agencies, principally the Conference of Evangelical Churches of Guatemala and the National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala. The latter is a grassroots movement of indigenous women widowed during the country's internal armed conflict.

Funding for the first-year grant of \$103,500 includes \$10,000 from the Brethren account in the Foods Resource Bank, from the proceeds of growing projects. Other partners are Christian Reformed World Relief Committee, Evangelical Covenant Church World Relief, Lutheran World Relief, Mennonite Central Committee, United Church of Christ Wider Church Ministries, United Methodist Committee on Relief, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The \$51,800 contributed by the churches is matched by a grant from US AID.

The work in Totonacapan is the first Foods Resource Bank program for which the Church of the Brethren is a lead sponsor. The board has placed volunteers and advocated for peace and human rights in Guatemala for three decades. For information about the Global Food Crisis Fund see www.brethren.org/genbd/global_mission/gfcf.htm.



Samuel Bowman

Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) unit 264, the annual older adult unit, held orientation April 17-29 in New Windsor, Md. Volunteers, their hometown or home congregation, and assignments are as follows: First row, from left: Sharon Poff, Lewisburg, Pa., to Community Mediation Center, Harrisonburg, Va.; Kay Billhimer, Monitor Community Church of the Brethren, McPherson, Kan., to Hopewell Inn, Mesopotamia, Ohio; Linda Hollinger, Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center; Sue Wilkinson, Dallas, Texas, to Su Casa Catholic Worker, Chicago. Second row: Pauline and Don Hess, Mountain View Fellowship Church of the Brethren, Port Republic, Va., to World Friendship Center, Hiroshima, Japan; Steve Hollinger, Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren, to New Windsor (Md.) Conference Center. For more information on BVS, visit www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org.

Sudan trip raises questions, brings unexpected hope

Jim Hardenbrook, Annual Conference moderator, and Phil Jones, director of the General Board's Brethren Witness/Washington Office, were part of a small interfaith delegation that met with Sudan President El-Bashir and others during a visit to Sudan June 6-15. The group spent time in the capital of Khartoum and in north Darfur State, and visited a refugee camp in Darfur.

The trip was made to support the peace process between the northern government and rebels in the South of Sudan (the Comprehensive Peace Agreement scheduled to take effect July 9) and to offer support and encouragement to the people of Darfur. As of mid-June, at least 180,000 people have died in violence in Darfur, and nearly 2 million are homeless, according to the *Christian Science Monitor*.

The delegation was sponsored by the National Black Leadership Roundtable and the Muslim American Society Freedom Foundation. Hardenbrook and Jones were Christian representatives on

the delegation, which also included Muslim and Jewish members. It was led by Roundtable president the Hon. Walter E. Fauntroy.

The trip was preceded by a briefing with Charles Snyder, US State Department undersecretary of state for Sudan. Because of its interfaith makeup, "This may be the most important delegation from the US ever sent to Sudan," Snyder told the group.

In addition to El-Bashir, the delegation met with other officials of the government in Khartoum, state officials in Darfur, nongovernmental organizations, officials of the African Union, officials of the United Nations, and representatives of the Sudanese People's Liberation Movement (SPLM) from southern Sudan. In most official meetings the group was accompanied by two representatives of the Sudan government. "It would be fair to characterize the trip as flavored by the government of Sudan perspective," Hardenbrook said.

The group reconnected with a New Sudan Council of Churches friend as it met with SPLM. Awut Deng Acuil,



Becky Maurer

Bethany Seminary celebrates 100th commencement

Bethany Theological Seminary celebrated its 100th commencement on May 7 in Richmond, Ind. A ceremony for conferring degrees was held at Bethany's Nicarry Chapel, and a worship celebration took place at Richmond Church of the Brethren.

President Eugene Roop welcomed graduates, family, and friends to the landmark commencement. "Please know that as you carry Bethany with you, you have affected Bethany whether that influence be obvious or subtle," he told the graduates. "You join a century-long company of students who have shaped as well as been shaped by Bethany."

Fumitaka Matsuoka spoke at the degrees ceremony, encouraging graduates to ask the question, "How do I live out God's vision?" Matsuoka is professor of theology and executive director of the Institute for Leadership Development and Study of Pacific and Asian North American Religion at Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley, Calif, and a 1969 Bethany graduate. He served as academic dean at Bethany from 1987-1992. His address, "An Unmasking

Bethany Theological Seminary graduated 13 students at its 100th anniversary commencement ceremony May 7 in Richmond, Ind. First row: Pearl Rebecca Rohrer of Richmond, Ind. (MDiv); Lutricia L. Zerfing of New Paris, Ohio (MATH); Kay E. Gaier of North Manchester, Ind. (MDiv). **Second row:** Ann M. Bach of Richmond, Ind. (MDiv); Tracy Ann Knechel of Dayton, Ohio (MDiv); Jon Keller of Greenville, Ohio (CATS); Deborah E. Romary of Fort Wayne, Ind. (MATH). **Third row:** Todd Reish of Richmond, Ind. (MDiv); James Zerfing of Lancaster, Pa. (MDiv); Evan Benjamin Garber of Weyers Cave, Va. (MDiv); John Sgro of Decatur, Ind. (MDiv); James Kent Risser of Lewiston, Minn. (MDiv). **Not pictured:** Connie M. Maclay of Mapleton Depot, Pa. (MDiv). Risser is Bethany's first graduate to receive both of the seminary's degree emphases of Peace Studies and Ministry with Youth and Young Adults. Maclay was awarded distinction in Biblical Studies. Knechel and Gaier were awarded distinction in Ministry Studies.

Experience," was based on Isaiah 6:1-9.

Tara Hornbacker gave the message, "Against the Flow," for the worship celebration. She asked graduates to take a fresh look at Romans 12:9-21. "The scripture reminds us that transformation has

its origin and its goal in God," she said.

Ten students received master of divinity degrees, two received master of arts in theology degrees, and one received a certificate of achievement in theological studies. (See photo caption for a listing of graduates.)

who spoke at the 2001 Annual Conference, is now a member of the SPLM leadership team with special focus on women and children. "She reminded me of the close and important ties that the Church of the Brethren has with the South of Sudan," Jones said.

The visit to the El Fashir refugee camp in Darfur was "a very short and in some ways very unsatisfactory visit," Hardenbrook said. Some 70,000 people live in the camp. "This might be the government's 'show camp,'" Hardenbrook said, adding that there was a sense of peace and security, and the delegation saw that wells, schools, and food were available but there was no electricity.

"I'd love to go back in a month with my list of questions," Hardenbrook said, "and to be more forceful in saying God's not happy with how his children are being treated" in Darfur. The trip raised more questions than it brought answers for Hardenbrook, who said he also has been disconcerted by the fact that he came away hopeful.

The sense of hope came despite finding the situation in Darfur "is awful, it really is," Hardenbrook said. "But it might not be genocide. Underline the word 'might,'" he added. "The UN is not using that term." The delegation's conversations led him to a new understanding of the roots of the conflict, in long-term ethnic and lifestyle tensions in the region.

The meeting with President El-Bashir was a surprise for Jones, who last fall was arrested in front of the Sudanese embassy in Washington, D.C., during a rally calling attention to the violence in Darfur. "I never envisioned that I would be given complete access to the president of Sudan in his Khartoum office," Jones said. "The message was the same there as here: The Church of the Brethren holds dear the sacred life of all people and implores nations and their leaders to seek peaceful means to the many things that divide us."

The delegation made a practice of asking to pray together at the end of each meeting, Hardenbrook said. President El-Bashir accepted the group's offer, and they joined hands as Fauntroy prayed. "That was very powerful," Hardenbrook said.

A full report from the delegation is available; e-mail Phil Jones at pjones_gb@brethren.org, or call the Brethren Witness/Washington Office at 800-785-3246.



Phil Jones

Jim Hardenbrook, right, 2005 Annual Conference moderator, visited the El Fashir refugee camp in Darfur, Sudan, on an interfaith delegation that also met with Sudan's President El-Bashir. Also on the delegation was Phil Jones, director of the General Board's Brethren Witness/Washington Office.

Personnel moves

- **Beth Burnette** will serve as promotions specialist for MESSENGER beginning about Oct. 1. This is a part-time, temporary position funded for two years through special gifts to the MESSENGER anniversary fund. Burnette will work primarily from her home in St. Charles, Ill. A member of York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill., she retired in June as administrative assistant for Illinois/Wisconsin District and as York Center's Christian education director.

- **Susie Farahat** joined the staff of On Earth Peace in August as coordinator of peacemaker formation. She will oversee an extensive peace education program that serves all ages, with an emphasis on youth and young adults. Farahat is a member of York Center Church of the Brethren and a recent graduate of Bryn Mawr (Pa.) College. She will be based at the New Windsor (Md.) office of On Earth Peace.

- **Tim Hissong** has been appointed president and chief executive officer of the Brethren Retirement Community in Greenville, Ohio, where he served for the past 13 years as vice president of finance and treasurer. He holds an MBA in management from Wright State University and is a registered housing professional and a licensed nursing home administrator. He is board chair of Southern Ohio District and Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Clayton, Ohio.

- **Carol Yeazell** is serving as interim full-time coordinator for the General Board's Area 3 Congregational Life Team. She has been part-time CLT staff for Area 3, which includes the districts of Atlantic Southeast, Shenandoah, Southeastern, Virginia, and West Marva.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Sept. 3-4 Idaho District Conference, Camp Wilbur Stover, New Meadows, Idaho

Sept. 4 Brethren Press Fall curriculum quarter begins

Sept. 7-8 On Earth Peace board meeting

Sept. 8-11 Seeking Peace: The Courage to Be Nonviolent, Indianapolis, Ind.

Sept. 9-10 South/Central Indiana District Conference, Beech Grove Church of the Brethren, Pendleton, Ind.

Sept. 10 Brethren Revival Fellowship General Meeting, Mount Pleasant Church of the Brethren, North Canton, Ohio

Sept. 11 Bethany Theological Seminary Emphasis Sunday

Sept. 16-17 Northern Indiana District Conference, Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren, Fort Wayne, Ind.

Sept. 16-17 Southern Pennsylvania District Conference, Ridge Church of the Brethren, Shippensburg, Pa.

Sept. 16-17 West Marva District Conference, Moorefield (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren

Sept. 23-25 Association of Brethren Caregivers board meeting, Elgin, Ill.

Sept. 25-Oct. 14 Brethren Volunteer Service Unit 267, New Windsor, Md.

Sept. 27-30 Bethany Theological Seminary Heritage Bus Tour

CONFERENCE ON WORLD MISSION AND EVANGELISM

by Carol Spicher Waggy

"Come, Holy Spirit, heal and reconcile."

This prayer of invitation was the theme for the World Council of Churches (WCC) Conference on World Mission and Evangelism held near Athens, Greece, in May. As the Church of the Brethren representative, I was excited to participate in this international gathering of Christians to discuss mission in relation to healing and reconciliation, and to worship with ecumenical brothers and sisters.

The conference was hosted by the Orthodox Church of Greece, and the influence of orthodoxy was evidenced in the many flowing black robes, the liturgy and songs, and, sadly, the inability for participants to share together in the bread and cup. In addition to WCC member church representatives, invited delegates came from Pentecostal churches and from the Roman Catholic Church.

I delighted in the rainbow of human diversity: skin color, languages, cultures. Every day was scheduled full of worship, plenary sessions, workshops, and "home group" meetings. I led my home group in the morning *lectio divina* exercise. The scripture was read slowly three different times by different people, and followed each time by silence. After the first reading we shared words or phrases from the text that stood out for us. After the second reading we shared how the text related to us personally. Following the third reading, we shared a prayer or reflection.

My home group included a Romanian Orthodox priest, a theologian from Norway, a Swedish theological professor, a retired nurse from the Lesotho Evangelical Church, a Greek Orthodox layman, a Syrian Orthodox female physician from India, a Disciples of Christ seminary dean from St. Louis, and a Romanian Orthodox seminary student. The relationships in this group became very important to each of us. One shared, "I thought I would become homesick, but I did not because I came back to my home group every evening."

Unlike previous conferences on world mission and evangelism, this conference did not spend much of its time hammering out the wording of an official statement. We did try to agree on a message to the churches, but there was insufficient time to come to consensus on exact wording, so the message was sent to a WCC commission for final wording on behalf of the delegates. Delegates were each able to make their suggestions in writing to the commission.

This year is the halfway point of the Decade to Overcome Violence (DOV), and the youth delegates assisted with a short drama to intro-



World Council of Churches

A "receiving the cross" ceremony took place during the Conference on World Mission and Evangelism sponsored by the World Council of Churches in Athens, Greece, in May.

duce the DOV report. DOV is a commitment, a choice, and an invitation to all Christian churches to refuse violence as a way of life. We were encouraged to go beyond naming, analyzing, and unintentional promoting of violence to overcoming it. The unhelpful confusion of violence and conflict, often by the media, was noted. As one who works in conflict resolution, I had to agree. Whereas violence in all its forms is not good, conflict is a given and can be used profitably to move a group or relationship forward.

I am grateful to the Church of the Brethren for offering me this experience. I return with a renewed vision for the ecumenical church and of the need for healing, reconciliation, and peacemaking to be part of our work of carrying out God's mission in the world.

Carol Spicher Waggy is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. She served on the steering committee for the Church of the Brethren Mission Alive 2005 conference. She went to Greece via the General Board Global Mission Partnerships office.

Recent grants from the General Board's **Emergency Disaster Fund**

- \$75,000 for Church World Service (CWS) work in the wake of an earthquake in Nias, Indonesia
- \$50,000 to CWS for those affected by violence in Darfur, Sudan. (In the past 18 months a total of \$181,500 has been given from the EDF for relief work in Darfur and southern Sudan.)
- \$25,000 for a continuing hurricane recovery project of Brethren Disaster Response in Florida
- \$15,000 for a Brethren Disaster Response tornado recovery project in Hallam, Neb., which was scheduled to close Aug. 6
- \$15,000 for a new Brethren Disaster Response project in Belmont County, Ohio, following flooding
- \$5,000 to CWS for work following severe storm damage and flooding in several states in the Northeast and South

Growing Faithful Disciples resource now available

A new Brethren resource for congregations, called "Growing Faithful Disciples," has been distributed to districts following a two-year pilot run in Middle Pennsylvania District. The CD resource is by a broad range of writers, including many Brethren, and was developed jointly by staff of Middle Pennsylvania and the Congregational Life Teams (CLT) of the General Board.

The resource is available to Brethren congregations at no cost. "Each district may choose to distribute and supplement the material . . . in the fashion that best serves specific needs and interests," Area 1 (Northeast) CLT coordinator Jan Glass King says.

CLT staff responded to an idea birthed at a Middle Pennsylvania District conference by creating and compiling resources to help shape and strengthen faithful discipleship. Designed around four areas of discipleship—worship, community, stewardship of God's grace, and missions/outreach—the material includes Bible studies, resources for children and youth, small group studies, tools for implementation, and hands-on approaches for congregations.

Each unit includes a historical perspective, Anabaptist in nature. Congregational process pieces address topics such as worship teams, creating safe spaces in a congregation, building and maintaining small groups, spiritual gifts discernment, the purpose and vision of congregations, and the "missional church" approach. Resources include music for congregations and choirs, Internet resources, ways to be involved in mission, and resources for inviting and welcoming new people.

Spiritual formation pieces explore prayer, spiritual disciplines, mentor-driven ministry, and children's resources. Writers include current and former faculty at Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren pastors, and General Board staff, among others.

"Growing Faithful Disciples was not written to be a quick fix but has the potential to be the beginning of an examination of congregational faithfulness in responding to the question: 'How are we doing at fulfilling the purpose for which Christ calls us?' " King says. For a preview of the resource, contact your district, call 888-411-4275, or e-mail jking_gb@brethren.org.

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CANADIAN MARITIME PROVINCES (August 5-14)
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'Hotel Rwanda': How do we respond to hate?

There's one movie theater in Bedford County, Pa., where I live. It shows one movie at a time, and you can see it whenever you want as long as you want to see it at 7:30 p.m. We had *Madagascar* for three weeks, but



FRANK RAMIREZ

Star Wars: Revenge of the Sith for only one week. There's neither rhyme nor reason.

One thing is certain: A movie like *Hotel Rwanda* is not coming to my local theater. Or anywhere else in a two-hour radius. If you want to see movies like this you have to wait for the DVD.

Hotel Rwanda is worth buying or renting. Directed by Terry George and written by George and Keir Pearson, it is a compelling, moving, breathing, living film that tells an unforgettable story about human bravery in the midst of chaos and genocide.

The movie is set during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, when a million Tutsi were murdered one by one, most often with a machete, by the Hutu. It tells the story of Paul Rusesabagina, himself a Hutu, who cannot save a

story. The authenticity of the characters was guaranteed in part by the writers' commitment to research and accuracy and by Rusesabagina himself, who served as a consultant to the film.

The film reminds us that Western nations did virtually nothing to stop the murders, even though they happened in full view of the world. Genocide is generally not a secret. The people on whom atrocities are inflicted know all about it. In the case of most of the major genocides of the past century, the world is aware as well. The words "never again" have been said after each major genocide, yet the horrors happen, again and again.

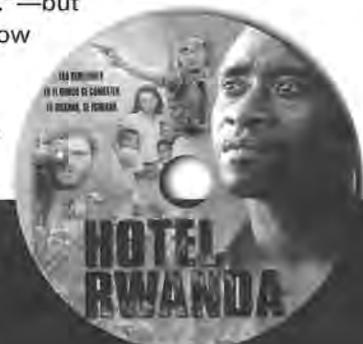
It was the Brethren response to genocide that drew us into larger Christian circles in the early years of the 20th century. We sent both money and aid workers to help relieve the suffering of the Armenians at the hands of the Turks, and our own Evelyn Trostle can be named alongside Paul Rusesabagina, Oskar Schindler, Raoul Wallenberg, and pretty much the entire Danish nation, as one who risked life and limb to stand up to evil and save the lives of as many as possible.

At the start of the film Rusesabagina witnesses the beating of a Tutsi but does nothing at that time because,

as he explains to his wife—herself a Tutsi—he must look to saving his family first, because that's all that matters. By the end of the film he has taught us that he was right—but that everyone is a member of our family, the human family.

And that's the essence of what Jesus taught when he was asked who are our neighbors. Whether we call someone a Samaritan, Tutsi, or Iraqi, our neighbor is the least likely and most obvious person in our lives. And once more as Jesus taught, "Whatever we do for the least of these we do for . . ."—but you're Brethren, so you know the rest of the verse. 

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



WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING

"A story so powerful it can't help but speak to both the heart and the conscience."—Robert Denerstein, *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, Colo.)

"The film defines how, using cunning and courage, a person can change the course of history—and stand up to the inhumanity in our midst."—Paul Clinton, CNN

million people but contrives to save 1,200 in the five-star hotel he manages. Played by Don Cheadle, who richly deserved the Academy Award nomination he garnered for the role, we come to know Rusesabagina as an ordinary man who accomplishes extraordinary things simply because he would rather die than survive because he wouldn't be able to live with himself.

Director George seems to know that we would not be able to stand hours of ruthless killing, so he builds tension by letting us know it is taking place, giving us glimpses, yet all the while focusing on the very human

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Release: The historical drama first appeared in theaters in late December 2004; it was released on DVD and video in April 2005.

Director: Terry George **Rating:** PG-13 **Length:** 2 hours, 1 minute

Awards: The film received 3 Oscar nominations, including Don Cheadle for best actor and Sophie Okonedo for best supporting actress. It won numerous awards in other competitions.

ONCAMPUS



Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Bridgewater and nearby Blue Ridge Community College on June 27 signed a Guaranteed Admission Agreement that will allow students meeting certain requirements to transfer directly from the community college to Bridgewater's bachelor's degree program.



Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

Religion and violence in Africa was the topic of this year's Durnbaugh Lectures, presented by Donald E. Miller, professor emeritus of Christian education and ethics at Bethany Theological Seminary. Miller discussed "The Challenge of Being a Peace Church in Africa."



Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata presented four alumni awards June 4 during Alumni Weekend 2005. Daniel O'Sullivan of Mechanicsburg, Pa., was awarded the Harold B. Brumbaugh Alumni Service Award; Friedhelm Wulczyn of Chicago received the Alumni Achievement Award; Todd Emrick of South Deerfield, Mass., received the Young Alumni Achievement Award; and Jeffrey Varnes of York, Pa., received the William E. Swigart Jr. Alumni Humanitarian Award.



University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

The University of La Verne and the City of La Verne have formed a cooperative alliance to benefit local athletes. On June 9, escrow closed on nearly 31 acres of undeveloped land in the southern part of La Verne. The city and the university will jointly hold the largest segment of the property, about 27 acres, splitting the \$2.8 million price tag. Both sides envision developing the area into expanded recreational and athletic facilities.



Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

This past school year, 23 Manchester students trained 121 first-graders and 96 second-graders in conflict resolution skills through Manchester's "Let's Talk It Out" project. The project is part of an Intercultural Communication course taught by associate professor Mary P. Lahman.



McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

The Citation of Merit, recognizing alumni who graduated more than 25 years ago and exhibit extraordinary leadership and selfless service, was presented to five recipients on May 21. Honored were C. LeRoy Doty of Long Beach, Calif.; William J. Goering of McPherson; Winston Goering of Nampa, Idaho; Rex J. Morris of McPherson; and Geraldine S. Tharrington Willcuts of Newberg, Ore.



Walt Wiltschek

Participants in this year's summer workcamps sponsored by the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office covered a lot of ground. The 600-plus participants went to sites in 19 states, Mexico, the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, Brazil, and Guatemala. At left, Alex Otake of Lombard, Ill., works at a Habitat for Humanity project in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Young adults focus on provocation

More than 130 young adults explored the art of provocation at this year's Church of the Brethren Young Adult Conference.

The gathering, held May 27-29 at Camp Woodland Altars near Peebles, Ohio, had as its theme "Provoking Love and Good Deeds," based on Hebrews 10:24. Worship formed the heart of the conference, with three speakers and a drama/multimedia service examining aspects of the theme.

Young adult Jim Stokes-Buckles of Putney, Vt., in the opening service noted Jesus Christ as a model of provocation. "He provoked people by loving those he wasn't supposed to love," Stokes-Buckles said. He challenged young adults to take the lead "at this critical junction of history."

Cliff Kindy, a member of Christian Peacemaker Teams, on Saturday emphasized the need for people to stand up to "empires" that sacrifice the rest of the world for their purposes.

"The Church of the Brethren has a different vision of the world that doesn't depend on diminishing or destroying other people," Kindy said. "It's a noble vision."

Jeff McAvoy and Carrie Fry-Miller performed a drama Saturday evening, interspersed with video clips, and Margo Miller-Royer closed the weekend with a series of reflections on relationships on Sunday. That final service included a time of feetwashing.

Shawn Kirchner and Joseph Helfrich served as music leaders for the weekend; General Board staff members Becky Ullom and Walt Wiltschek were worship coordinators. The annual event is planned by the General Board's Youth/Young Adult Ministry office and its Young Adult Steering Committee.

Other features of the conference included "padare" workshops on a variety of topics, sharing time in small groups, a campfire, open mic coffeehouses, and an upbeat "joyful noise" singing session. An auction raised more than \$200 for the Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund.

Hannah Edwards



A rhythm-filled worship opening brings a smile to the face of Laura Kelsey at this year's Young Adult Conference

Only humans can do tearing

In the MESSENGER issue of June 2005 there is a letter about homosexuality, and the comment is made: "This issue that is tearing at the heart of our denomination."

The truth is, an issue cannot tear at anything. An issue doesn't have hands or nails, it cannot have an intention of harm or well. Human beings are the only ones who can tear at the heart of our spirituality. Yet, there is a truth in the idea that the way some people are responding to this issue is indeed tearing at the heart and spirituali-

The truth is, an issue cannot tear at anything. An issue doesn't have hands or nails, it cannot have an intention of harm or well. Human beings are the only ones who can tear at the heart of our spirituality.

ty of the Church of the Brethren.

Isaiah says that our sins are the color of scarlet and that our hands are full of blood. We bloody our hands when we are tearing at something, trying to squash something, make it conform to our way. In

our hands is death.

In this particular letter to which I make reference, I hear no humility, no seeking of God, no search for wisdom. The minds have been made up, and there is no path but theirs, and from where I sit, that path is not of God.

Eric Volkel-Barno
Springfield, Ill.

Pontius' Puddle



Bible articles are a highlight

I want to thank you very much for the excellent series of articles on books of the Bible. I look forward to getting each of these and reading them. I find that they give a concise overview of each book. Not a huge study, but something to lay groundwork for more in-depth study as desired.

I think this is also important for us as a

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The Association of Brethren Caregivers offers scholarships to nurses in established nursing programs. Candidates must be members of the Church of the Brethren and accepted into a LPN, RN or nursing graduate program. More information about eligibility and application forms are available from the Association of Brethren Caregivers at www.brethren-caregivers.org. Applications must be submitted by April 1 for consideration of scholarships to be awarded for the Fall 2006 academic year.

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



Association of
Brethren Caregivers

For information about nursing scholarships, call the Association of Brethren Caregivers at (800) 323-8039 or visit www.brethren-caregivers.org.

denomination. I'm hoping our church will consider a series of Sunday school classes using the articles as the curriculum. I believe that a more unified understanding of our guidebook can lead to more unity as we select and work on goals, strengthening the "together" part of living the love of Christ, simply and peacefully.

Thanks so much to the authors of these articles for their contributions, and to MESSENGER in general for continuing high standards of religious journalism.

Craig Coble
Elizabethtown, Pa.

How do we best support troops?

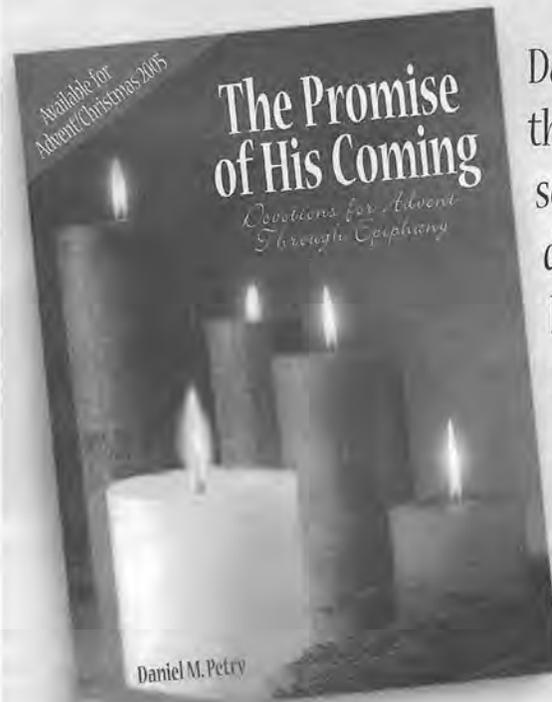
We see signs everywhere that say "SUPPORT OUR TROOPS." What does that mean? I believe it means more than displaying ribbons and flags on our cars.

Well over 1 million soldiers have served in Afghanistan and Iraq since September 11, 2001, according to the Pentagon—a third of those more than once. Twelve thousand troops have been wounded and required medical treatment. A 2004 study published in the *New England Journal of Medicine* pointed out that 17 percent of Iraq veterans exhibited signs of major depression, anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder. However, less than 40 percent of those soldiers sought treatment because of the stigma associated with the illness. Once these veterans return, more than 500,000 expe-

rience homelessness each year.

A recent picture published in *The St. Petersburg Times*, originally from the *Columbus Dispatch*, illustrated the horror we send our young people to face. In the

picture a young soldier is cradling a small child fatally wounded in a car bombing in Iraq. The soldier's face is hidden as he nuzzles the bloody, blanketed child. How can this soldier's heart not be



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broken? How can he recover from this and other horrors he has endured?

The best way to honor our troops is to provide the care they desperately need after they have endured the hell of war. But more important, we must find better ways to solve problems of injustice and cruelty than enticing our young people into preemptive wars that only intensify hatred and violence. Why can't we spend the billions of dollars required to fund a war on discovering better ways to overcome evil? The apostle Paul had a significant suggestion: "Overcome evil with good." Heeding this dictum may just be the best way to honor our troops, and our Lord.

Jean Lersch
Saint Petersburg, Fla.

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PERU, ECUADOR, GALAPAGOS ISLANDS Plan ahead for June 2006 tour to Machu Picchu, the fabled "lost city of the Incas," Lima, Quito, and the colorful Indian markets of equatorial South America. Cruise to the enchanted Galapagos Islands, including Darwin Bay, to view exotic birds and wildlife, including blue-footed boobies, waved albatross, sea lions, iguanas, sea turtles, and the magnificent frigate bird. For information, please write to J. Kenneth Kreider, 1300 Sheaffer Road, Elizabethtown, PA 17022 or kreiderk@etown.edu.

How do you describe something that is beautiful, historical, and enchanting all at the same time? Two words will do it: Angkor Wat. The 900-year-old temple complex is only one of the highlights of a fun and educational travel experience in Cambodia, Thailand, North and South Vietnam, and Singapore. November 1-16, 2005. For information contact: Becky and David Waas, 302 Hickory Lane, N. Manchester IN, 46962. Phone: 260-982-4687 bdwaas@resident.timbercrest.org.

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We at Brethren Press would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us out at Annual Conference. To all of you who helped, from unloading the books to helping customers, to tearing it all down at the end, we are grateful for and humbled by your generosity. Thanks to each and every one of the Brethren Press bookstore volunteers.

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

New Members

Beacon Heights, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Kelly Campbell, Carla Kilgore, Aaron Hollenberg, Emily Hollenberg

Big Swatara, Paxton, Harrisburg, Pa.: Brandon Gornick, Robert Knode, Jon Young

Brook Park Community, Brook Park, Ohio: Tim Duffy, Jane Duffy, Don Horner, III, Maria Kinser, Jennifer Moses, Stephanie Schafner

Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.: Tyler Hipkins, Libi Hipkins, Sean Hudson, Shirley Shanks, Charles Beekley, Linda Beekley, Ed Smith, Betty Smith, Darlene Brunner, Tim Beekley

Cabool, Mo.: Orval Carmichael, Marci Lankert, Ed Anck, Joan Anck, Barbara Smith

Cerro Gordo, Ill.: Derek Agar, Jodie Agar, Jesek West

Chiques, Manheim, Pa.: Crissy Keener, Blake Strausbaugh

Crest Manor, South Bend, Ind.: Tonya Colwell, Emily Burr

East Chippewa, Orrville, Ohio: Brian Beckwith, Millard Delauder, Bonnie Delauder, Denver McCumber

East Cocalico, Reamstown, Pa.: Randy Bonna, Bill Haller, Warren Lausch

Eastwood, Akron, Ohio: Amanda Ahlgreen, Chris Brown, Lisa Brown, Pamela Burke, Jina Brighton, Kiesha Johnson, John Konst, Hope Konst, Norma Shaffer, Michelle Martino, Michelle Gryder, Amy Flake

Free Spring, Mifflintown, Pa.: Eric Alexander, Ginger Alexander, Anna Mary Clouser, Daniel Elsassner, Andrew Wert, Louise Wert, John Zendt, Jr., Lois Zendt, Helen Willow

Glendale, Calif.: Sarah Heiny, Elizabeth Heiny

Good Shepherd, Springfield, Mo.: Weldon Sikes, Linda Sikes

Gortner Union, Oakland, Md.: Edward Petersheim, Orpha Petersheim

Hollins Road, Roanoke, Va.: Leo Overton, James Light, Catherine Light, Jerrica Kanode, Dillon Shrader, Amanda Shrader, Sandra Pyle, Gary Blankenship, William Craft, Anthony Hall, Jamie Haines

Ivester, Grundy Center, Iowa: Matthew Bridges, Michael Bridges, Don Hartwig, Angie Robles, Jeff Overton, Susan Schleisman, Jim Lewis

Keyser, W.Va.: Eric Loy, Garrett Nash, Cody Runner, Matraca Shirley, Sierra Wassell

Kokomo, Ind.: Elizabeth

Newcomer, Sabrina Hooker, Diane Edwards, Dixie Henson
Lebanon, Pa.: Heather Watts Coughlin

Lewiston, Maine: Richard Rouillard, Jean Rouillard, Rebekah Swierk

Lincolnshire, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Eddy Bazile, Marialyn Bazile, Kevin Creed, Sharri Creed, Kyle Creed, Nathaniel Creed, Glen Howard, Robin La Rue, Rosemary La Rue, James Mitchell, Missy Schiffl, John Shull, Tina Shull, Bryce Stover, Patty Stover, Amanda Talamantez, Traci Waters, Arielle Wolf

Lititz, Pa.: Tamara Bacon, Scott Bacon, Carley Buckwalter, Lauren Flynn, Alex Gibbel, Josh Glisson, Carol Hevener, Christopher Lefever, Matthew Miller, Kara Shelley, Andrea Shenk, Tailor Shotzberger, Lisa Tennis, Jasmine Tobias, Dean Weaver

Lorida, Fla.: Lois Zachman, William Edwin Reish, Mary V. Reish

Manor, Boonsboro, Md.: Melissa Gustason, Doug Reichard, Jay Reichard, Luke Reichard, Cassandra Golden, Summer Neff, Crystal Krockler, Jonathan Krockler, Doris Miller, Gene Miller, Craig Hood

Morgantown, W.Va.: Sarah Einstein, Scott Gibson, George Calvert

Moscow, Mount Solon, Va.: Allison Alexander, Zachary Grove, Jacob Reeves, Hunter Liskey, Kristy Mitchell, Carla Mitchell, Dan Mitchell, Cathy Teter, Cathy Strickler, Lee Landes, Barbara Gardner

New Beginnings, Warrensburg, Mo.: Gretchen Elizabeth Knause, Joseph Howard Knause
Northview, Indianapolis, Ind.: David Frantz, Jan Rhoades, Nina Evans, Pat Roberts, Marcia DuMond, Richard Propes, Renee Ross

Oakton, Va.: Peter Zience

Peach Blossom, Easton, Md.: Jennifer Lyons, Morgan Lyons, Darin Jones, Joanna Williams

Plymouth, Ind.: Aaron Schattl, Mike Casey, Joan Casey, Beverly Kruder

Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio: Lucas Schroeder, Marina Knappe, Jon Hornish, Damon Bolton

Pulaski, Va.: Lindsay Carroll, Gina Cline Carroll, Tom Alkire, Anna Belle Alkire

Red Oak Grove, Floyd, Va.: Vincent Osborne, Cory Shrewsbury, Kenneth Blackwell, Makayla Harrison

Ridge, Shippensburg, Pa.: Jill Varner, Kyle Varner, Ashley McCoy, Joel Garrett, Becca Varner

Ridgeway Community, Harrisburg, Pa.: Brittany Valentin, Hanna Linton, Katalin Csizmadia, Carol Beck, Christopher Roth, Nathaniel Roth, Anthony Mazzolla

Smith Mountain Lake Community, Wirtz, Va.: Brenda Johnson

Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.: Robert Boyer, Gloria Boyer, Thomas Douville, Jeffrey Eckert, Susan Eckert, Clymer Garman, Barbara Garman, Daisyanna

Heister, Leah Mellinger-Blouch, Benjamin Weaver

Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va.: Crystal Lantz, Jason Lantz, Ken Shifflet, Anne Shifflet, Frank Wiseman, Jenn Comer, Joyce Kizer, Debbie Wimer, Charles Wenger, Nancy Gunden, Victor Click, Duane Click, Sarah Hutt, Emily Hutt, Crystal Stone, Gladys Hedrick, Jeff Elliott, Missy Elliott, Bobby Smith, Michelle Smith, Margaret Smith

Venice, Ill.: Lillian Francis

Virden, Ill.: Mary Ellen Lawson, Don Lawson, Sharon Neal, Nick Jones
Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio: Donald Peppel

Anniversaries

Abbott, Robert and Joan, Montpelier, Ind., 50

Anderson, Charles and Bernice, Uniontown, Pa., 71

Bantz, Floyd and Alta, Lancaster, Pa., 60

Boos, Gene and Ellen, Plymouth, Ind., 60

Brandt, Robert E. and Anna, Elizabethtown, Pa., 55

Burkholder, William and Janet, Orrville, Ohio, 50

Clapper, Johnny and Patty, New Enterprise, Pa., 50

Dean, Vernon and Edna, Astoria, Ill., 50

Diehl, Richard and Connie, Uniontown, Pa., 50

Farringer, Dwight and Helen, North Manchester, Ind., 55

Flowers, Lawrence and Lenora, Oakland, Md., 50

Floyd, Richard and Juanita, Roanoke, Va., 65

Foust, Richard and Erma, New Lebanon, Ohio, 50

Frantz, Loren and Evelyn, Harrisburg, Pa., 50

Fritz, Preston and Helen, New Windsor, Md., 60

Garner, Oscar and Florice, Lemoyne, Ohio, 60

Garst, Paul and Doris, Roanoke, Va., 55

Gilbert, Edward and Mildred, North Manchester, Ind., 60

Gottshall, Dick and Dottie, Roanoke, Va., 60

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

Hinrich, Richard and Mary, Curryville, Pa., 50

Kinsley, Evan and Lucile, North Manchester, Ind., 70

Koehler, Don and Ila, Somerset, Ohio, 50

Kreider, Clair and Betty, Lancaster, Pa., 60

Mansfield, John and Shirley, Continental, Ohio, 50

McDaniel, Alton and Lucille, Singers Glen, Va., 50

Miller, Gene and Eloise, New Lebanon, Ohio, 55

Nissley, Jay and Mildred, Manheim, Pa., 50

Parrish, Dick and Helen, Continental, Ohio, 60

Post, John and Donna, Glendale, Ariz., 50

Rohrer, Alpheus and Alice, North Lima, Ohio, 55
Rohrer, Jay and Faye, Manheim, Pa., 50
Showalter, Clarence and Anna Ruth, Hagerstown, Md., 60
Showalter, Luther and Alverta, Edgewood, Md., 55
Smith, Lee and Glea, North Manchester, Ind., 60
Wenger, Clyde and Shirley, Strasburg, Pa., 50
Wolfe, Lavern and Donna, Uniontown, Pa., 55
Zeiler, Herbert and Eunice, Loveland, Colo., 55
Zuck, Nevin and Leah, Lancaster, Pa., 65

Deaths

Abshire, William Randolph, 88, Roanoke, Va., June 10
Baer, Gary D., 65, Uniontown, Pa., Jan. 11
Bailey, Edra, 86, Uniontown, Pa., April 22
Baker, Donnie Lee, 65, Harrisonburg, Va., April 4
Bell, Harold, 88, Eaton, Ohio, June 3
Benford, Chance, 2, Rockwood, Pa., Jan. 15
Benstead, Marjorie Lucille, 90, Worthington, Minn., May 27
Black, Merle E., Jr., 82, Lancaster, Pa., April 15
Botkin, Martha Gaynelle Miller, 68, Staunton, Va., May 12
Boughman, Marjorie Topham, 85, Lima, Pa., June 23
Bowser, Roberta, 85, Brookville, Ohio, June 22
Boyd, Joseph deGarn, 66, Timberville, Va., May 7
Bradley, Mary Louise, 91, Roanoke, Va., June 4
Brungard, Charles, 49, Indianapolis, Ind., Feb. 1
Butts, Mildred, 85, Shippensburg, Pa., March 13
Cantrell, Agnes, 81, Tallmadge, Ohio, March 26
Carpenter, Peter, 85, Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 14
Cassell, J. Irving, 89, Bridgewater, Va., May 3
Cherbonnier, Leila E., 91, Easton, Md., May 18
Chewning, James A., 80, Roanoke, Va., March 11
Clem, Ruth Emily Rinker, 87, Maurertown, Va., March 14
Cole, Daniel, 89, Johnstown, Pa., May 29
Coplen, Dorothy, 74, Fort Wayne, Ind., May 30
Cressler, Martha, 89, New Oxford, Pa., Feb. 24
Crockett, Jerry L., 61, Peru, Ind., May 23
Dadisman, Mary N., 92, La Verne, Calif., June 5
Dage, Lawrence, 91, Albia, Iowa, May 20
Diehl, Hazel Marie Lilly, 88, Harrisonburg, Va., April 1
Dove, Paul William, 66, Criders, Va., March 11
Dovel, Roy Elmo, 77, Stanley, Va., May 3

Driver, Carolyn Click, 85, Bridgewater, Va., April 13
Driver, Richard, 71, Fort Wayne, Ind., March 17
Eckroth, Ruth, 81, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 22
Edgecomb, Delores, 70, Decatur, Ill., May 14
Eichelberger, Ava S., 79, Keyser, W.Va., May 21
Eikenberry, Thelma, 77, Modesto, Calif., June 26
Feightner, Beatrice, 94, Windber, Pa., March 1
Feucht, M. Ruth, 92, Downers Grove, Ill., June 5
Fink, Leona Grace, 86, Harrisonburg, Va., March 24
Fisher, Blanche, M., 82, North Manchester, Ind., May 23
Fleetwood, Douglas, Sr., 90, Easton, Md., April 26
Fleming, Catherine Rinker, 85, Stephens City, Va., March 22
Flory, Earl R., 85, Lawrence, Kan., May 8
Frey, Joyce M., 81, Moreno Valley, Calif., June 2
Gardner, Edith V., 88, Keyser, W.Va., May 19
Gardner, Ressie, 84, Bridgewater, Va., April 21
Geary, Mary, 99, Somerset, Pa., June 5
Gephart, Grace, 93, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 14, 2004
Glick, Elsie, 90, Selinsgrove, Pa., May 2
Good, Douglas Allen, 54, Stanley, Va., April 7
Good, Helen, 61, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 13
Good, John Franklin, Jr., 74, Grottoes, Va., April 18
Green, Hannah, 95, Oakland, Md., April 20
Groul, L. Everett, 85, Brattleboro, Vt., June 28
Guyer, Betty, 88, Woodbury, Pa., May 24
Hall, Beverly Joan, 64, Massanutten, Va., March 29
Hancock, Rose F., 98, Woodstock, Va., March 26
Haycock, Hazel Ruth, 82, Edinburg, Va., March 21
Helbert, Nina Christina Hoover, 97, Harrisonburg, Va., April 3
Hershberger, Ruth M., 79, Sugarcreek, Ohio, May 26
Hess, F. Eugene, 81, South Bend, Ind., Oct. 8, 2004
Hinkle, S. Etolah, 100, Lorida, Fla., May 2
Housden, Leo Walter, 90, Stanley, Va., March 13
Howell, Wallace F., 73, McPherson, Kan., June 5
Humbert, Naomi Lee Wright, 100, New Hope, Va., April 29
Hummel, Nancy, 54, Dayton, Ohio, July 4
Hutto, Mildred, 73, Royal Oak, Md., May 25
James, Richard E., 85, Trotwood, Ohio, June 17
Jones, Everett, 74, West Alexandria, Ohio, June 28
Jones, Harold, 90, Fayetteville, W.Va., June 14
Jumper, Thelma, 83, Camp Hill, Pa., June 5

Keiper, Dorothy, 90, Windber, Pa., Dec. 7
Ketterman, Ruth Odessa Cullers, 69, Moorefield, W.Va., April 26
Kile, Gene Carol, 67, Petersburg, W.Va., May 22
Killian, Marshall, 90, Bryan, Ohio, June 15
Kimble, Truman C., 72, Stephens City, Va., April 6
Kiser, Mary Zimmerman, 97, Bridgewater, Va., March 31
Knotts, Hayward, 89, West Manchester, Ohio, April 17
Koontz, Janice Walter, 71, New Enterprise, Pa., June 22
Lahman, Ivan, 85, Quinter, Kan., May 11
Lambert, Mary S., 91, Franklin, W.Va., March 15
Lausch, Titus Z., 83, Lebanon, Pa., May 25
Leberknight, Genevieve, 83, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 24
Liskey, Claude E., Jr., 85, Harrisonburg, Va., April 18
Lynn, Edmund A., Jr., 60, Salisbury, Pa., May 10
May, Donnie Glen, 40, Mathias, W.Va., March 26
McCan, Herman, 76, Plymouth, Ind., March 19
McCray, Jeanette Rankin, 64, Fort Defiance, Va., April 11
McQuinn, Sylvia M., 97, Rossville, Ind., June 17
McWethy, Bessie, 99, Savoy, Ill., June 22
Metzger, Nancy, 61, Peru, Ind., June 12
Michael, Marcia Kiracofe, 74, Mount Solon, Va., May 17
Miller, Harry, 89, Palmyra, Pa., May 28
Miller, Harry E., 75, Wilmington, Del., May 23
Millikin, Evelyn, 80, West Alexandria, Ohio, June 23
Mishler, Carl, 62, Columbia City, Ind., May 28
Moore, Alyce, 90, Preston, Minn., June 18
Morse, Barbara, 60, Keyser, W.Va., April 5
Moyers, Carrie Louise Evans, 78, Broadway, Va., April 30
Moyers, Virginia Hess, 96, Harrisonburg, Va., March 18
Myers, Margaret, 85, Goshen, Ind., June 16
Neideigh, LeRoy, 85, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 12
Nelson, Lewis, 89, McPherson, Kan., May 28
Nicarry, Wayne A., 85, Chambersburg, Pa., May 29
Patchen, Maxine Flory, 82, Lawrence, Kan., May 6
Paton, Marian, 74, Plymouth, Ind., May 29
Pettit, Frances Ann, 50, Stanley, Va., March 24
Pippen, Lora Belle, 80, Nappanee, Ind., June 15
Reed, William, 62, Carlisle, Pa., April 17
Reichard, Charles E., 78, Myersville, Md., April 27
Richards, Arthur B., Sr., 91, Boonsboro, Md., May 17
Rindels, Jerry, 65, Preston, Minn., May 31

Ritchie, Lucy Fulk, 97, Fulks Run, Va., April 17
Rotruck, Alverda M., 100, Keyser, W.Va., May 18
Sedrel, Marilyn L., 63, Peoria, Ill., May 24
Shaver, Ethel Batten, 95, Mount Sidney, Va., April 2
Shelton, Robert Ross, 93, Modesto, Calif., May 12
Showalter, Anna Ruth, 84, Hagerstown, Md., May 20
Shull, Carl D., 89, Bridgewater, Va., May 6
Skiles, Alta Rhohene, 97, South Bend, Ind., Feb. 22
Smiley, Pearl Elizabeth Michael, 89, Bridgewater, Va., March 16
Smith, Mable, 76, Mechanicsburg, Pa., June 1
Snyder, Ada Belle, 85, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 25
Strickler, Francis Hyde, 92, Barren Ridge, Va., March 27
Sword, Ruth, 89, Ackley, Iowa, May 14
Traxler, Ruth, 79, Cerro Gordo, Ill., July 7
Tritt, Esther, 81, Carlisle, Pa., March 16
Veltri, Shielda, 65, Rockwood, Pa., March 8
Verbeck, David, 64, Indianapolis, Ind., Dec. 2
Wallace, Dora, 82, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 18
Walters, Bertha, 93, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 17
Wardle, Elsie K., 84, Harleysville, Pa., May 15
Washer, Helen Jean, 66, Haughton, La., June 11
Wetschurack, Emma E., 88, Columbus, Ind., June 4
White, Kathryn, 78, Keyser, W.Va., July 24
Williams, Mary Catherine Frye, 64, Quicksburg, Va., April 16
Wingert-Grammer, Donna J., 72, Lawrence, Kan., April 8
Workman, Ruth E., 95, Orrville, Ohio, May 16
Worman, Paul, 86, Hatfield, Pa., Aug. 22, 2004
Wratchford, Ervin Jeremiah, 102, Moorefield, W.Va., May 21
Zittle, Donald Hale, 72, Hagerstown, Md., May 19

Licensings

Clark, Andrea S., W. Pa. Dist. (Walnut Grove, Johnstown, Pa.), June 12
Clay, Charles E., Virlina Dist. (Crab Orchard, W. Va.), June 26
Goodnight, Janet L., W. Pa. Dist. (Walnut Grove, Johnstown, Pa.), June 12
Neff, Linda Eicher, Shen. Dist. (Harrisonburg, Va., First), May 8
Randall, Richard T., Virlina Dist. (Mount Hermon, Bassett, Va.), June 12
Rice, Charles E., W. Plains Dist. (Independence, Kan.), May 29
Shroyer, Michael L., S/C Ind. Dist. (Markle, Ind.), May 22
Stoner, John W., Jr., W. Pa. Dist. (Somerset, Pa.), June 5
Stutzman, Paul F., Shen. Dist. (Mill Creek, Port Republic,

Va.), Nov. 14
Suders, Donald Neil, S. Pa. Dist. (Brandts, Saint Thomas, Pa.), May 21
Yowell, Richard Harrison, Shen. Dist. (Beaver Creek, Bridgewater, Va.), May 22

Ordinations

Frye, Leslie Ann Billhimer, W. Plains Dist. (Monitor, McPherson, Kan.), May 28
Kinnick, C. Scott, Southeastern Dist. (Cedar Grove, Rogersville, Tenn.), May 1
Schwartz, Marvin, S/C Ind. Dist. (Peru, Ind.), June 12
Sgro, John A., II, S/C Ind. Dist. (Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind.), May 15

Placements

Biggood Enders, Greg, from interim to pastor, Huntington, Ind., July 1
Bowser, Paula A., from pastor, Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md., to pastor, Trotwood, Ohio, July 1
Branson, Merrill C., pastor, Community, Cleveland, Ala., June 5
Carr, Angela Tolbert, pastor, Laurel Branch, Floyd, Va., May 1
Clay, Charles E., pastor, Crab Orchard, W. Va., May 1
Combs, Robert D., pastor, Oak Grove, Levels, W. Va., June 26
Edwards, Charles R., from interim to pastor, Eden, N.C., July 1
Fike, Lisa J., from interim to pastor, Freeport, Ill., Feb. 1
Godfrey, Mark D., pastor, Nokesville, Va., Oct. 13
Haldeman-Scarr, Sara, pastor, San Diego, Calif., June 5
House, William D., pastor, Marion, Ind., June 1
Jones, Gregory L., from pastor, Fairview, Unionville, Iowa, to pastor, Bunkertown, McAlisterville, Pa., June 6
McLearn-Montz, Alan, from pastor, Freeport, Ill., to director of pastoral services and chaplain, Freeport Rehabilitation & Healthcare Center, Freeport, Ill., July 1, 2004
Muthler, Mark H., associate pastor, Woodbury, Pa., June 16
Pfaltzgraff Eller, Kathryn, chaplain, Claremont Manor, Claremont, Calif., April 16
Randall, Richard T., from interim to pastor, New Hope, Stuart, Va., June 1
Said, Samuel, pastor, Drexel Hill, Pa., July 1
Sgro, John A., II, from youth minister, Pleasant Dale, Decatur, Ind., to pastor, Lanark, Ill., July 1
Shearer, Clark C., pastor, Buffalo, Ind., June 1
Smith, Leonard W., pastor, Broadfording, Hagerstown, Md., June 1

Come to the dork side

You may have heard the joke about the patient who went to see a psychiatrist, crying, "I think I'm a chicken!"

The psychiatrist looks with concern and asks, "How long has this been going on?"

"Ever since I was an egg!" the patient replies.

A church may have a difficult time fitting itself onto a psychiatrist's couch, but it feels like the Church of the Brethren, too, is experiencing a bit of an identity crisis.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Some voices have said that the denomination needs to move more toward the mainstream, perhaps becoming more like the "megachurches" in order to grow and thrive and follow the Great Commission.

Others, however, including many from outside the denomination, have urged Brethren to make their unique voice heard, because it is needed more than ever. It's been said from local

community groups to the global stage of the World Council of Churches.

Leading church thinker Brian McLaren told an Annual Conference audience that the peace churches were a group that did not accommodate to the world like other churches did—until about the 1960s. "There are things you don't even know you know that are so important now," McLaren said. "I think you have an important role to play."

Likewise, journalism and media professor Stewart Hoover told those at the MESSENGER Dinner, "Distinctiveness is today more important than ever. Where is our distinctiveness, our identity, our 'concept?'"

Where indeed. An Annual Conference worship speaker said that we cannot get "stuck in the mud of our heritage," a heritage that has "lost the ability to connect with our world." Is this true? One might assert instead that the mud is not the heritage itself, but what has been piled on—issues, conformity, legalism, tradition for tradition's sake—in the years since Alexander Mack and friends.

Our heritage was about passionately following Jesus, living by the New Testament, speaking peace, and showing the world a different and distinct way of living. Nothing about that is irrelevant for today's world. We need to polish the mud off that heritage, not throw it out. We need to reclaim its essence, not cut the strings.

Brethren can offer a unique lens through which to see the world, if we dare to pull it out in public and look through it. Reaching people for Christ and staying true to who we are need not be mutually exclusive.

Retired Mennonite editor John M. Drescher mourned in a recent interview with *Crossroads* magazine, "During the last several decades the church has experienced little criticism or conflict from the world, not because the world is more Christian, but because the world and the church are so much alike. We long to be loved so much we've lost the desire for a distinctly different life. Most of us would rather be dead than different."

But guess what, Brethren? Being different is back. An Associated Press article in July declared, "Suddenly, it's cool to be uncool." It noted a trend in high schools where the "dorks" and "geeks" were standing up

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proudly for their supposedly uncool passions, like orchestra, libraries, and computers. "Dork Pride!" T-shirts have been popping up, as have online fan clubs.

Will the trend hold? Maybe not. The message of the Gospels will, though. And if the world thinks Brethren are a bit dorky and "uncool" for holding a view that's outside the mainstream, so be it. Jesus said we should be out of step with society.

Corporations and institutions spend millions trying to build their identity. We have one, a good one. The real crisis is if we lose it. If we live it out authentically and express it in relevant ways, we may find others believe it's cool to be uncool, too. It's a distinct possibility.—Ed.

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GUATEMALA: REPLENISHING THE SOIL AND THE SOUL

The trauma of 36 years of civil war runs deep. The obstacles to peace remain daunting. Still, the indigenous Maya of Guatemala press for more in life than struggle and survival.

Living in the highlands and on the margins, Maya families transplant thousands of tender saplings to halt erosion of the steep terrain.

They build cisterns to collect clean drinking water for the region's five-month dry season. They construct fuel-efficient stoves to save on firewood and reduce the wide-spread incidence of lung disease. Small-scale measures, all, yet steps pivotal to the healing of Guatemala.

Through such steps the Global Food Crisis Fund joins Global Mission Partnerships in raising up three R's across remote villages of the highlands: *redevelopment* of a despoiled land, *reconciliation* of people brutalized by violence, and *replenishment* of the human spirit. The Mayas, in turn, bear witness to their own distinctive three R's: *resistance* to the forces of oppression, *resilience* in the struggle for a just order, and *reverence* for all living things.

Celebrate and join in this fair exchange of the people of God—Mayas and Brethren together—giving and receiving the fruits of the Spirit.



GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS FUND

To contribute, send your gift to Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Also, write for a free DVD or Video highlighting the Global Food Crisis Fund programs in Guatemala.