

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2005 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

The church and disabilities

**Is the welcome mat out for
those with special needs?**

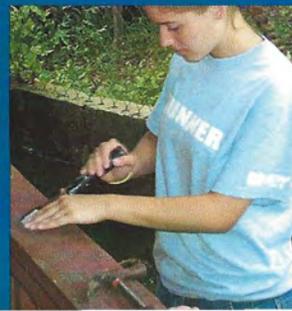
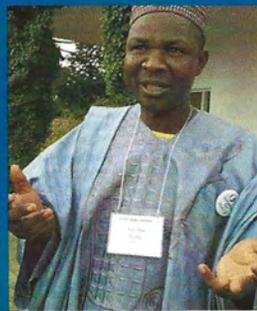
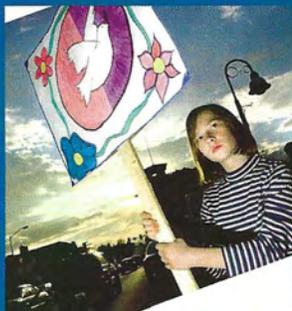
The
Things
That
Make
For

Peace

Even at Jesus' birth, God's on-going concern for peace was sung across the skies: *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to all on whom his favor rests."* (Luke 2:14) The Christmas Advent Offering of the Church of the Brethren General Board supports ministries of the peace heralded by angels and revealed in Christ. Please give lovingly.



Church of the Brethren General Board
Christmas Advent Offering 2005



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

Church
of the
Brethren

MESSENGER

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ONTHECOVER

A set of resources written for the Association of Brethren Caregivers this year included an introduction by Pat Challenger that said, "It is necessary for special needs folks both young and old to experience belonging and inclusion within God's houses.... We as churches need to recognize the talents that people with special needs can bring to our congregations." A series of articles this month examines the gifts and struggles of the disabled, and the church's role.

8 Working on the margins

Tom Benevento lives as he teaches: simply and in a way that's sustainable for the earth. From Guatemala to Indiana, he journeys alongside those that many others overlook.

10 The church and disabilities

Is the welcome mat of the church out for those with disabilities? Janet Stroup relates the first-person stories of some disabled Brethren and others (p. 10). David S. Young shares observations he made of congregational hospitality while traveling with his language-impaired son (p. 16). Other articles look at one district's vision for ministry to the disabled (p. 15), the difficulties a church can face in knowing how to respond (p. 14), and the tests of faith that can come with watching a family member face a disabling condition (p. 18).

20 2 Samuel: The monarchy struggles

The story of the monarchy in ancient Israel continues with the turbulent reign of King David. He's portrayed as a hero elsewhere, but in the book of 2 Samuel he travels a very bumpy road.



Regina Roberts

10



Tom Benevento

8

DEPARTMENTS

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Our family was standing at immigration in the Detroit airport, a necessary step before the last leg of a big trip that encompassed Hiroshima, Seoul, and Tokyo. After 16 days, it felt rather good to stand behind the sign for citizens, rather than foreigners. It's great to travel, and it's also great to come home again.

After a few minutes in line, the tall young man behind us spoke. "You've been to Camp Mack?" he asked. He was eyeing one of the keychains hanging off the backpack of our teenage daughter. Turns out he remembered making crafts there as a kid, when he attended with a friend. Now he was living in Seoul, teaching English and volunteering his free time in an orphanage.



WENDY McFADDEN
Publisher

In another era, it used to be plain clothes that marked the Brethren. Apparently, what we wear can still make us stand out in a crowd. As in the time I spotted a 1978 National Youth Conference T-shirt in the Guayaquil airport in Ecuador. Today, in an age when one of the most popular clothing trends is "attitude" T-shirts, our Brethren apparel might be considered downright countercultural.

My household possesses T-shirts and sweatshirts from three Brethren camps, four of the Brethren colleges and the seminary (plus some that list all the Brethren colleges), multiple NYCs and a Study/Action Conference, several years' worth of workcamps, a bunch of Annual Conferences, On Earth Peace, Association of Brethren Caregivers, Brethren Press, Messenger, Brethren Volunteer Service, and our local congregation. These shirts quote Jesus, Paul, Micah, Esther, and John Kline. (If clothing ourselves with righteousness were as easy as donning a T-shirt, we'd certainly be prepared.)

While we in the Church of the Brethren do attempt to make our outward appearances match our inward selves, perhaps this can be true of larger entities as well. For example, during several days in Hiroshima I was impressed with the way it has embraced an identity as a city of peace. Every time a nuclear test is conducted somewhere in the world, the mayor of Hiroshima communicates with the country responsible, issuing an appeal for the abolition of nuclear weapons. A massive pillar in the Peace Museum is covered with copies of these letters, issued year after year. A sign acknowledges that some people would consider the effort fruitless but that the people Hiroshima feel they can do no less. It's as if the city has clothed itself in a garment of peace, an image evoked by the garlands of paper cranes blanketing every monument in the Peace Memorial Park.

"As shoes for your feet put on whatever will make you ready to proclaim the gospel of peace," says the apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:15. He doesn't stop with footwear. "Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. . . . Above all, clothe yourselves with love" (Col. 3:12, 14). This is the kind of clothing that is sure to get you noticed.

Wendy McFadden

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AROUND THE DENOMINATION

Updates and highlights from the Church of the Brethren districts

Atlantic Northeast: This year's Lebanon Valley Brethren Home (Palmyra, Pa.) Chicken Barbecue raised approximately \$38,000. . . . A COBYS Bike & Hike was held Sept. 11, starting in Lititz, Pa.

Atlantic Southeast: District conference Oct. 7-8 in Orlando included a focus on spiritual gifts, with Vicki Smith of Atlantic Northeast District as the keynote speaker.

Idaho: A district Training in Ministry (TRIM) event was held Sept. 22-25 at Mountain View Church of the Brethren in Boise. Jonathan Reid from the University of La Verne was the featured speaker.

Illinois/Wisconsin: Brethren pastors and chaplains in the Chicago area were asked to aid an inter-religious response providing spiritual care for Hurricane Katrina victims coming to the city.

Michigan: Roy and Tara Wise have announced their resignations as manager and administrator of Camp Brethren Heights effective Dec. 31.

Mid-Atlantic: The first Camp Mardela (Denton, Md.) Olympics, held during the annual family camp, raised \$805 for disaster relief. About 170 people attended.

Middle Pennsylvania: The annual disaster response turkey and ham dinner was held at Everett (Pa.) Church of the Brethren on Oct. 1.

Missouri/Arkansas: A minister-spouse retreat took place Oct. 21-22 at Spring Branch Church of the Brethren near Wheatland, Mo. The focus was on bivocational ministry.

Northern Indiana: Delegates at district conference authorized the district board to explore use of the now-closed Wakarusa church building as a potential new district office site.

Northern Ohio: District conference voted to close Trinity Church of the Brethren in Massillon. . . . Good Shepherd Home in Fostoria dedicated a wing addition and expansion on Aug. 31.

Northern Plains: A Heritage Day was held Oct. 8 at Camp Pine Lake in Eldora,

Many Brethren districts, congregations, and institutions have been holding special events and offerings to respond to the hurricanes that struck the Gulf Coast this fall. Above, Manchester College sophomore Tarran Day holds collection boxes she set out around campus for a health supplies drive. The school has raised more than \$15,000 in cash, as well. Virgina District reported raising more than \$100,000, believed to be a record for special offerings in the district. The Brethren Disaster Auction in Pennsylvania raised more than \$500,000. For more on the response, see page 22.

Iowa, featuring games, crafts, food, and other activities.

Oregon/Washington: Sixty people attended this year's district conference, where the annual disaster auction raised more than \$2,000. Barb Saylor and Mark Lancaster led Sunday worship.

Pacific Southwest: The sale of the former Whittier church property was expected to be finalized this fall, at a price of approximately \$2.4 million.

Shenandoah: A full-day seminar for pastors on "Nothing Ordinary in Ordinances" took place Sept. 12 at Sangerville Church of the Brethren near Bridgewater, Va. Jeff Bach provided leadership.

South/Central Indiana: A group of volunteers spent a Saturday at the district office this fall building a ramp and doing new landscaping work around the property.

Southeastern: A fall district youth retreat took place Oct. 22-23 at Friendship Church of the Brethren in North Wilkesboro, N.C. . . . Jim Hoffman has been named chaplain for the district.

Southern Ohio: A seminar on Sept. 24 focused on gifts discernment. Held at Eversole Church of the Brethren in New Lebanon, it was sponsored by the district gifts discernment team. Victoria Ullery, Duane Grady, and Mark Garber presented.

Southern Pennsylvania: The annual Fall Festival at Camp Eder in Fairfield, Pa., was



Jan S. Koenig

held Oct. 15, featuring an auction, food court, and pig/turkey roast meal.

Southern Plains: District conference included an auction that raised nearly \$4,500 for Spring Lake Camp and Retreat Center in Billings, Okla.

Virgina: The district board has approved a resolution against the use of mercury compounds as a preservative in various vaccines commonly administered to children and expectant mothers.

West Marva: District conference was held Sept. 16-17 at Moorefield (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren with Harold Garber serving as moderator.

Western Pennsylvania: Senior high youth will take a service team trip to the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., Dec. 2. They will work in the warehouse organizing disaster supplies.

Western Plains: A special Level I training for Disaster Child Care volunteers was scheduled for Oct. 22-23 in Norfolk, Neb., to meet an extraordinary need in the wake of Hurricane Katrina.

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.

Ohio youth give home an 'extreme makeover'

Twenty-four youth from Oakland Church of the Brethren (Gettysburg, Ohio) and four youth from West Milton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren joined together July 17-24 to give a gift of love to a family in nearby Greenville.

The Oakland youth group plans a trip each summer to help out people in need, traveling to places like Mexico and North Dakota in the past. This year they were challenged by the church family to help out someone locally, so the group decided to do an "Extreme Home Makeover: Oakland Youth Edition."

After talking to several social agencies and other professionals, the group selected the Teague family to receive their gift. On July 16, the Teague family was sent on an all-expense paid vacation to Shawnee State Park as the Southern Ohio youth "invaded" their home.

Over the next six days, the youth were joined by adult volunteers to completely renovate the home, working 9 1/2 hour days. Salem Church of the Brethren in Philipsburg provided lodging for the workers, which allowed them to spend their evenings getting to know each other better through worship and play. Adult volunteers from Oakland, meanwhile, continued to work late into the night; one



Becky Maurer

Beth Custer and Erin Julian take their turns at some teardown work for a "home makeover" project.

evening a group of youth went back and helped the adults until 2 a.m.

When the family returned home on July 24, the whole house had been transformed. Two chimneys were taken down from roof to basement, the whole house was sided with vinyl siding, all new windows were installed and wrapped with aluminum, new doors were installed, a bathroom was torn out and redone, porches were repaired, and numerous other improvements had been made.

Before handing over the keys to the new house, the youth led a short worship service for the family and neighborhood to dedicate the house to God.—Chris Custer, Jon and Lori Keller

Ordination service joins the best of both worlds

The invitation read, "It is rare for sisters and brothers in Christ who are members of different congregations to have an opportunity to join together as

the family of God in worship. Since Leslie's call from God came through the community of faith, we seek to honor that call and that community by offering an opportunity to come together at Christ's table for a somewhat untraditional Brethren love feast."

Although less familiar than the love feast, the ordination service also has some traditional elements to it. The basic elements of both services were combined to provide a unique launching of ordination to ministry for Leslie A. Billhimer Frye.

All who desired met in the Monitor Church of the Brethren (McPherson, Kan.) sanctuary for the first parts of the service, preparation and feetwashing. While we were celebrating Leslie's acceptance of her call to ministry, this act was a reminder that as Christians we are all called by Christ to serve.

Following the service of feetwashing, those gathered moved to the fellowship rooms of the church for the meal. Unlike the traditional love feast meal, this was a carry-in dinner with meat provided. It began with reading of scripture and prayer and continued as a regular carry-in dinner at the church. Fellowship was real as we visited with other Brethren and some from other denominations who had come for the special event.

In an hour and a half the meal was cleaned up, and the congregation gathered again in the sanctuary—this time for a meaningful worship including carefully chosen music and a sermon, followed by ordination questions for Leslie, her family, and the congregation. The service closed with all sharing the bread and cup of communion. It was truly a service of participation and a blessing for everyone present.

—Sandee Kitzel

Youth and adult volunteers gathered for a photo in front of the finished product after their "home makeover" project.



Becky Maurer

Celebration honors Blooming Grove Colony

A celebration honoring 200 years of the Blooming Grove Colony near Williamsport in Lycoming County, Pa., was held July 24-25.

Blooming Grove was settled in 1805 by immigrants from Württemberg (Germany) who were followers of the Pietist and Separatist leader George Rapp.

Rapp immigrated in 1803 and soon established the Harmony Society, near Pittsburgh, one of America's most successful communal experiments. One group of about 50 Separatists,

led by Dr. Conrad Haller, wintered in Germantown in 1804 and were hosted by Brethren families. This contact led to their acceptance of Brethren beliefs, and the immigrants were known as "Dunkards" when they arrived in Lycoming County the following year.

Other Württemberg families arrived at Blooming Grove in 1809 and in 1817. A log meetinghouse, which also served as a school, was built in 1828 and stands today as part of the Blooming Grove Historical Society Museum. Throughout their history the Blooming Grove Dunkers were led by local lay leaders and remained isolated from the wider Brethren movement. Brethren ordinances, such as trine immersion baptism

and the love feast, as well as the peace teachings of the church, however, continued into the 20th century.

In the early 1840s a visit to Blooming Grove by Konrad Fleishmann, a evangelist from the more energetic German



A log meetinghouse from the Blooming Grove Colony, built in 1828, today is part of the Blooming Grove Historical Society Museum.

David Eller

Baptist movement, led several Brethren families into a pioneering congregation of that denomination.

David Eller of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College was keynote speaker for a kick-off event honoring the heritage of Blooming Grove April 1, and he was guest preacher for a "traditional Dunkard" worship service in the old meetinghouse on July 25. Historian Donald F. Durnbaugh, who died in August, took part in a "Great Gathering" on July 24. More than 800 attendees enjoyed a variety of activities that included craft demonstrations, food, and workshops on genealogy, the history of the community, and the religion of the Brethren.

LANDMARKS & LAURELS

• **Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren**, Knoxville, Tenn., celebrated its 100th anniversary Oct. 8-9. The weekend included auctions, concerts, a potluck dinner, and worship.

• Christian Peacemaker Teams Iraq team member **Anita David** was featured on Chicago Public Radio for two weeks in September, reading her "Letters from Baghdad."

• **Annie A. Hollinger**, a member of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, celebrated her 100th birthday on Sept. 20.

• More than 400 churches, camps, and districts plus the denomination as a whole will benefit from participation in **Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company's Partnership Group Program**. In 2005, the group was awarded approximately \$109,000 as their portion of a dividend-sharing plan, based on a calculation of three-year loss ratios. In 2005, approximately one-half of these monies will be returned to the participating congregation or other ministry, on a percentage basis of the total premium. The remainder will be used to support such denominational ventures as the 300th Anniversary Committee and the "Together: Conversations on Being the Church" process.

REMEMBERED

• **Richard Bowman**, former president/CEO of Fahrney-Keedy Home and Village in Boonesboro, Md., died Sept. 11 after a three-year battle with cancer. He was a member of Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren. Bowman had served as top executive of the Brethren retirement community for 28 years, retiring in 2003. The home renamed its Alzheimer's unit the Bowman Center that year.

Children in Southern Ohio District enjoyed a perfect day for fishing in an event at the Brethren Retirement Community.



Dennis Meeks

Something fishy is going on in Southern Ohio

Outdoor Ministries of Southern Ohio District hosted its second Fishing Adventure for children of the district on Sept. 11. The Brethren Retirement Community's "Back Forty" in Greenville hosted the afternoon event, and many BRC residents helped to bait hooks, land fish, and measure the "trophies."

In one hour and 45 minutes, 37 girls and boys ages 7 to 14 landed a total of 210 fish. All fish were returned to their homes to grow up. The children, along with parents, hosts, volunteers, and others, were fed socially, physically, and spiritually with laughter, hot dogs, prayer, kind words, enthusiasm, and limitless smiles.

Prizes were awarded for the smallest fish, largest fish, and most fish caught, in four age categories. One prize was also given for the most unusual catch of the day—a 57-inch "grass pike."—**Dennis Meeks**

'What's happening to the Church of the Brethren?'

District executives are in a unique position to hear concerns expressed by individuals and congregations. For many years we have been hearing a variety of concerns that can be summed up with the question "What's happening to the Church of the Brethren?"

Since the mid-1960s the Church of the Brethren (along with many other Protestant denominations) has seen a



MARK FLORY STEURY

steady decline in numbers. Many congregations struggle with an aging and shrinking church membership. Each year district conferences take action to close congregations. Congregations are often frustrated that their way of being church isn't working well for them any more.

Similar frustrations are experienced at the denominational level. People leave Annual Conference feeling discouraged with disagreements expressed at business sessions. There is a growing awareness of serious fragmentation within the denomination.

For years district executives have heard and discussed

step toward a new and common understanding within the church concerning who, whose, and what we are."

Since the fall of 2003, all the agencies of the Church of the Brethren (Annual Conference officers, Association of Brethren Caregivers, Bethany Theological Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, General Board, and On Earth Peace) have worked with the Council of District Executives to plan what has now become known as "Together: Conversations on Being the Church."

Our hope is that every individual in the Church of the Brethren will be a part of these conversations. We anticipate conversations in local congregations (small groups, Sunday school, worship, informal settings), within districts, at the colleges and seminary, and at Annual Conference and other national gatherings, such as National Older Adult Conference.

Together: Conversations on Being the Church will be launched with a training session for individuals who will help lead the conversations. This will be held at New Windsor, Md., Feb. 24-26, 2006. At Annual Conference 2006 we will spend part of several business sessions in conversation with one another. Conversations will be held within districts throughout 2006 and into 2007. Congregations will begin

their conversations following Annual Conference. A study guide is being developed that can be used in all of these settings.

I'm excited about the potential this conversation

has for the church. Through Bible study, prayer, and careful listening to one another, my hope is that we will come to a clearer understanding of God's purpose for us as the Church of the Brethren. Please pray for this series of conversations, and pray for the renewing of the Church of the Brethren. 

Mark Flory Steury is district executive for Southern Ohio District and a member of the Together: Conversations on Being the Church planning team.

It's often important for the church to step back from the emotional fray and to reassess the role and function of the church. What does it mean for us to be the Church of the Brethren in this generation and in this culture?

these concerns. In 2003, the Council of District Executives decided to invite the denomination to begin a conversation on what it means to be the church today. It's often important for the church to step back from the emotional fray and to reassess the role and function of the church. What does it mean for us to be the Church of the Brethren in this generation and in this culture? What is God's yearning for us as a church for this time?

In a "Statement of Concern" adopted at their meeting in the summer of 2003, the Council of District Executives invited the agencies of the church to help plan a "consultation on ecclesiology." In the statement, the council wrote that the purpose of the consultation is "to involve the Church of the Brethren in an extensive conversation which can help us understand and address the issues related to our current situation. The consultation is a first



For more information on *Together: Conversations on Being the Church*, visit www.brethren.org/together.

QUOTE WORTHY

“We will never be able to help every disaster survivor, but we are empowered to share the love of Christ with as many as we can.”

—Jane Yount, coordinator of disaster response for the Church of the Brethren General Board, writing in Emergency Response/Service Ministries’ *Bridges* newsletter

“Passive indifference is as bad as active malice.”

—US Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.), speaking on ABC’s “This Week” in September about the Hurricane Katrina response. He was quoted by the Associated Press.

“Most of our congregations understand stewardship primarily as a financial issue. . . . Very few congregational stewardship decisions are made by prayerful discernment of God’s call or a review of mission and ministry values.”

—General Board Funding team members, in a report on a recent stewardship survey of Church of the Brethren congregations

“The Spirit is speaking to the deep places of our hearts, our spirits, and our minds. We are listening as we have not listened before because our souls are starving.”

—Paul Grout, director of “A Place Apart,” writing about the desire for a fuller life and relationship with Jesus Christ

“As we continue to try to politicize God, or market God, or say that America is Christian, or that God is with one (political) party, or that God is here and not there, it only further points to the fact that we don’t understand how big God is—and how great God is.”

—Bishop T.D. Jakes, pastor of The Potter’s House in Dallas, speaking at a plenary session of the National Association of Black Journalists. He was quoted by *USA Today*.

“Countless numbers of people are injured by violence, and the cost is nearly impossible to assess.”

—Decade to Overcome Violence coordinator Hansulrich Gerber, who noted that according to World Health Organization figures, an estimated 1.6 million people lost their lives to violence in 2000

CULTUREVIEW

• **The Upper Room devotional guide** marks 70 years of publishing this year. It is read by more than 2.5 million Christians and published worldwide in 73 editions and 44 languages.

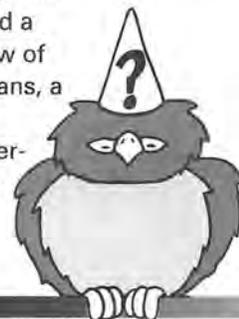
• Alternatives for Simple Living is offering its annual “**Whose Birthday Is It, Anyway?**” campaign for 2005 with a variety of resources (including reflections, a calendar, and activity ideas) for refocusing the spirit of Christmas on Jesus. Information is at www.SimpleLiving.org.

• **Habitat for Humanity International’s board of directors** on Aug. 4 named Jonathan T.M. Reckford to serve as the global homebuilding ministry’s new chief executive officer. Reckford, 42, had for two years served as executive pastor of Christ Presbyterian Church of Edina, Minn. He succeeds long-time CEO Millard Fuller.

• **Four in 10 Americans identify themselves as evangelical** or born-again Christians, but a significantly smaller percentage of Americans actually subscribe to “core evangelical

doctrine,” the Gallup Organization found. In a mid-April poll, 42 percent of respondents said they consider themselves to be born-again or evangelical. But in a similar poll taken in early May, only 22 percent agreed with all three beliefs that Gallup said “most evangelical leaders would say are core evangelical doctrine.” The questions were about evangelism, the authority of the Bible, and a turning point in one’s life that related to Christian commitment. (RNS)

• **More Americans hold favorable views of Muslims now than before 9/11**, and fewer Americans say Islam is more likely than other religions to encourage violence, according to a recent poll by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. Of the 2,000 American adults interviewed, a majority, 55 percent, of those surveyed expressed a “favorable” view of Muslim Americans, a figure that has risen from 45 percent before the 9/11 attacks.



JUST FOR FUN: MAKE A MATCH

FOLLOW THE LEADER Match the name of the person at left with the Brethren agency or institution they head on the right (answers below):

- | | |
|------------------------------|---|
| ___ 1. Eugene F. Roop | a. Juniata College |
| ___ 2. Jo Young Switzer | b. Association of Brethren Caregivers |
| ___ 3. Phillip Stone | c. McPherson College |
| ___ 4. Stanley J. Noffsinger | d. Elizabethtown College |
| ___ 5. Kathy Reid | e. Annual Conference |
| ___ 6. Wilfred E. Nolen | f. Bethany Theological Seminary |
| ___ 7. Ronald D. Hovis | g. University of La Verne |
| ___ 8. Bob Gross/Barb Saylor | h. Manchester College |
| ___ 9. Thomas R. Kepple Jr. | i. Church of the Brethren General Board |
| ___ 10. Lerry W. Fogle | j. Brethren Benefit Trust |
| ___ 11. Stephen Morgan | k. Bridgewater College |
| ___ 12. Theodore E. Long | l. On Earth Peace |

ANSWERS

1-f, 2-h, 3-k, 4-i, 5-b, 6-j, 7-c, 8-l, 9-a, 10-e, 11-g, 12-d.



Working on the margins

by Janis Pyle

Tom Benevento lives the sustainability lessons he teaches

Ixtahuacan, Guatemala: At high noon, 16 couples in full Mayan formal wedding dress have stopped before crossing the street. Our van stops two feet from the lead couple in the procession. I am drawn to their somber, sweet eyes, dancing with expectation. I pick up my camera; in range is a National Geographic-quality image. But, before my photographic instincts take over, I remember that our guide, Tom Benevento (Latin America/Caribbean specialist for the Church of the Brethren General Board's Global Mission Partnerships), had said that Mayan people do not wish to be photographed. I put down my camera.

Trained as a social ecologist, Benevento, from Goshen, Ind., has worked on development, hunger, and sustainability issues—especially in Guatemala—for the past 14 years. Traveling first to Guatemala as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker and now overseeing these workers in Latin America, he has developed programs in sustainable agriculture, reforestation, and appropriate technology for stoves and water catchment/cistern systems. His thought-provoking environmental and peace and justice faith expeditions are well known in the denomination. Characteristically, he emphasizes the contributions of others. “There are so many people involved in anything that happens. Interconnect-edness is a basic biblical and ecological principle,” he says.

“Working with folks on the margins is where I happen to find an opening to God,” he says. “There’s a holy sort of brokenness where outer shells are stripped off and peeled

down to what’s real and unpretentious.”

To travel with Benevento is to experience his profound Christian faith lived out in deep respect for each person and for all of creation. Visits are for mutual learning and sharing. Wherever he goes, he is a welcome guest.

• • •

Totonicapan, Guatemala: On a tour of a Foods Resource Bank project funded through the Global Food Crisis Fund, our group spends the morning touring a greenhouse. As the videotape rolls, Benevento translates for the local leaders—technical information about land use, wells, irrigation techniques, and natural pesticides. Our hosts ask us to stay for lunch. I assess the

sanitation and am ready to say, “No, thank you.” Benevento instead says: “We would be honored to stay for lunch.” We eat a lovely salad of lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes, and onions around a common table.

Merv Keeney, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships, commends Benevento’s gifts in “deep cultural sensitivity, uplifting the dignity of people, and sustainable development skills.” Those gifts, and Benevento’s extensive knowledge of Central America, have made him a valuable team member, Keeney says.

• • •

Goshen, Ind.: Over breakfast (eggs from the laying hens in his backyard), we look over the notes he used as technical consultant and illustrator for the Brethren Press book Gardening for the Earth and Soul, written by Heather Dean, a Brethren Volunteer Service worker in Copalaa, Guatemala (see breakout). He realizes that he doesn’t have on hand any of the more than 100 sketches used in the book. “I gave them all away as gifts,” he says. “In the long run,” he adds, “we can’t hold on to anything.”

“It took us many tries to develop the technology for stoves that use a third of the firewood of past ones,” Tom Benevento says. In the foreground is co-inventor Danny Sabuc of San Lucas, Guatemala. The Sicajan family contributed half of the money for this stove, which has paid off in improved health due to less smoke in their home.

Janis Pyle





The Benevento-Zahner family—Margot, Tom, Zachariah, and Silas—does not own a television. “We read a lot of books. We garden, ride our bikes, and play. We talk with one another a lot—we are engaged with one another,” Margot Zahner says.

Although an accomplished pen-and-ink artist, Benevento felt that he wanted to make his life a kind of a work of art rather than make his living by doing artwork. “Self-empowering the indigenous people in Guatemala or bringing dignity to homeless people in the United States—that is art to me,” he says. “My primary artwork, however imperfect the process, is journeying with others to build a more socially compassionate, ecologically sound, and peaceful world.”

He is more concerned about imparting the content of the book: that all persons protect the earth by learning to do local and organic gardening to sustain life for future generations.

Particularly impacted by Hurricane Katrina, he mourned for the soil, water, and individual plants and animals affected, as well as for the people. “I hope that the region will be rebuilt with a respect for natural resources and sustainability,” he says.

• • •

Downtown Goshen: Benevento, more than handy with a wrench, spends several hours fixing flats and adjusting brakes at the Chain Reaction Community Bicycle Project. He learns new techniques from his buddies. They lose track of time; Tom keeps his watch in his pocket. For lunch, we all go to the soup kitchen next door for “beanie weenies” and coleslaw. I learn from a reprinted local newspaper that Benevento co-founded the shop and a curbside recycling pick-up (with Brian Kruschwitz, a fellow Brethren community advocate).



The bike shop is conveniently located next door to a community center called The Window. Both organizations employ low-income people. Eber Rice-Smucker, director of The Window, praises Benevento’s Spanish-language ability and his cultural awareness.

“Not only do I appreciate the kind of attention Tom pays to detail in being an advocate,” Rice-Smucker says, “but, in the process, he seems to do pastoral care along with his community relating, making our guests feel like friends instead of desperate beggars.”

• • •

Goshen, Ind.: At a family supper, Tom’s wife, Margot Zahner, prepares a delicious black bean salad with fresh cilantro. Tea is served from a pot with an Old World map design, a wedding gift from her parents. The children eat heartily. Folk artist Nanci Griffith is playing tonight at nearby Goshen College, they say. Would I like to come along? Later, heading out the door, I reach for my car keys. “Let’s walk,” they say. Our friendly conversation rings clear in the night air.

The Benevento-Zahner family chose their home because their basic needs—food (from their own and a community garden), work, school, church, and parks—are available within a one-mile radius. They deliberately keep their income close to the

poverty line to avoid paying taxes that would finance war efforts. “We bike almost everywhere and share a car with several other families,” Benevento says.

Margot and Tom have complementary interests. She is an assistant professor in the education department at Goshen College. Her master’s degree is in multi-cultural education from the University of Wisconsin, and Tom’s is in sustainable systems from Slippery Rock (Pa.) University. Their children are Zachariah, 6, and Silas, 2 1/2.

To live out their values in practical terms, Benevento says they take their cues from four basic tenets for conserving the environment. The tenets come from those recommended by the Union of Concerned Scientists as having the most impact: 1. Reduce car usage. 2. Eat less red meat. 3. Eat locally grown organic food. 4. Reduce energy consumption.

“Lifestyle changes don’t come easy,” he emphasizes. “Often our attempts are fumbling, but we make it a family goal to live lightly on the earth.”

Quietly, the family spent a recent weekend building an outdoor solar-powered fruit dryer. It’s others, not themselves, who pass along the fact that the name “Benevento” in Italian means “good wind.” ❧

Janis Pyle is coordinator for mission connections for the General Board’s Global Mission Partnerships office. She traveled to Guatemala in June and Goshen, Ind., in September to interview Tom Benevento.

COME TO THE GARDEN

Published in spring 2004 by Brethren Press, *Gardening for the Earth and Soul* combines sustainable gardening, social commentary, global peace, children’s activities, and more along with drawings by Tom Benevento. The 180-page paperback is available for \$18.99 plus shipping and handling. Call 800-441-3712.



Are the doors always

At times, we children of God seek out uplifting experiences. Other times we're gifted with them and acknowledge God with thanks in our hearts. The church is one place where we can hope to be lifted up and to sense God's presence through worship and through relationships with brothers and sisters who make that church their home.

As churchgoers, though, acceptance of newcomers into our midst is often related to the extent to which we see those people as being similar to us. When we perceive people as quite different from us, we may

In the hope of helping more of us see the church through eyes of people with disabilities, this article is being written to expand our vision and understanding.

While questioning people regarding their involvement with congregations, I found varying types of disabilities. Some people had difficulties with mobility and others with speech. Some had impairments or slowness in processing and retaining information. Others had mental illnesses of varying types.

Some interviewees had grown up in a church family and had found the church to

given responsibilities? Were their offers to help in various ways accepted?

Lastly, I asked: If they could have one wish or prayer granted for their church what it would be?

The names used are fictitious, but hopefully you can see these people as individuals who may be attending your church presently, or perhaps one day in the future.

Dick

Dick had been questioning his faith in his college days and was invited to a men's group, but found the room where they met dark and the men there aloof. He didn't return.

After receiving his diagnosis of schizophrenia in his 30s, Dick spent time in a

state hospital and attended a different church, admittedly to find time away from the institution. He had been attracted there because of a friend's interest in discussing

When we perceive people as quite different from us, we may distance ourselves from them, believing they need to be approached in a different or special way not known to us.

distance ourselves from them, believing they need to be approached in a different or special way not known to us.

People with disabilities, visible or invisible, hope to find in the church a family of Christians who wish to understand them: their dreams, their difficulties, and their desire to be loved and useful in God's sight.

Unfortunately, people who have no disabilities may find it too difficult to make the effort to include all of God's children in the church family. Without meaning to, they may send signals that others' differences are unacceptable. In some cases, people may avoid reaching out because of fear that they won't say or do the "right" thing. Consequently, they send messages that those with disabilities are not welcome.

be a welcoming place. Others sought out the church in their adulthood and had a variety of experiences. All seemed appreciative of the opportunity to speak of their experiences with their church families.

I first asked how they were received the first time they attended their church. Did they feel welcomed? Were they invited back?

They were then asked in what ways they were included in the life of the congregation. Were they

Gary Heisler, right, accepts the Association of Brethren Caregivers' first "Open Roof Award" on behalf of Lansing (Mich.) Church of the Brethren from ABC board chair Sue Moore Ranson at the 2004 Annual Conference. The award recognizes congregations and districts doing significant work in disabilities ministry.

Eddie Edmonds



open?

by Janet Stroup

People with disabilities reflect on their experience with the church

faith with him in a nonjudgmental way. He was also drawn to the church's ministry to the homeless, plus he found the students there to be inviting and welcoming.

When asked what his prayer for the church would be, Dick said he would pray "for all to believe in Christ, knowing that he will come when we're ready for him, and will prepare a place for us."

Lana

Lana, in her 20s, had attended church most of her life, but when she moved to a group home she decided to attend a church closer by. She said she was immediately made to feel welcome, and was invited to stay for a potluck.

Lana, speaking slowly and deliberately because of her cerebral palsy, shared, "People readily talked to me, and one gentleman picks me up and takes me home each Sunday." She added, "When it comes to ladies' society, I feel welcome, but not when I talk about being in the choir."

Lana said she's not been asked to take any responsibility in the church, but adds, "I offered to help with the Sunday school, and they told me I could take attendance, but no supplies were given to me, and it sort of went by the wayside."

She has helped in the Sunday school with clerical work, such as sorting papers, and acknowledges that it's a needed job.

Her hope for her church is that there could be an outreach for the handicapped there. Lana added, "I'm the only young person with a disability in the church, and I'm sure there's a ministry out there that we haven't tapped into yet."

Yolanda

Yolanda is in the early stages of dementia and deals with depression while living in a group home. She says she has always enjoyed being in and working in the church.

Mary Dulabaum



The Association of Brethren Caregivers has worked to facilitate the presence of the disabled at various Brethren events. Above, Brethren take part in a workshop at Caring Ministries Assembly.

"I always went, and I always felt welcome," she said. She became animated when talking about her experiences teaching first grade Sunday school class and when she helped make banners and teach in Bible school.

"I wish I could get to a church now, but they can't get anybody to take me," Yolanda said. "I would like to help teach again if I could get to church." When it was suggested that perhaps her pastor could make arrangements for her to go, she felt that might work for her.

Yolanda's prayer for the church is "that all people could become one, so all can love (without hatred) and all could participate and get along well."

Eve

Eve, in her early 20s, speaks earnestly of her love for Christ, saying she wonders if God gets tired of her talking with him. She listens attentively when a small group from a local church makes a weekly visit to her group home for scripture and singing, and recently asked if she could pray in the group for one from the visiting group who had to undergo major surgery.

While living at home, Eve attended a church near her and said she felt welcome there "in a way, because a lot of my friends from school went there." She had been invited back for snacks and to dinners, and also to Bible study. She said she felt uncomfortable when they wanted her

Brett Winchester, left, a Brethren from Idaho, has used his experience with blindness to become an advocate for the visually impaired. He is pictured with a speaker at an Annual Conference event.



Mary Dulabaum

thought: violence, sexual preoccupation, or religion. Ned's injury led him to become interested in a newfound

to pray in front of a lot of people.

"I feel bad because my friends at church know more about God than I do," Eve said. She added that she would like to be able to go to church, but her mother is particular about who would take her as "she wants to protect me."

"I love God and I would do anything for him, and I want to learn more about God," she said.

When asked what she would change about the church if she could, she said she would not change anything, and she likes it when people (in church) cry and everybody hugs them.

Anna

Anna, a college graduate in her mid-30s, hasn't attended church lately because of needing to be near her mother, who has dementia. Anna uses crutches or a wheel-

chair, and though she hasn't participated in Bible studies or other groups in the church, she doesn't feel excluded, she said. She appreciates the ramp that is present at her church now, as she had difficulty walking up the steps previously.

Her prayer for the church would be that "everyone is accepted for who they really are, so everyone would be included."

Ned

Ned sustained a serious head injury about 25 years ago, the kind that the doctor said generally results in one of three excesses of

faith. "The spirit of God came to me," Ned recalled. "I didn't go to him."

Ned said he was warmly welcomed into the church he now attends. "They greeted me, took my coat, and invited me to a church meal that day. They offered to serve me (food) and helped my mom get the wheelchair in and out of the trunk," he added.

He said he was offered opportunities to minister after he had been attending for a while, such as at the beginning of the service when the pastor would ask him to pray. When the church discussed having a

DISABILITIES MINISTRY

The Disabilities Ministry is one of the oldest ministries of the Association of Brethren Caregivers (ABC); it still exists pretty much as it was conceived in 1984 by a group of disability advocates at Annual Conference. This group believed the church needed more education about how to work with and include people with disabilities into every facet of the church. Today, the Disabilities Ministry is committed to opening doors and building bridges in the Church of the Brethren and beyond, so that all may worship, serve, be served, learn, and grow in the presence of God as a valued member of our Christian community.

Through a volunteer committee, this ministry plans awareness-raising events and provides services for people interested in disabilities ministry. The committee develops many resources that congregations can use in their observance of Disabilities Awareness Month held each October. Materials about adapting ordinances, planning awareness activities, and worship resources are all available under the Disabilities Ministry pages of ABC's website (www.brethren-caregivers.org). The group also has established an annual award, titled the Open Roof Award, to recognize districts and congregations that are making great strides in disabilities ministry.

The committee's other activities include:

- Creating an electronic listserve so that individuals from across the denomination who are interested in disabilities ministry can discuss common concerns, share resources, and network.
- Providing MESSENGER-On-Tape, a subscription service offering monthly audiotaped reading of MESSENGER for people who are visually impaired.
- Offering several Annual Conference activities, such as informational insight sessions and a meal event. Also, this committee provides the "buddy system" at Conference, which connects families with disabilities to volunteers who provide help at meals and accompaniment services during business sessions.—**Mary Dulabaum**



Regina Roberts

Cara Atkins of Harrisonburg, Va., shared the moving account of her recovery from a serious car accident during Annual Conference reporting in 2004. Delegates gave her a standing ovation.

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pig roast, Ned offered to bring a pig, and they accepted his offer. Additionally, he enjoys passing out tracts, and recently enlisted the aid of another pastor in passing out tracts at a local parade. "I'm eager to serve," Ned said.

Ned said he appreciates his church's outreach, and commented, "I feel that they're a very loving bunch, and they're always looking for new disciples, so the doors are always open."

The only time Ned feels awkward is when he has to go downstairs to eat, as he has significant mobility problems. In fact, the only thing he would wish for in his church is to have a ramp on the inside.

...

The needs of people with disabilities for fellowship in a church family do not differ appreciably from anyone else's, but for interest in a church body to be sustained, they need to know they are needed and cared about. Fully a third of the people interviewed had a desire to attend church, and when transportation was available they attended.

If a person with a disability attends your church, you might ask if he or she has friends who would wish to attend, and find some way for transportation to be provided. It would also make sense to ask him or her to do some specific ministry that you believe would be of interest.

God creates flowers of varying hues, sizes, and textures. A mixed bouquet delights the eye. In God's mix of people of varying abilities, disabilities, and personalities, beauty is seen as well.

You can't find a more grateful and loving Christian than one whose presence and gifts are sought out and appreciated. These frequently are found among those whom society might call "the least of these." Christ reminds us that in seeking "the least" we are seeking him. 

Janet Stroup lives in Brethren, Mich., and is a former member of the Association of Brethren Caregivers' committee for disabilities ministry. She is a member of Lakeview Church of the Brethren.



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The church and disabilities

A case study in servanthood

by Audrey Osborne Mazur

Congregation takes risk to help person with mental illness

Anne was raised in the Church of the Brethren. She graduated college and became a teacher. In early adulthood she developed schizophrenia. Delusions and hallucinations distorted her thoughts.

Although she taught school for 13 years, her mental illness eventually stole her ability to hold any job. Living with her parents, she coped the best she could, developing comforting rituals to help order her increasingly frightening world.

Years later a health crisis sent her mother into the local Brethren retirement home for care, leaving Anne homeless. She was left with her intelligence, her savings, and her car. She spent eight years living in hotels. Finally, her savings shrinking, Anne began to live in her car.

She parked in the church lot for several seasons. She slept behind the wheel, surrounded by her belongings. She spent the days in Wal-Mart or at the mall.

Predictably, the neighbors worried about the presence of a homeless person in the neighborhood. The congregation grew increasingly concerned for Anne's safety. When someone could unlock the doors for her she used the church's facilities, but they knew Christ's example called them to do more.

Each in turn—the church board, the deacons, the lawyer with whom they consulted, the district staff, and the police—all confessed they did not know what to do. Five members responded to a call for volunteers to form a task group. With no precedent to follow, they prayerfully worked to meet Anne's needs.

Their immediate goal was to provide

shelter. Bill and Karen Smith worked to gain Anne's trust. The church designated outreach funds. The district granted some financial help. The committee found a gracious landlord with an available apartment. They fixed it up and furnished it. Finally, Anne agreed to move in.

The Smiths drove her, unsure of whether she would stay. She did stay but

was nervous in its support of this ministry. Some thought Anne was manipulative. But the committee has kept communication flowing. The congregation has hosted several speakers on the topic of mental illness.

Concerned members have chosen not to stand in the way when decisions regarding Anne have come for a congregational vote.

Schizophrenia is not an easy illness with

NOTE: While the congregation was willing to share its story, all names have been changed due to the sensitivities of the topic and a desire for confidentiality.

"These individuals can give love even when love is not returned. They truly understand sincere love and are living it out. It has been a fabulous example of people stepping up to be servants."

never unpacked the brown paper bags containing all her belongings.

"We accepted her on her own terms," Karen remembers, "It was just wonderfully satisfying to know she was dry and warm."

The church paid Anne's rent and utilities for four years. Eventually the court declared her incompetent and appointed the church guardianship. At the judge's request, two church members stepped into the legal role of guardians in order to manage paperwork as needed. Anne then became eligible for Social Security.

The past three years, this government assistance has provided just enough to pay Anne's rent and utilities. The church no longer includes Anne in its budget. She continues to live in her own peculiar but frugal way. From her remaining life savings she budgets \$1.50 per day for all her living expenses. With this she buys food, saves for car insurance, and makes any purchases.

The committee continues to be involved in Anne's care. They are clear though that, "The goal is to get her the maximum level of independence, not to make her dependent."

As with most decisions in any church's life, the congregation has not been unani-

which to work, or to live. It prevents Anne from being able to accept friendship, hugs, or even food from others. She cannot invite people into her apartment or show thanks. She will not change her rigid ways.

"She doesn't do things this way to make life difficult for us. She does this because this is the way she's always done things," Karen explains.

Pastor Don White affirms the committee's work.

"These individuals can give love even when love is not returned," White says. "They truly understand sincere love and are living it out. This ministry has been totally done by lay leadership. It has been a fabulous example of people stepping up to be servants."

Bill Smith wants people to know: "Servanthood is what is making the difference. Churches can do this."

And Karen summarizes, "When working with anyone with physical or mental disabilities the same barriers are always there: financial and health. The goals are always the same, too: independence and dignity. The joy comes from providing those goals."

Audrey Osborne Mazur is a member of Black Rock Church of the Brethren in Southern Pennsylvania District.



The church and disabilities

Support and struggle

by Karen Doss Bowman

Virlina group focuses on developmental disabilities ministry

Like most parents of children with developmental disabilities—afflictions such as autism, mental retardation, and cerebral palsy—Doris and the late Bob Jones, of Roanoke, Va., wrestled most with one basic concern: Who will take care of my child when I am no longer able to do so? Their adopted son, David, had suffered brain damage as an infant in Korea, and when he became an adult the Joneses wanted to find a suitable place for him to live and ensure that quality care for him would continue after their deaths.

The Virlina District's Developmental Disabilities Ministry (DDM) was started about 10 years ago by the Joneses and other concerned parents to promote awareness among congregations about the needs of developmentally disabled people. The committee's ongoing primary mission has been to establish a group home that would provide long-term care for the special-needs population.

During the early 1990s, soon after Bob Jones—a former pastor and past Virlina District executive for outdoor ministries—was diagnosed with cancer, the Joneses moved David into a residence at Virginia Baptist Children's Home in Salem, Va. "The home atmosphere is much more desirable than an institution," Jones says.

Still, with only six residents per house, space is limited at the Baptist facility. Jones and other parents on the DDM committee hope the Church of the Brethren will establish a similar facility to accommodate special-needs children within the denomination. When the committee was first set up, the idea was explored with the Association of Brethren Caregivers and the Bridgewater Retirement Community in Virginia, but to no avail.

The committee has made efforts to educate Virlina congregations about develop-

mentally disabled people and to offer insight into how to minister to that population and their families. They produced a video, "All of God's People," which has been shown at district conference and distributed to all district congregations, and purchased a number of resources for the Virlina District library. Cindy Barnum-Steggerda, former chair of the committee, has been working on a Sunday school curriculum for disabled members.

"There is the need and desire to get into the congregations to share how we go about truly welcoming and making families feel welcome," says Emma Jean Woodard, Virlina's associate district executive. "Our tendency is to shy away from them and not respond. That doesn't help them want to come back."

The group also provides loving support to each of the members, sharing information on legal and financial matters or offering sympathetic ears. Having a child who is developmentally disabled can be very isolating, says Dorothy Shumate. She

and her husband, Virlina District executive David Shumate, have an autistic son, John David. When he was younger, Dorothy Shumate recalls, John David would sometimes scream for no apparent reason—even during church.

"It would be real embarrassing because people think, 'Look how badly behaved they are,'" Shumate says. "And you can't really explain it, so you try to avoid being in public."

Jones sometimes feels discouraged that her and Bob's dream of a Church of the Brethren home for the disabled has not materialized. But she doesn't give up hope and is convinced that the ministry is an important one.

"There's always going to be that need," she says. "Children are born every day with disabilities and will need a place. The Church of the Brethren should be able to meet that need. It's a big one, but it's very vital." ❧

Karen Doss Bowman is a freelance writer based in Bridgewater, Va. She is a member of Sunrise Church of the Brethren in Harrisonburg.



Kendra Flory

Junior high youth have for a number of years volunteered at Inspiration Center in Lake Geneva, Wis., on one of the General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office's summer workcamps. Inspiration Center is a camp for people with mental and physical disabilities.



Hospitality, Andrew style

Churches must be ready to accept gifts of the disabled, too

by David S. Young

With his signature smile, our language-impaired son Andrew has handed many a bulletin to people at Annual Conference over the years.

Given our family's interest in revitalization of the church, we have learned Andrew is actually the best gauge to understand what is happening in congregations. Observing his mannerisms tells us not only how he is being received but also what is making these churches grow.

When the congregation we recently served in renewal ministry awarded sabbath rest, we knew that, having Andrew, I could not travel for study and inspiration. Over the years staying faithful to family values has yielded many gains spiritually. So, given our parameters, why not visit growing Church of the Brethren congregations together? What could this teach us about hospitality, we wondered, not only for the handicapped but also for all visitors to any church?

Actually, none of these growing churches had greeters at the door, at least when we arrived. For the challenged, that is a need since you may have to look for a restroom. Arrival time can vary because one can get held up with the extra preparation required, like making sure personal care is complete, that everything is in place, and, when in the car, that Andrew didn't forget his Bible. But after that, while each church was totally different, we found a welcome that went deep in the heart.

As interpreters for Andrew, we discovered 10 points that give a perspective on what hospitality entails for him.

1. Demonstrating strength at the center

What these congregations did have in place was something greeters alone can't create: having things together. At each church, Andrew was so settled. By his mannerisms we could tell there was a low level of conflict, people were intentional in what they were doing, and everyone worked together. In church renewal this is called "strength at the center," a sense of identity and of what makes them unique as a church, as well as a high level of cooperation and communication, especially noted in leaders.

2. Having a high spiritual index

The second thing Andrew responded to was that each of these churches has a high value on spiritual purpose. Like everyone, Andrew has his own concerns on his heart: concerns about work at his sheltered workshop, about people who are ill, or the car he saw banged up on the way to church.

At one of the growing churches, they knelt for morning prayer. Since then, Andrew has knelt for bedtime prayers every night.

3. Respected by the pastor

Each of these pastors had high energy that translated into joyously greeting Andrew, often by name. None of these pastors tried to "high-five" Andrew, which only increases his excitability and which we as parents then have to deal with most of the rest of the day. Pastors and others treated him like an adult, not a child. Given that he is reaching 30, a normal handshake settles him and conveys respect for him as an adult.

4. Putting people at ease

In these churches people tried to put us at ease with Andrew. While we usually sit in the back so as not to be disruptive, often people tried to alleviate our discomfort when he was joyfully excited in the service. With some prompting, Andrew can settle in these churches. The people factor was translated into inviting us for a congregational dinner, which can have its own challenges. Not that Andrew is unmindful, but food can fall on the floor. The signal was soon out: "You are welcome, even if we are inconvenienced."

5. Receiving people's contributions

Another big factor was that these congregations were able to receive Andrew's contribution.

Because he is so concerned, for instance, when someone has a cast on a leg, Andrew expresses how he wishes that person will get better. People were patient with his inquiries. They received his "hos-



Submitted by David S. Young

Sitting with his family, Andrew Young kneels for prayer while visiting a Brethren congregation in Pennsylvania.



Andrew Young, left, stands with some new friends at a Church of the Brethren congregation in Pennsylvania.

David S. Young

pitality” when he opened the door and waited for them to go through. Hospitality paradoxically can mean receiving what others have to offer.

6. Focusing on internals, not externals

For Andrew, churches do not have to worry about external factors. At these churches parking was at a premium, hallways were packed, and buildings were older but very clean.

For Andrew externals mean nothing. Taking time to speak with Andrew makes a big impact on him. He remembers churches where people take time to say “hello” to him and then wait as he responds back. Building relationships is definitely a factor in hospitality for Andrew.

7. Having clear beliefs about Jesus and costly discipleship

Another very important factor for Andrew was that each of these churches had clear beliefs in God, and in every case expressed Brethren ideals. We heard about Jesus, counting well the cost in discipleship, family values, and service. Andrew frequently talks about talking to Jesus, making peace, caring about family, and helping the poor. When pastors would preach, we could hear Andrew repeat things from the sermon. Andrew feels at home when he hears Christian beliefs he recognizes.

8. Being a giving church

When the offering plate comes around, Andrew pulls out his wallet and opens it up, giving generously from money he earns at work. We can’t be sure if he can tell these churches are generous, but in every case their giving was either near or

exceeding budget. Does Andrew feel more welcome around people who give like he does? He certainly has a great compassion for those who are hungry or in need. In each of these churches there were mission projects at home and afar, like 89 junior highers at a youth event at the church or a workcamp in Mexico. Andrew responds to projects to help others.

9. Being a positive environment

Andrew does well being around positive people. He shies away from negative people, people complaining about one another, and people who have unresolved conflict in their lives. We noticed his sensitivities early in his life and are amazed how his radar works. In these congregations we did not hear anything negative said, even when there would have been opportunity. People were pos-

itive about their church. They talked about their positive feelings in a very natural, inviting way.

10. Leading people to Jesus

In the Bible, Andrew is a rather silent disciple, one who leads his brother Peter to Jesus. Likewise, with our son Andrew, people say how refreshing it is to be with him. When you become friends with Andrew, you are a friend forever. He has cards to write notes to nearly everyone he meets. People say they see what is impor-

If we summarized what hospitality means for Andrew, it would be pointing people to Jesus. Andrew has a way of taking you where you are, making you feel welcome, and seeing how faith can make a difference.

tant because of him; they smile because he always is smiling. Andrew likes everybody. He sees no distinctions and will pat you on the back for a job well done. Andrew has a way of making you feel better.

If we summarized what hospitality means for Andrew, it would be pointing people to Jesus. Andrew has a way of taking you where you are, making you feel welcome, and seeing how faith can make a difference. While we think of ways to welcome the disabled, with all due concern for factors that need to be in place, perhaps of equal importance is to ask how ready we are to receive their gifts. For Andrew, that would be to point you to Jesus’ unconditional love. That’s hospitality, Andrew style! 

David S. Young lives in Ephrata, Pa., and is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren in intentional interim ministry. He has a doctor of ministry degree in church renewal.



The walk through the

Onset of disability tests life and faith by Carol Yeazell

Some things in life are predictable. All humans will at one time or another walk through valleys of trial and discouragement, the things we call “hard stuff.”

What is not predictable is when the times of drought will appear. Winter and spring are not the same each year, and so it is with the things that bring detours to our lives. We don’t know when the rock slide will suddenly block the path we tread. As much as we may think we are prepared for these times, there really is no way to prepare.

For one of the valley periods in my life, traversing through it was not quick. The question remained month after month and year after year: Would it ever end?

It may be helpful to know there was not a struggle with “empty-nest syndrome” when our youngest child left home for college. Life was full of meaning and purpose; thus, my existence was not tied up in holding on to David and Melody. It was their turn to embrace the next phase of living, and I was quite content when it happened.

You may ask, “So was there shock, anger, or resentment when Melody had to return home at age 26 due to illness (*myasthenia gravis*, see sidebar) that had her totally bedridden within six months?” Yes, those emotions and others were prominent as my husband, Gene, and I struggled to deal with what seemed an unreal situation.

At the time I was executive director of

Beth-El Farmworker Ministry Inc., a not-for-profit mission that assisted migrant farm workers in Wimauma, Fla. Many positive things were occurring through the efforts of the mission, with dreams and visions becoming reality. The work was fulfilling and satisfying. I was back in touch with a segment of society that has been treated

unfairly in this country, and I became an advocate whenever the opportunity arose.

But the demands of caring for Melody, spending six days at the mission, and operating a business forced me to pause and take stock of what was important. A four-day retreat helped me to determine that I loved what I was doing at the mission but would have to give it up if I wanted to remain sane and healthy. I did not want to leave what I loved because of Melody’s situation. I knew I had to do this for myself, or I would carry resentment toward Melody. When the decision was made to leave there was peace, and I knew that I would not blame her.

All goals and aspirations were tabled. How well I remember one evening in the home of some prayer partners hearing the hostess say to me, “You are going to do spiritual warfare in your own home.” It was early in Melody’s illness, when she still ventured out, and she was with me that evening. Neither of us was excited to hear that prophetic utterance. My spirit was fighting a royal battle, for I guess I knew even then



Carol Yeazell with Melody at her wedding in 2002—about 10 years after being diagnosed with myasthenia gravis.

DISEASE AND HEALING

Melody Yeazell was diagnosed with *myasthenia gravis*, a disease that affects the nerves and muscles in the body. Often it occurs in younger women in their 20s or older men.

During Melody’s crisis stage she could not chew or swallow, nor could she move as all her muscles were weak. This meant someone had to care for all her physical needs. She progressed from being totally bedridden, to being in a wheelchair, then a cane, and finally did not require any assistive device. In the 10th

year she began physical therapy and continued to make remarkable progress in regaining health and strength.

Melody now has been married four years, something that most people thought would never happen, and she leads a full physical and spiritual life. There are still problems related to the disease and the medical treatments she underwent, and she continues to take a small dosage of a drug that allows her to maintain strength throughout the day.

valley

that the words were truth, and it was the last thing I wanted to hear.

Spiritual warfare it was. During the years of illness—six spent in bed almost 100 percent of the time—there were moments when we had to make arbitrary decisions regarding her care, and she was not in compliance with the choices. Those were difficult times, for she deserved to be treated with dignity and respect.

About the only excursions from the house for Gene and me were hurried meals at restaurants. Even this was stressful, as we never knew what we would find upon return.

Melody and I became prayer partners during the 10 years of extended illness, but this caused a tremendous strain in Gene's and my marriage. She expected me to keep things in confidence, and Gene, who felt left out, wanted information.

There were many moments of anguish, other times of helplessness, and years of struggle, for Melody had numerous brushes with death. What kept me standing (Eph. 6:13b) was the fact that early in the illness two women separately spoke to Melody the same promise from Psalm 118:17. Personalizing it they said, "You shall not die, but live, and proclaim the glories of the Lord."

There was a long period when God's voice was silenced. There were no more answers to Melody's many questions. No longer was I an intermediary. Melody had to learn to hear God. I admit it took a long time to have confidence in listening to the Holy Spirit after those years of aimlessness.

I would never wish anyone else to walk through the valley, but in doing so one always learns more about God's character, and also about our feeble attempts at being Christ-like. 

Carol Yeazell is a member of the General Board Congregational Life Teams and interim coordinator for Area 3 (Southeast). She and her husband live in Arden, N.C.

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2 Samuel: The monarchy struggles by David Leiter

The book of 1 Samuel ended with the death of King Saul; 2 Samuel begins with David's shaky succession to the monarchy. This succession does not occur automatically. While David is anointed as king at Hebron, Abner—commander over Saul's forces—makes Saul's son, Ishbaal, king over the northern territories of Palestine.

In simplistic terms, for the time being David is king over Judah (the south) and Ishbaal is king over Israel (the north). The division of the united kingdom into the northern and southern kingdoms does not officially occur until 1 Kings, but we have a hint of it here in the early chapters of 2 Samuel with the temporary division between the north and the south.

Resistance and hostility mounts

between David's followers and those of Ishbaal. After several brief skirmishes, Joab—the commander of David's forces—kills Abner, and Ishbaal himself is killed. David comes out smelling like a rose. He condemns the killers of Ishbaal because he was one of Saul's sons. At the same time it is because of the killers' dirty work that he then becomes king over the united kingdom.

David is the primary subject of the book of 2 Samuel, but his portrayal is not a most favorable one. One must turn to the book of 1 Chronicles to find a more positive depiction of King David. Instead, 2 Samuel is, in fact, a quite violent book with stories that spell darkness, trouble, and tragedy for David's house.

Bathsheba's beauty attracts David

although she is married to Uriah the Hittite. David uses his royal powers to have Uriah killed in battle so he can marry Bathsheba. God chastises David through the prophet Nathan, and he punishes David through the death of the first-born child of David and Bathsheba.

David's house is further plagued by his son Amnon's rape of Amnon's sister Tamar. Absalom, David's son and brother of both Amnon and Tamar, kills Amnon to avenge the violence done to his sister. At first David is told that Absalom killed all of David's other sons, but in reality only Amnon was killed. This event caused tension between David and Absalom.

Eventually Absalom captures the attention of the people through his



charisma and declares himself king at Hebron. The support given to Absalom forces David to leave Jerusalem, and Absalom eventually occupies Jerusalem and sets up shop there as king. Absalom then pursues David, who is on the run, but eventually Joab kills Absalom and David once again becomes king of Israel.

There is one last revolt against the house of David as Sheba, son of Birchri, from the tribe of Benjamin, convinced the people from the north to follow him. Joab pursues Sheba to the city of Abel and brokers his death from a wise woman of the city. The last chapter of the book ends the dark episodes of David's kingdom with God's punishment of David for taking a census of the land. Although the text does not explicitly state why the taking of such a census was a "sin," David repents, and God gives David the choice of three punishments. David chooses the punishment of a pestilence that results in the death of 70,000 people.

Amid the dark and violent shadow cast over the book of 2 Samuel there are a few bright spots. First, the ark

of God that had earlier been taken by the Philistines returns to Jerusalem. Second, in 2 Samuel 7, God promises to build a house for David that will be an everlasting dynasty for the king. This is an unconditional covenant bestowed upon David from God that David's kingdom will last forever. And third, David expressed compassion for Jonathan's son Mephibosheth and gave him all of the property of



"David Covets Bathsheba" by Julius Schnoor von Carlsfeld

David is the primary subject of the book of 2 Samuel, but his portrayal is not a most favorable one. One must turn to the book of 1 Chronicles to find a more positive depiction of King David. Instead, 2 Samuel is, in fact, a quite violent book with stories that spell darkness, trouble, and tragedy for David's house.

Saul's house and a permanent seat at his table. But again, all of this is overshadowed by revolts, wars with the Philistines, incest and revenge, adultery, and God's anger.

2 Samuel's portrayal of David has its ups and downs. The book depicts a king who is on the run from his adversaries and who has internal struggles with his immediate family. What is missing in this book is the solid depiction of the glorious and magnificent King David that has emerged within church tradition

down through the ages. Be that as it may, 2 Samuel tells the story of the life of God's anointed who ruled over the united kingdom with perseverance and good fortune. ❧

David Leiter is pastor of Friendship Church of the Brethren in Linthicum, Md. He also serves as a member of the Biblical Studies faculty at the Ecumenical Institute of Theology in Baltimore.

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 December: 1 Kings, by Kim McDowell.

2 SAMUEL: A CLOSER LOOK

Many of the stories in 2 Samuel originated by word of mouth (oral tradition) and were passed down along generational lines. Eventually the stories were put into writing as early as the seventh century BCE and underwent an editorial process that continued into the sixth century BCE. Famous stories include: The return of the ark to Jerusalem, God's covenant with David, David and Bathsheba, David's compassion for Mephibosheth, and the census-taking followed by punishment.

At the Brethren Disaster Auction in Lebanon, Pa., Sept. 23-24, 450 volunteers assembled 30,000 Gift of the Heart Health Kits in just two hours and 25 minutes. The auction is sponsored by Atlantic Northeast and Southern Pennsylvania Districts.

Brethren respond to Katrina, evacuees across the country

Before Hurricane Katrina became one of the worst disasters in US history, Church of the Brethren staff were at work anticipating needs in the storm's aftermath. Disaster Child Care (DCC) volunteers were put on alert even before the storm hit Aug. 29, and when it made landfall staff at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., prepared a shipment of relief materials for distribution by Church World Service (CWS). That first shipment of 5,000 blankets and 5,040 health kits reached Louisiana Aug. 31. The denomination also issued an immediate appeal for donations to the Emergency Disaster Fund and for Gift of the Heart Kits.

In the weeks following, as the nation received report after report of the suffering of New Orleans, the plight of evacuees, and the mounting death toll, Brethren response continued: More shipments of relief materials were made almost daily, Emergency Response director Roy Winter was assigned to work

John Minnich/Brethren Disaster Auction



directly with the American Red Cross, DCC set up shop at a variety of shelters and emergency centers across the country, a clean-up project was begun in Alabama, hundreds of thousands of dollars were given to the Emergency Disaster Fund, a series of grants from that fund supported the relief effort, and thousands of Gift of the Heart Kits were collected.

Disaster Child Care: DCC volunteers, who serve at the request of FEMA and the Red Cross, waited more than a week until they could begin serving children and families at evacuation destinations. Eventually child care was put into place at several centers across the country. Many volunteers were flown to their destinations by nonprofit group Angel Flights.

As of late September, DCC had worked in Lafayette and Shreveport, La.; Kingwood, W.Va.; Pensacola and Fort Walton Beach, Fla.; Denver, Colo.; Los Angeles and San Bernardino, Calif.; and Norfolk, Va. The team working at the Cajun Dome in Lafayette was evacuated to Shreveport in advance of Hurricane Rita and set up child care there before traveling back to Lafayette in late September to continue service.

New Orleans on Sept. 18, 2005. The city skyline looks over a neighborhood still flooded three weeks after Hurricane Katrina.

Win Henderson/FEMA



Teams also were on-site and ready for service in Wichita, Kan.; Grand Rapids, Mich.; Cleveland, Ohio; and Blackstone, Va.; but were not needed because expected evacuees were sent elsewhere.

DCC received so many requests to do additional trainings as a result of Katrina that the program appointed a volunteer coordinator to handle all the requests. Several additional trainings were scheduled to enlist new volunteers for a response that spans more states than DCC has ever served at any one time.

Service Ministries: Through Sept. 28, 29 shipments of relief materials had been made by Service Ministries staff at the Brethren Service Center. Totals for the relief goods shipped to Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Texas, and Virginia were: 27,700 blankets, 74,880 Gift of the Heart Health Kits, 6,750 School Kits, 304 Kids Kits, and 4,115 Clean-up Buckets.

The shipments also included a first for Interchurch Medical Assistance Inc.: response to a domestic disaster in the US. Twenty IMA Medicine Boxes were sent to meet basic health needs in two shelters in Louisiana.

Brethren Disaster Response: A Brethren Disaster Response clean-up project began Sept. 13 in Citronelle, Ala., in partnership with Southeastern District and Cedar Creek Church of the Brethren. The project soon added home repairs to its clean-up work.

Project work has been coming from two sources: a committee created by Cedar Creek, which works with Brethren Disaster Response and provides a listing of members and non-members who need help;

and the Mobile VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), which is providing the balance of clients. As of late September the project was still working in the early stages of recovery, doing debris removal, placing tarps, and making roof repairs and more extensive repairs due to fallen trees on homes. "We start early, we go strong, we are exhausted. But we are happily doing God's work," disaster project director Mike Walker of Glenville, Pa., said.

The project covers a broad area of service across Mobile County and southern Washington County. Full volunteer crews will be needed for many months to successfully complete the work at hand.

Emergency Disaster Fund: As of late September, \$110,000 was given from the Emergency Disaster Fund in five grants: an initial grant of \$15,000 to support CWS shipments of Gift of the Heart Health Kits, material aid, and organization of long-term recovery; \$50,000 supporting a greatly expanded CWS appeal made later in September; \$25,000 for Emergency Response/Service Ministries efforts including Disaster Child Care and Brethren congregations responding to needs of survivors; \$15,000 supporting the Brethren clean-up project in Alabama; and \$5,000 to Southern Plains District, which provided aid to evacuees sheltering near two Brethren congregations in Louisiana.

Church of the Brethren congregations and districts have held many special collections to support the Katrina effort. In just a few examples, on Sept. 26, Southeastern District received a love offering totaling almost \$36,000; Virginia District gave more than \$52,000 in a special collection Sept. 18; and the 29th annual Brethren Disaster Auction in Lebanon, Pa., sponsored by Atlantic Northeast and

Southern Pennsylvania districts, was expected to raise more than \$600,000 for disaster relief including work related to Katrina by year's end.

More than 10,000 people attended the week-end of events Sept. 24-25 at the Lebanon Fairgrounds, including 450 volunteers who assembled 30,000 Gift of the Heart Health Kits and volunteers who "blitz-built" a home for an Ohio River valley family who lost their home to flooding last winter. "It was eye-staggering when some 30,000 health kits got produced in two hours and 25 minutes," auction co-founder Jay M. Witman said. "There was not a dry eye."

Long-term partnerships: Much of the Brethren response focused on supporting the work of long-time partners the Red Cross and Church World Service. Winter was requested to participate in the Red Cross' coordination of mass care, working out of Washington, D.C. With a team from the Harvard School of Public Health, he helped make a field assessment of survivors in Louisiana. The Sept. 8-11 trip to many of the 290 shelters and emergency centers in southern Louisiana helped the Red Cross assess the need for mental health care and counseling and the need for child care.

When the extent of the disaster began to unfold, CWS soon made the announcement that it expected Hurricane Katrina to be the largest US relief and recovery effort in its history. On Aug. 31, CWS executive director John L. McCullough expressed particular concern "about the plight of what we anticipate to be a high percentage of poor people, the elderly, and other vulnerable populations. Stories of individuals who had to stay in their homes because they couldn't afford to evacuate personify that crisis."

For information about Brethren Disaster Response see www.brethren-disaster-response.org. For information about Disaster Child Care see www.disasterchildcare.org. For updates on the Church of the Brethren hurricane response or to give to the Emergency Disaster Fund see www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/NewsUpdates.htm. Checks made payable to the Emergency Disaster Fund may be mailed to 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. For stories of hurricane response by Brethren individuals, congregations, districts, colleges, and other organizations, see www.brethren.org/genbd/ersm/HurricanePosting.htm.

Roy Winter, director of Emergency Response for the General Board, helped load boxes of health kits assembled by volunteers at the Brethren Disaster Auction in Lebanon, Pa., Sept. 23-24. The kits were transported to the Brethren Service Center warehouse in New Windsor, Md., where they will be distributed on behalf of Church World Service.

UPCOMINGEVENTS

Nov. 4-5 Shenandoah District Conference, Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 4-6 Illinois/Wisconsin District Conference, Springfield (Ill.) Church of the Brethren

Nov. 6 National Junior High Sunday

Nov. 11-12 Virginia District Conference, Beckley, W.Va.

Nov. 13 National Donor Sabbath, sponsored by the Association of Brethren Caregivers

Nov. 14-17 "Nourishing the Soul" Clergywomen's Retreat, East Troy, Wis.

Nov. 18-19 Brethren Benefit Trust board meeting, Brethren Home Community, New Oxford, Pa.

Nov. 29-Dec. 2 Ecumenical Stewardship Center Leadership Seminar, "Images: Proclaiming Stewardship—Voice and Vision," Daytona Beach, Fla.



John Minnich/Brethren Disaster Auction

HIROSHIMA, JAPAN

This past Aug. 6 was hot and mostly sunny in Hiroshima, Japan. Passing clouds provided occasional relief from the sun for some 55,000 people gathered at Peace Memorial Park.

The sky was not unlike Aug. 6, 1945, except for the clouds. Sixty years earlier those clouds would have meant the difference between life and death. That's because it was the clear weather that moved Hiroshima to the top of the list of likely targets for the world's first atomic bomb. At exactly 8:15 a.m. the crowd observed that fateful action with a silent prayer and then the tolling of the Peace Bell. The doves released a few minutes later flew into a sky that promises hope, but also the threat of peril.

As in prior years, the commemoration ceremony was a plea for the worldwide abolition of nuclear weapons. In his annual peace declaration, the mayor called for the United Nations to establish a special committee to plan for the achievement and maintenance of a nuclear-free world. Two young students, representing the children of Hiroshima, issued a commitment to peace, saying, "We renew our determination to carry on the quest of the *hibakusha* (survivors of the A-bomb), to continue telling the world about the horrors of nuclear weapons, to learn and pass on the Hiroshima story, until we build a world at peace."

Church of the Brethren General Board resolution

On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the World Friendship Center in Hiroshima, the Church of the Brethren General Board commends the center for its tireless efforts to work for peace, share stories about the personal suffering caused by nuclear weapons, and build friendships across borders.

We in the Church of the Brethren recall our many years of partnership with the center, particularly through Brethren Volunteer Service. We celebrate the profound, interfaith witness of the center that has been born from the ashes of Hiroshima. We honor the past and express hope for the future by reaffirming, with you, our commitment to creating a world free from both nuclear weapons and war.

anniversary events as guests of the WFC board included BVS director Dan McFadden and former WFC volunteer directors Mary Ann Albert, Bev and Joel Eikenberry, David and Evie Bertsche, Ed Dougherty and Beth Bentley, and Liz Bauer. Current directors are Don and Pauline Hess of Massanutten, Va., who began a two-year BVS term in May.

Brethren also were represented by more than 1,200 paper cranes folded the month before by children and adults at Annual Conference, and by a resolution issued by the General Board. As

members of the WFC board were given Church of the Brethren logo pins, they learned how the elements of the logo—the cross, the wave, the dove, the curve of the globe—evoke the waters of baptism and commitment to following Jesus, which compel Brethren to work for peace throughout the world.

The evening of Aug. 6, a World Friendship Center group made up of American guests and Japanese hosts joined thousands of others assembling traditional paper lanterns inscribed with messages of peace. As strains of Mozart's *Requiem* could be heard from the nearby concert stage, people lit their lanterns and set them into the river. The bright spots of color punctuated the inky night and floated past the skeletal A-bomb Dome in a profound juxtaposition of past and present, darkness and light, horror and beauty.



Mary Ann Albert, right, chair of the American Committee of the World Friendship Center, visits with Michiko Yamaoka, a survivor of the atomic bomb. Part of Yamaoka's story was told in the Aug. 1 issue of *Time* magazine.

Wendy McFadden is publisher and executive director of Brethren Press.

Recent grants from the General Board's Emergency Disaster Fund

- \$20,000 to Church World Service (CWS) for food security in Ethiopia
- \$8,000 to help displaced people from Darfur, Sudan, who have taken refuge in Chad, given through CWS
- \$5,000 to CWS for severe flooding in the Maharashtra area of India
- \$5,000 to CWS in the wake of Hurricane Dennis in Cuba
- \$1,500 for Wright, Wyo., through CWS, after a tornado devastated the low-income coal-mining community

(For grants related to Hurricane Katrina, see the article on page 22)



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) unit 265 completed training Aug. 12 at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Volunteers, their congregations or hometowns, and places of service are as follows:

First row from left: Emily Tyler, McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, to General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office; Monica Rice, Akron (Ohio) Springfield Church of the Brethren, to General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry office, Elgin, Ill.; Jodi Eller, Church of the Brethren member from Merritt Island, Fla., project to be determined; Nikki D'Adamo, Mechanicsville, Va., to The Junction, Northern Ireland; Sanju Walker, Waukegan, Ill., to La Puente Home, Alamosa, Colo.

Second row: Dean Feasenhiser, Fruitland (Idaho) Church of the Brethren, to Brethren Historical Library and Archives, Elgin, Ill.; Ferne Steckman, Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, to SERRV International, Brethren Service Center, New Windsor, Md.; Alexander Kruger, Speyer, Germany, to Tri-City Homeless Coalition, Fremont, Calif.; Todd Flory, McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren, to General Board Brethren Witness/Washington (D.C.) Office; Stephanie Grossnickle, Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren, to Catholic Worker House, San Antonio; Kyle McCord, Panther Creek Church of the Brethren, Adel, Iowa, to Northern Ohio District of the Church of the Brethren, Ashland, Ohio; Samuel Baiduc, Wienhaussen, Germany, to Camp Ithiel, Gotha, Fla.

Third row: Christian Harr, Michelbach, Germany, to Catholic Worker House, San Antonio; Rachel Long, Woodinville, Wash., to Women in Black, Serbia/Yugoslavia; Stuart Wood, Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren, Bridgewater, Va., to Virginians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty; Julia Rosenblau, Eppelboru, Germany, to Su Casa Catholic Worker House, Chicago.

Brethren Press revives its Covenant Bible Study Series

Two Brethren Press titles introduced at Annual Conference this year were the first to be published in the Covenant Bible Study Series since 1999: *Romans: Church at the Crossroads* by Virginia Wiles, a Pauline scholar; and *Side by Side*, an analysis of Bible stories that sometimes complement and sometimes compete, by Frank Ramirez.

The publication of the two Covenant titles signals the renewal of one of the most popular Bible study series published by Brethren Press. More Covenant titles to come include *Voices in the Book of Job* by Bob Neff, this fall; and *Exodus* by Connie Burkholder and *The Exile* by Joel Kline, to be available in 2006.

The original Covenant series was connected with the People of the Covenant small-group program run cooperatively by the Church of the Brethren General Board and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The program closed in 1997, but Brethren Press continued publishing several titles still in the pipeline. The several dozen titles completed by then had sold a combined total of more than 173,400 copies.

"Because of the popularity of the series and the fact that we continued to receive requests, we decided to resume publishing," said Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press.

All 33 Covenant Bible Study titles, including the new ones, appear in a first-ever Adult Resources Catalog from Brethren Press. Covenant Bible Studies cost \$6.95 plus shipping and handling. Each includes 10 sessions appropriate for small-group study. To order, call 800-441-3712.



Leaders and groups from the US Church of the Brethren have visited India several times in recent years to help work at reconciliation between the Church of North India and the India Brethren. Here, 2004 Annual Conference moderator Chris Bowman is warmly welcomed to India in early 2004.

Supreme Court of India decides key church case

The Supreme Court of India has dismissed the claims of the Church of North India (CNI) that it is the legal successor of the First District Church of the Brethren in India.

"This decision affirms the continuing legal existence of the church as well as the trusts, and vindicates the position of the Brethren in India," according to Darryl Sankey, communicator for the Church of the Brethren in India. There has been no comment from CNI.

The legal ruling in early May provides clarity that may help to resolve claims to church properties, said Merv Keeney, executive director of Global Mission Partnerships for the General Board. The properties have been an ongoing source of tension between the two churches in India.

The First District Church of the Brethren in India, which emerged from Brethren mission efforts begun in 1895, joined in the movement toward formation of CNI in 1970. Some Brethren members and congregations began leaving CNI in 1978.

The General Board has maintained an official relationship with CNI since its formation in 1970, but re-forming the relationship with the India Brethren is relatively new. Following the split between these segments of the church in India, a review of the India relationships brought an Annual Conference study and response in 1988. More recent review of this relationship led to an action by the 2003 Annual Conference to affirm rebuilding relationship with the India Brethren alongside the relationship with CNI.

"While we might assume that a Supreme Court decision has immediate impact, the situation in India is not as automatic," Keeney said. "It appears that even a ruling by this national court will take time to impact the communities where CNI and the Brethren exist together."

Thriving, with scars

The last column I offered for this space centered on a theme of a double lightning strike.

Although thunderstorms are much more rare here in western Oregon than in many other parts of the US, I'm struck by the lightning theme again.

If you've ever traveled in the Pacific Northwest, you'll find many small towns whose economic base was once the lumber industry. Local city parks or town welcome signs are augmented by a horizontal slice of tree trunk towering higher than a tall man standing on a wagon bed. Kids scramble up to get their pictures taken astride it, while grown-ups waggle their heads to imagine the vertical size of such a monster and wonder at the energy it would



LANI WRIGHT

take to fell it in the days before chainsaws and helicopters.

In our local Coiner Park, there's a living remnant of such a tree—still vertical. It bears a wide white scar laid down a 30-foot length of its trunk not by any blade, but by one of those rare lightning strikes. It's not one of the ancient, monstrous trees, but what's impressive is that, despite the damage inflicted years ago, it lives and thrives—scarred, yet whole—and tells the story of that powerful storm to any park visitor with open eyes.

That's how veterans of the US civil rights movement live today—scarred, but thriving (the ones I know, anyway). As time marks us all, many of the ordinary-people-turned-activist with firsthand memories of those days are slipping away, and the rest of us are left to remember via their written stories and songs.

We have at least one such song in the *Hymnal Supplement*. Since there is no room on the pages of the *Supplement* booklets to include biographical sketches and anecdotal sidebars, here is yet another installment of a "serial" version of *Hymnal Companion*. Attached to the original "My feet are tired" as it came to the selection committee were these stories:

• • •

Hymnal Supplement #1091, "My feet are tired"

Tune: WALKING FOR THE GLORY OF THE LORD

Text and music: Frances Smith Thomas (1917-1999)

In the early days of the history-making nonviolent bus protest in Montgomery, Ala., a newspaper reporter asked an elderly black woman whether she felt tired from walking several miles to and from her place of employment. "Well," she replied, "my feet are tired, but my soul is resting."

The composer dedicated the song "to the 50,000 Negroes of Montgomery who, using only the weapon of love, withstood insults, threats, arrests, and bombings in their struggle with injustice; and who, with their faces turned toward

freedom, kept 'walking for the glory of the Lord.' "

The song's premier performance was at the Montgomery Anniversary Concert in New York City on Dec. 5, 1956. It featured Coretta Scott King (wife of Martin Luther King Jr.) as soloist, with Jonathan Brice at the piano. Since then, Mrs. King has presented this song in many recitals throughout the country as one of a group of spirituals describing the spirit of bus protest.

Frances Smith Thomas, the peace and civil rights activist who wrote it, was a native of Columbia City, Ind., and a 1939 graduate of Manchester College. A music major at the college, Thomas studied social justice and international peace issues after Andrew Cordier, also a Manchester graduate and teacher (1923-1944), inspired her to do so.

After graduating from Manchester, Thomas and her husband, Cecil, taught at Lincoln School in Alabama, helping make the small, African-American school a viable experience for the young people of the community. Two of those students included Coretta Scott King and Jean Childs (1954) Young, wife of former UN ambassador Andrew Young.

During Fran Smith Thomas' memorial service, Coretta Scott King said, "In terms of our personal goals, they motivated, encouraged, and inspired us to reach for the highest and best. When it was time to go to college, it was the influence of Fran and Cecil Thomas that led Jean Childs and her sisters, Louise and Cora, to come to Manchester; my sister Edyth and I to go to Antioch College. . . . They made sure we had scholarships and other assistance to complete our college education."

After leaving Alabama, Fran and Cecil set up the first interracial work camp in the South in Nashville in 1943; they organized a bus protest caravan to Montgomery, Ala., in 1956; they organized a student delegation to Pakistan, India, and Ceylon in 1958; they established a conference on US-China relations in 1965; and they conducted a study tour of Japan in 1966.

After Cecil's death, Fran earned a master's degree and a doctorate in education from Michigan State University. In 1978, she was appointed to MSU's Department of Racial and Ethnic Studies, with special responsibility for developing the human rights program. She later worked for the School of Urban Affairs at MSU for 20 years. During the summers, she worked for the Martin Luther King Jr. Center for Social Change in Atlanta.

In her later years, Fran renewed her passion for music and became close to the Juilliard String Quartet, Dizzy Gillespie, and Isaac Stern. 

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



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

ONCAMPUS



Bridgewater College (Bridgewater, Va.)

Five alumni were inducted into the college's Athletic Hall of Fame as part of homecoming festivities on Oct. 14. The former Bridgewater athletes honored were Bruce C. Cowan, class of 1972; Charles J. DeWitt, class of 1976; Donna E. Nichols, class of 1978; Nancy Harker Roscher, class of 1976; and Thomas D. Wright, class of 1976.

Elizabethtown College (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

The groundbreaking ceremony for Elizabethtown's new James B. Hoover Center for Business took place Sept. 15. President Theodore E. Long served as master of ceremonies for the event, offering opening remarks and introducing other speakers. The \$5.2 million business center will be a two-story, 30,000-foot facility that will provide much-needed space for the growing business department.



Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.)

Juniata celebrated the official end of its "Uncommon Outcomes" capital campaign with a reception and fireworks display on Oct. 15. The campaign, which raised \$103,420,630, began in July 1998. . . . The women's volleyball team beat the University of La Verne, then ranked No. 4 in the AVCA Division III Top-25 poll, for the second time this season on Oct. 8.



University of La Verne (La Verne, Calif.)

Marlin Heckman, a 1958 alumnus and an academic librarian who retired in 2004 after a 42-year career—the final 32 years spent at La Verne—received a "Service to Alma Mater" degree during an alumni weekend dinner on Oct. 14. Professor of biology Robert Neher, who has served at La Verne since 1958, received the "Outstanding Faculty" award. Five others were also honored at the dinner.



Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.)

David McFadden, vice president for enrollment since 1993, has been promoted to executive vice president, a position in which he will lead enrollment, planning, and marketing. He will oversee a newly formed Communications and Marketing department.



McPherson College (McPherson, Kan.)

Graduates Gail Erisman Valeta, class of 1980, and Floy Evon Detwiler (Ditmars), class of 1975, were recipients of the Young Alumni Award for 2005 during the Honors Convocation held Oct. 7 in Brown Auditorium. The award recognizes McPherson alumni who graduated within the past 30 years for significant achievements and service to community, to profession, to church, and to the college.



Walt Wiltschek



Above, junior high youth and advisors get acquainted with a game during small-group time; below, Andrew Echard of Virginia and Monica Hershey of Pennsylvania rake leaves in New Windsor as a service project.

First junior high conference deemed a major success

Tony Bruner stood before a group of 250 junior high youth and advisors and told them they were part of a special moment. Never before had a conference for their age group been held on a regional or national scale.

Yet here they were, meeting Sept. 30-Oct. 2 in New Windsor, Md., for a regional event just for junior highs. Eight districts stretching from Pennsylvania to North Carolina took part.

"This is kind of a historical event," said Bruner, who co-chaired the planning committee along with General Board Youth/Young Adult Ministry director Chris Douglas. More than a year of planning went into the weekend, which carried the theme "Be Strong and Courageous."

They had no trouble finding junior highers willing to come. Douglas said registration was capped at 250 due to the facility limits of the Brethren Service Center, and a waiting list quickly grew. While most events were held at the center, the group slept at a nearby middle school.

Beginning with registration under outdoor tents, the conference packed the allotted time with worship, meals, small groups, workshops, optional service projects, games, and tours of the center. Worship messages came from Mennonite drama team Ted & Lee, New Creation Project pastor David Weiss, and Annual Conference moderator-elect Belita Mitchell, who pastors Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. Brethren folksinger Joseph Helfrich led music through the weekend.

"It's really putting God in perspective," said Laura Kownacki of Mechanicsburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, who said she particularly enjoyed a workshop with Ted & Lee. "They should make it a week long." She also liked the "hot hats" that all the participants received: red baseball caps specially printed with "Jr. Hi" on the front.

Organizers said the response indicated a need for more such events in the denomination, and they were expecting to look at such possibilities for the future. In the meantime, Weiss urged the junior high youth to continue offering their gifts to the church and the world.

"Young people, we need you now!" Weiss said. "(Others) need to see you making a difference, and they can. There are so many many ways you can make a difference. Will you put your life in the hands of an extraordinary God?"—Walt Wiltschek

Walt Wiltschek



How do we become relevant?

I would like to commend Walt Wiltschek's editorial "Come to the dork side" [September 2005] for calling our attention to the fact that we have a voice within the larger community of faith. I find it interesting, though, that the idea to "stay true" has come from the mouths and hearts of those outside of our denomination, while those of us inside call for a sort of new identity.

As a young Brethren pastor who will be around as society continues to move from a modern to postmodern way of thinking, I was left with one question after reading the article. Wiltschek states that if we live out our faith authentically and express it in relevant ways, others will come. My question is this: How are we to become relevant to a society that may or may not want authentic faith? How do we "polish the mud" off our heritage so that it will compare to all the other heritages? I understand our heritage is unique and in some aspects will never compare to others, and I understand the idea of being "cool to be uncool," but unless we as a

Brethren church learn what it means to be relevant, we will not get the chance to show people the "coolness" of our faith.

In the book by Tony Campolo (who is also one who calls for us Brethren to stand tall) and Brian McLaren, *Adventures in Missing the Point*, McLaren states that the church is at a crossroads. Not unlike the change from leaded to unleaded gasoline in the '70s or the change from VHS to DVD today, the church is finding that it now needs to offer both the modern and postmodern. If you listen to any church (not just Brethren) you hear the same thing: We need to do something, we need to add an emergent worship, we need to add praise music, we need to be relevant to the people today. Is that what it means to be relevant, throw a few new songs in on Sunday morning and the pews will overflow? That is not what McLaren is saying. What he is saying is that the church needs to figure out how to repackage what they have to give. He does not say to change *what* we give, but to offer it in new ways. While the music may be one small part of the package, there is

something bigger that needs to be changed as we learn what it means to be relevant.

The church, for as long as its history has been recorded, has operated within the following model: Behave, Believe, Belong. If you act like us, look like us, and believe like us you can belong with us. All others need not apply. You can look at all the churches and find they think like this. Thinking like this is not growing churches or being relevant. What if we changed that model to Belong, Believe, and then Behave. What if we tell the people of the world, "Come sit with us, it does not matter who you are, what you believe, where you came from; come and stand with me in the presence of the Lord where you belong." When you stand side by side in the presence of the Lord belief will come, and then, my friends, the behavior that was No. 1 on the list takes care of itself.

Paul talks about letting the Holy Spirit transform us, but unless we belong and believe there is nothing to transform. One of the ways we can be relevant today and share the ideas that make us Brethren is to operate from within the Belong, Believe, Behave model. Why? Because that is what Christ did. Look at the woman at the well: Christ made her belong, she then believed, and then she changed and behaved. One of the ways to be relevant is to understand that story and understand that if Jesus was here today he would be calling "in" all of the ones we would like to leave "out."

John Sgro
Lanark, Ill.

Pontius' Puddle



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Called to confront injustice

When I was a child my family took a trip to New Orleans. As I remember, the city was beautiful with huge live oak trees and exquisite French architecture. I also remember walking down Bourbon Street

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

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

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

But when the winds of this hurricane blow over, will we go back to the complacency of our previous satisfied lives? Will the poor that were hidden from view until Katrina tore down the walls of our ignorance be quietly hidden again?

and looking into the open doors of bar-rooms with strippers on the bar in plain view of innocent passersby such as my family. My mother had to keep prodding us along as we gawked into those dark smoke-filled rooms that looked like a den of devils.

Some would say that the city deserved Katrina. I'm not one of them. Maybe some did and some didn't. I leave that to God. As someone once said, "We are not so much punished for our sins as by our sins." Isaiah 5 described the decadence of the inhabitants of Israel. In the history of God's activities in Israel during biblical times, prophets such as Isaiah saw natural and man-made calamities as a show of God's displeasure. I don't know. What I do know is that many God-fearing, church-going, right-living people got caught up in the effects of Hurricane Katrina.

I wonder, if this was an act of God, why wasn't God more selective in the form of punishment? I also know more of the wealthy were able to escape while the poor were not. We are not to judge whether New Orleans and the Gulf Coast deserved such punishment. What we are clearly called to do is to show mercy to everyone who has been affected by the storm. "He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God" (Prov. 14:31).

But it also goes way beyond that. We can savor the feeling that comes from our good will. We have been very generous in our response to the hurricane victims. But when the winds of this hurricane blow over, will we go back to the complacency of our previous satisfied lives? [See "From the Publisher," September 2005] Will the poor that were hidden from view until Katrina tore down the walls of our ignorance be quietly hidden again?

The rest of the country has a responsibility to respond to the growing disparity between the rich and poor of this country made sadly evident following Katrina. And not just in New Orleans but in Los Angeles, Chicago, New York, and on and on. Recent statistics show that 1.1 million people joined the number of Americans living in poverty

last year compared with 2003. Meanwhile, corporate CEOs are now making 431 times as much as the average worker as opposed to 301-to-1 in 1990 and 24-to-1 in 1965.

Maybe God through Isaiah wasn't speaking just to the Israelites. Maybe God through Isaiah wasn't speaking just to the residents of the Big Easy. Maybe God is speaking through Isaiah to all the inhabitants of this great but greedy country that it is time now to reverse the trend of the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. As Rose Brooks said, where we once had a war on poverty we now have a war on the poor. Hopefully history will show that the United States will be remembered as a country that cared for its own, rich and poor, black and white, not like the country portrayed in the book of Isaiah. "Therefore I command you to be openhanded toward your brothers and toward the poor and the needy in your land" (Deut. 15:11b).

David A. Whitten
Mount Solon, Va.

Our name is discriminatory

I am a lifelong member of the Church of the Brethren and proud of our world peace emphasis.

Many people have long been concerned about the status of women in our American society with its glass ceiling in corporations and unequal pay in the general labor market. Worldwide, we now have examples of countries where women are gaining privileges of voting, driving cars, having educational opportunities, and obtaining loans to start small businesses.

All this is happening, and yet our church feels it is necessary to remain entitled the "Church of the Brethren" with the obvious discriminatory connotation.

Wes DeCoursey
McPherson, Kan.

Let's stop the bashing

Whatever side I come out on on this issue of homosexuality, it is my personal conviction based on my personal in-depth study

of the Scriptures. I don't intend to push my beliefs on anyone in this response. I just wish to lift up the fact that there is a biblical principle being overlooked and, therefore, not practiced.

In Romans 14, Paul gives all of us three unshakable guidelines on convictions. Put in personal pronoun terms, they go like this:

1. I should not judge those whose convictions are different than mine (v. 1-4).
2. Whatever convictions I hold, they must be held as "to the Lord" (v. 5-8).
3. Whatever convictions I have developed as "to the Lord," I must be true to them, for I will stand before God to give an account (v. 23).

Frankly, there seems to be one side on this issue that habitually "passes judgment" on the other for the convictions they hold. It is my understanding that it is the Holy Spirit who works in each of us to develop those convictions. Evidently, there seems to be something else on the Holy Spirit's agenda for those with whom we disagree.

As for this issue, I believe it is time to stop bashing the convictions others hold and just be faithful to what you believe the Holy Spirit is leading you to practice. I guarantee you: My convictions will not be changed through badgering and belittling. I doubt that yours will be changed, either.

Les Cooper
Peru, Ind.

Get over embarrassment

In MESSENGER's March issue, Frank Ramirez's "Message in a bottle" blends humor and story on the topic of "embarrassments" in the church. He helps us laugh at ourselves (like characters in a "Family Circus" cartoon) concerning issues—like the 1902 flap over storing communion wine in beer bottles.

Similarly, Allen McGrew has us squirming with teenage embarrassment at seeing his tottery old grandmother in his school lunch room. His personal discomfort and concern for her changes when what seems to be dangerous naivete is, in reality, a dedicated teacher's love that transforms

the toughest kids into grateful readers.

In the same issue, Duane Grady tells how the love feast broke down multi-ethnic and cross-cultural (embarrassing to some) barriers; and Bob Gross is pictured kneeling beside a Palestinian woman planting an olive tree—a symbolic act transforming a potentially violent and embarrassing situation with his presence. Jim Hardenbrook learned by worshipping with Sudanese Christians what it means to sing “teach me how to love him more.” He gained new

insight about decisions based on faith, not fear, sharing the good news of God’s love in word and deed and that, when we live it, the peace of Christ helps us “see (without embarrassment) all human beings as creatures deeply loved by God.”

The message is that God’s mercy embraces every one of us, warts and all. Doesn’t this mean that we should take time to really see our brothers and sisters—even the 10 percent who are likely to be homosexual? Mercy is robust love

combined with a gentle, realistic humor. This is the best description that I can think of for God, who made us with all our peculiarities. Let’s embrace each other with God’s mercy by putting our “egos in a drawer” (see Walt Wiltschek’s March editorial), trusting that God will transform us into his loving community; we will get over our embarrassments by “loving him (and our neighbors) more.”

Lowey (Lois) Dickason
South Haven, Mich.

CLASSIFIED ADS

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Send letter of application and current resumé to Search Committee, Chicago Mennonite Learning Center, 4647 West 47th Street, Chicago, IL 60632. For further information call Sueann VonGuten, Search Committee Chairperson, 574-848-7899 or vonalter2@verizon.net.

President, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas

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New Members

Annville, Pa.: Heather Boyer, Carter Wintch, Tony Betz, Jen Betz, Lane Kintigh, Margaret Kintigh, Tony Montalvo, Alyssa Montalvo, Craig Forinash, Steve Forinash, Jared Longenecker, Samantha Toun
Antelope Park, Lincoln, Neb.: Jennifer Anderson, Marjean McIntyre, Mike McIntyre, Amanda Pegans
Blue Ridge, Va.: Dustin Barfield
Cedar Creek, Garrett, Ind.: Dawn Shull, Lindsey Yarde
Copper Hill, Va.: Dale Conner, Jennifer DeHart, Elizabeth Thompson, Amanda Akers, Linda Saunders, Christen Garner, Wayne Ingram, Kristina Beckner, Jason Beckner, Matthew Beckner, Sean Edgell, Shane Edgell, Zachery Turman
Geiger, Friedens, Pa.: Donald Schlosnagle, Amanda Schlosnagle, Amber Schlosnagle, Tiffany Woy, Adam Angermeier, Jackie Pyle, Mary Straka
Glade Valley, Walkersville, Md.: Adam Rudy
Greenmount, Harrisonburg, Va.: Joan Frank, Alyssa Weider
Harmony, Myersville, Md.: William Baker, Grant McConaughy, Matthew McConaughy, Keith Selzer, Sherrie Ridgely
HIS Way Fellowship/Iglesia Jesucristo, El Camino, Hendersonville, N.C.: Aura Castenada Alonso, Samuel Alonso, Lidia Castenada, Prisilla Hernandez, Estella Cardona Vera, Mauricio Vera, Oscar Vera
Hope, Freeport, Mich.: William Gay
Longmeadow, Hagerstown, Md.: Melody Stocks, Glenn Young, Jan Young
Madison, Brightwood, Va.: Sherri Harkness, John Harkness, Raja Rayaprol, Renee Bender
Memorial, Martinsburg, Pa.: Brianna Musselman, Michelle Forshey, Britni Greenleaf, Melissa Kensinger, Ryan Kensinger, Abby Steele
Moorefield, W.Va.: Susan Dolly, Byron Curtis Dolly, Jordan Elizabeth Beasley, Carson Michael Crawford, Amanda Nicole Titus, Dwayne Franklin Heckman, Kathy Elaine Beasley
Mount Morris, Ill.: John Buck
Oak Grove, Lowpoint, Ill.: Doris Pilgrim, Dennis Schmidt, Domani Tripam, Joe Tripam
Oak Grove, Roanoke, Va.: Sue Hill, Fletcher Hill, Carole Ferguson, Dennis Ferguson, Susan Gibson, Heather Prokopchak
Peace Valley, Mo.: Gary Fike, Jill

Fike, Ezra Fike, Linnea Fike, Elmer Fike, Ina Fike, Raymond Waggoner, Bradley D. Brotherton, Britny E. Brotherton
Peru, Ind.: Evelyn McMahan, David Hiatt
Pine Creek, North Liberty, Ind.: Ashley Clark, Marcus Walter, Angie Bradley, Kenny Hygema, Jr., Vicki Hygema, Maurine Miller, Bud McCune, Linda McCune, David Richert, Adam Novak, Melissa Novak
Quakertown, Pa.: Miranda Howard, Jason Haring, Janel Zomberg, Karen Steich
Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Dean Maust, Dolores Maust
Scalp Level, Windber, Pa.: Missy Plows, Jennifer Heinrichs
Walkers Chapel, Mount Jackson, Va.: Brandi Miller, Lori A. Mauck
Welty, Smithsburg, Md.: Carrie Powell, Tina Trezza
White Oak, Manheim, Pa.: Aaron Fahnestock, Melissa Showers, Dwayne Martens, Earl Miller, Dwight Stauffer, Isaac Martin, Karla Martin, Colleen Martin, Steve Alwine, Emily Alwine
Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio: James Hlebovy, Marie Hlebovy, Rachel Hlebovy, Cassandra Hlebovy, Aaron Hlebovy, Chelsea Bowker, Brittany Bowker, Shayla Hubbard, Danielle Taylor, Tiffany Taylor, James Razo, Rachel Razo, Alyssa Mellott

Anniversaries

Bergy, Keith and Jean, Caledonia, Mich., 60
Berkey, Dennis and Marilyn, Windber, Pa., 50
Bloss, William and Lois, Uniontown, Ohio, 55
Butler, Denny and Rosie, Redford, Mich., 60
Deyarmin, Gerald and Shirley, Windber, Pa., 50
Eisele, George and Katherine, Lincoln, Neb., 50
Funk, Charles and Ruth, New Oxford, Pa., 60
Fyock, Wayne and Joy, Windber, Pa., 55
Geisel, Ed and Ann, Windber, Pa., 55
Good, Paul and Mickey, Johnstown, Pa., 50
Hamilton, Dave and Velma, Virden, Ill., 77
Hindman, Robert and Ruth, Johnstown, Pa., 50
Hoffman, William and Janet, Windber, Pa., 50
Horvath, Frank and Martha, Windber, Pa., 50
Layman, Eldon and Bettie, Broadway, Va., 50
Ledgerwood, Olin and Helen, Hartville, Ohio, 55
Main, Robert and Dorcas, Frederick, Md., 50
Marva, Joe and Donna, Windber, Pa., 50
Maschgat, James and Mildred, Windber, Pa., 50
Mihalko, Alex and Yvonne,

Windber, Pa., 50
Miller, William, Sr., and Ruth, Windber, Pa., 50
Miller, Wilmer and Luella, Windber, Pa., 71
Mitchell, Floyd and Kathleen, Martinsburg, Pa., 60
Myers, Donald and Mary, Alliance, Ohio, 55
Ober, Clarence and Marian, Clymer, Pa., 60
Peters, Art and Evelyn, Johnstown, Pa., 50
Pletcher, Paul and Beatrice, Champion, Pa., 50
Powell, Jack and Zetta, Windber, Pa., 50
Pritt, Paul and Jackie, Windber, Pa., 55
Refi, Alex and Nancy, Windber, Pa., 55
Rice, Joe and Betty, Charlottesville, Va., 50
Trinks, Ervin and Alice, Hanover, Pa., 60
Warshel, Fred and Nancy, Windber, Pa., 50
Weaver, Warren and Jeanette, Johnstown, Pa., 50
Wolfgang, Millard and Ruth, New Oxford, Pa., 65
Woodall, Ron and Ann, Wirtz, Va., 50

Deaths

Arnett, Elizabeth Sprecher, 85, Boonsboro, Md., Aug. 25
Banks, June, 73, Williamsburg, Pa., July 12
Bauserman, Jerry, 42, Broadway, Pa., Aug. 20
Berkley, Clyde A., 76, Dry Fork, Va., Aug. 5
Blose, Arlene Harbrige, 58, Commodore, Pa., July 31
Bowman, Hazel S., 84, Bridgewater, Va., July 17
Brougher, Mary E., 87, Martinsburg, Pa., June 5
Brubaker, Bertie, 85, Ijamsville, Md., July 5
Byers, Carol, 55, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 19
Caplinger, Stanley, 85, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 31
Cassel, Ruth, 90, Manheim, Pa., June 11
Clark, Byron E., 50, Brookville, Ohio, Oct. 15, 2004
Clark, Joseph L., 86, Wheaton, Ill., April 30
Dadisman, Earl, 87, Worthington, Minn., Aug. 21
Dewey, Helen, 86, Hartford City, Ind., Aug. 2
Domer, Melvin M., 71, North Canton, Ohio, July 17
Dorrugh, Glenna, 61, Poolesville, Md., July 28
Durnbaugh, Donald F., 77, James Creek, Pa., Aug. 27
Fike, William, 70, Mechanicsburg, Pa., July 27
Garst, Rhea C., 93, Salem, Va., July 7
Goodenberger, Melvin S., 91, Canton, Ohio, Aug. 13
Goodwin, Richard P., 81, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Aug. 6
Green, Freeman D., 67,

Quicksburg, Va., July 24
Greiner, Geraldine, 80, Manheim, Pa., March 2
Haas, Dorothy F., 89, North Canton, Ohio, Aug. 16
Hammond, Christine Saul, 85, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 21
Hammond, Emma, 86, Brookville, Ohio, Aug. 26
Hannah, R. J., 77, Osceola, Mo., Aug. 11
Hess, Janet E., 69, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 18
Hinds, William R., 84, Hartville, Ohio, July 8
Hines, Lily Rozella, 87, Moorefield, W.Va., Aug. 24
Hoffman, Martha K., 97, Hartville, Ohio, April 13
Hoover, Russell, 80, Goshen, Ind., Aug. 4
Hottle, Weldon Ernest, 77, Timberville, Va., Aug. 30
Hudson, Alverda, 96, Greenville, Ohio, Aug. 14
Hutchinson, Robert Duane, 82, Bridgewater, Va., July 29
Jenkins, Velma, 94, Dayton, Ohio, April 9
Keener, Betty Lou, 77, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 2
Kimble, Catherine, 88, Maysville, W.Va., July 28
Knelson, Warren, 88, Dixon, Ill., Aug. 20
Kohler, John S., 87, Ashland, Ohio, Feb. 19
Kreiser, Tola, 88, Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 13
Kurtz, Elmer, 81, Mogadore, Ohio, March 27
Lacher, Ruth, 84, Baltimore, Md., Aug. 30
Lambert, Arvil Lee, 66, Mount Crawford, Va., Sept. 5
Landes, Virginia Lee, 93, Mathias, W.Va., Sept. 1
McDonald, Carl, 71, New Paris, Ind., June 5
Medearis, Betty W., 75, Elgin, Ill., Aug. 20
Miles, Dennis, 87, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 22
Miller, Earl, 93, Lancaster, Pa., July 15
Miller, Roxie, 82, Moorefield, W.Va., Aug. 25
Mitchell, Vera Woodie, 93, Slidell, La., Aug. 13
Mongold, Lola Secrist, 72, Petersburg, W.Va., Aug. 5
Mundy, Vallie St. Moyer, 90, Waynesboro, Va., Aug. 9
Murphy, Cora W., 99, Windber, Pa., July 14
Myers, Donald, 93, Goshen, Ind., June 15
Nace, Olive M., 83, Glendale, Calif., July 12
Pence, Helen Marie Carr, 87, Broadway, Va., July 22
Petersen, Loren W., 86, Waterloo, Iowa, July 31
Pollock, Mary, 81, Windber, Pa., July 26
Prater, Charles J., 82, Stuarts Draft, Va., Aug. 26
Reber, Elsie V. Markey, 90, New Oxford, Pa., Aug. 14
Rhodes, Florence K., 85, Martinsburg, Pa., April 14
Rhodes, Kermit Hollen, 95,

Bridgewater, Va., July 19
Riggleman, Oliver Freemont, 73, Moorefield, W.Va., Aug. 13
Rodeffer, Judith Miller, 65, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 24
Rodgers, Josephine, 82, Windber, Pa., Jan. 5
Rowe, Roger E., 85, Smithsburg, Md., Jan. 20
Sievers, Don, 72, Brookville, Ohio, June 23
Smith, Glenna, 76, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 7
Smith, Harold Robert, 83, Moorefield, W.Va., Aug. 26
Smith, Monica Gail, 29, Mount Crawford, Va., July 31
Stauffer, Wilburt, 82, Lititz, Pa., July 14
Stiffler, Paul W., 87, Martinsburg, Pa., April 12
Strite, Elmer C., 85, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 2
Summers, Don Solomon, 71, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 29
Turman, Edgar M., 68, Allisonia, Va., Aug. 18
Turner, Ogretta Ruth Smith, 83, Criders, Va., Sept. 3
Wampler, Philip David, 38, Bridgewater, Va., Aug. 4
Weaver, Terry, 58, Elton, Pa., Feb. 12
White, Rachel Virginia Roller, 92, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 5
Wise, William Franklin, 65, Weyers Cave, Va., Aug. 14

Licensings

Archer, Brian A., N. Ohio Dist. (Pleasant View, Elida, Ohio), July 24
Leahy, Donna M., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Manassas, Va.), Aug. 7
Moss, Mark L., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Frederick, Md.), Aug. 14
Rush, J. Scott, W. Marva Dist. (Oak Grove, McHenry, Md.), Aug. 21

Ordinations

Bowyer, Mark A., N. Ohio Dist. (Pleasant View, Elida, Ohio), Aug. 21
Diamond, Douglas M., Southeastern Dist. (Peak Creek, Laurel Springs, N.C.), Sept. 4
Staggs, Kevin L., W. Marva Dist. (Bear Creek, Accident, Md.), Aug. 14

Placements

Button-Harrison, Timothy, from team pastor to pastor, Ivester, Grundy Center, Iowa, Sept. 1
Fouse, Levain, pastor, James Creek, Markleysburg, Pa., Aug. 1
Frey, William R., Sr., from pastor, Fruitland, Idaho, to pastor, Lindsay Community, Lindsay, Calif., Sept. 1
Hileman, Raymond E., from pastor, Ligonier, Pa., to pastor, Miami First, Miami, Fla., Aug. 1
Payne, Jeffrey S., pastor, Arlington, Va., Sept. 1
Zerfing, James L., pastor, Lake View Christian Fellowship, East Berlin, Pa., Sept. 15

Good to be seen

It seems that Jesus knew what he was talking about when he said in **Matthew 26:11**, "The poor you will always have with you." He had a way of being right about things.

The most troubling facts emerging in the wake of Hurricane Katrina this fall were not the extent of the damage, the looting, or the political battles over the speed of the response—though those were troubling enough. More troubling, especially for Christians, was who was left, and why nobody seemed to care until media images thrust it in the world's collective face.



WALT WILTSCHKEK
MESSENGER Editor

Some charged racism, noting that most of those trapped in the Superdome squalor were black. But former US Secretary of State Colin Powell responded that it was a more complex issue. Instead, Powell said, socioeconomic factors were at play. "I don't think it's racism," Powell told the

Associated Press. "But poverty disproportionately affects African-Americans in this country. And it happened because they were poor."

Several commentators observed that most state and national leaders, accustomed to a life of relative privilege, couldn't conceive of people being unable to throw supplies into the back of their SUVs, fuel up, and drive out of town to a safe hotel. If being without such things isn't part of one's everyday experience, it becomes easy to overlook those in different circumstances.

And indeed, the charms and "party town" reputation of New Orleans hide what is largely a poor city—part of the poorest region of our country. Urban renewal and French Quarter tourism have brought many improved facilities downtown, but lying just beyond the edges are the hungry, tired, and poor.

Communications scholar George Cheney wrote in 2000 that organizations as a whole tend to suppress difference. Anything that threatens our ideals of equality is ignored.

Cheney recalled a convention held jointly by US communication scholars and their Latin American counterparts. There was little informal interaction between the two groups, he said, because the conference hotel "was prohibitively expensive" for most of the participants from Latin America.

"We do not know those who are out of view," Cheney concluded. "And we tend not to acknowledge those with whom we are not already familiar in some way. Thus, we must make extra efforts to break our own seclusion and isolation."

The Church of the Brethren heard this plea in 2004 when members and friends of cross-cultural groups in the denomination brought their concerns to Annual Conference via two queries. Delegates adopted these concerns in a combined charge to an Intercultural Study Committee that is expected to bring a recommendation next summer.

Other groups—based on theology, sexuality, gender, and other issues—have likewise asked for their voice to be heard. We don't need to affirm everything they say or believe, but we at least need to affirm them as people and children of God. Simply to ignore someone

Simply to ignore someone is to say that we don't acknowledge their existence. It's like the rich man of the Gospels who ignored Lazarus begging at his gate.

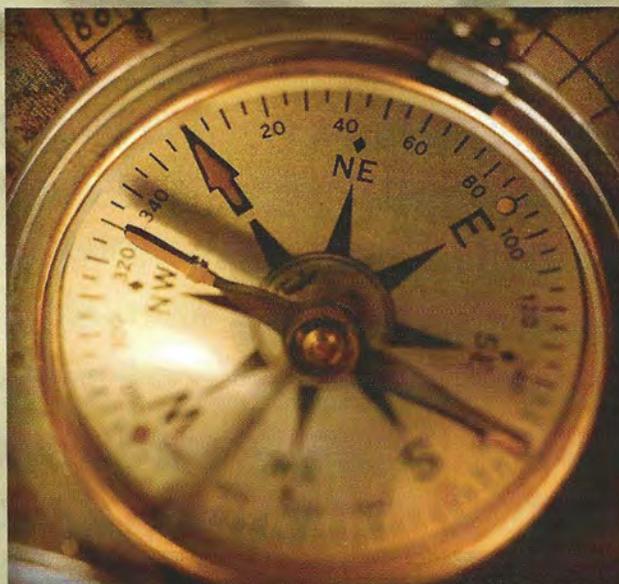
is to say that we don't acknowledge their existence. It's like the rich man of the Gospels who ignored Lazarus begging at his gate.

When someone tells my pastor's husband, "Good to see you!" his usual jovial response is "Good to be seen!" It typically elicits a smile or a chuckle (or occasionally a strange look), but it contains a lot of truth. It *is* good to be seen.

As we head toward Advent, may we remember that Jesus came as a baby of Middle Eastern descent, born to a young, poor family in a cattle stall. And out of the destruction of a hurricane, may winds of change blow through our denomination and our world, widening our vision and opening our eyes.—Ed. 

COMING NEXT MONTH: Are we still a peace church?, Christmas reflections, a story of congregational life, a look at 1 Kings, the *Chronicles of Narnia*, and more.

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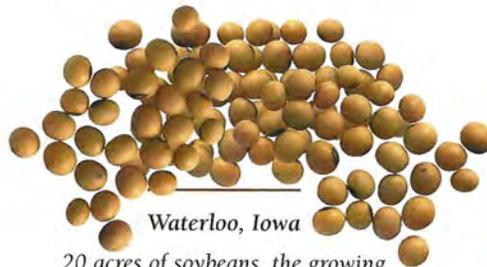
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20 acres of corn, the growing project of Cherry Grove Church of the Brethren and partner Dixon Church of the Brethren.



Waterloo, Iowa

20 acres of soybeans, the growing project of South Waterloo Church of the Brethren and partner Hammond Avenue Brethren Church in Waterloo.



Decatur, Indiana

20 acres of corn, the growing project of Pleasant Dale Church of the Brethren.



Hardin, Missouri

25 acres of soybeans, the growing project of Brad White of Bethany Church of the Brethren.



Mount Morris, Illinois

8 acres of soybeans, the growing project of Mount Morris Church of the Brethren and partner Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin.

Sharing the Harvest



Polo, Illinois

20 acres of corn, the growing project of Polo Church of the Brethren and partner United Presbyterian Church in Tinley Park near Chicago.



Conrad, Iowa

147 acres of corn, the growing project of Ivester Church of the Brethren and partner churches of five denominations.

The Global Food Crisis Fund salutes the Church of the Brethren's first seven growing projects in support of Foods Resource Bank (FRB), a Christian response to world hunger. The proceeds enable the world's poor to develop and sustain their own small-scale food production. To learn how you, too, can help your church launch a growing project for sharing the earth's bounty with the hungry, call 800 323-8039, ext. 264.



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