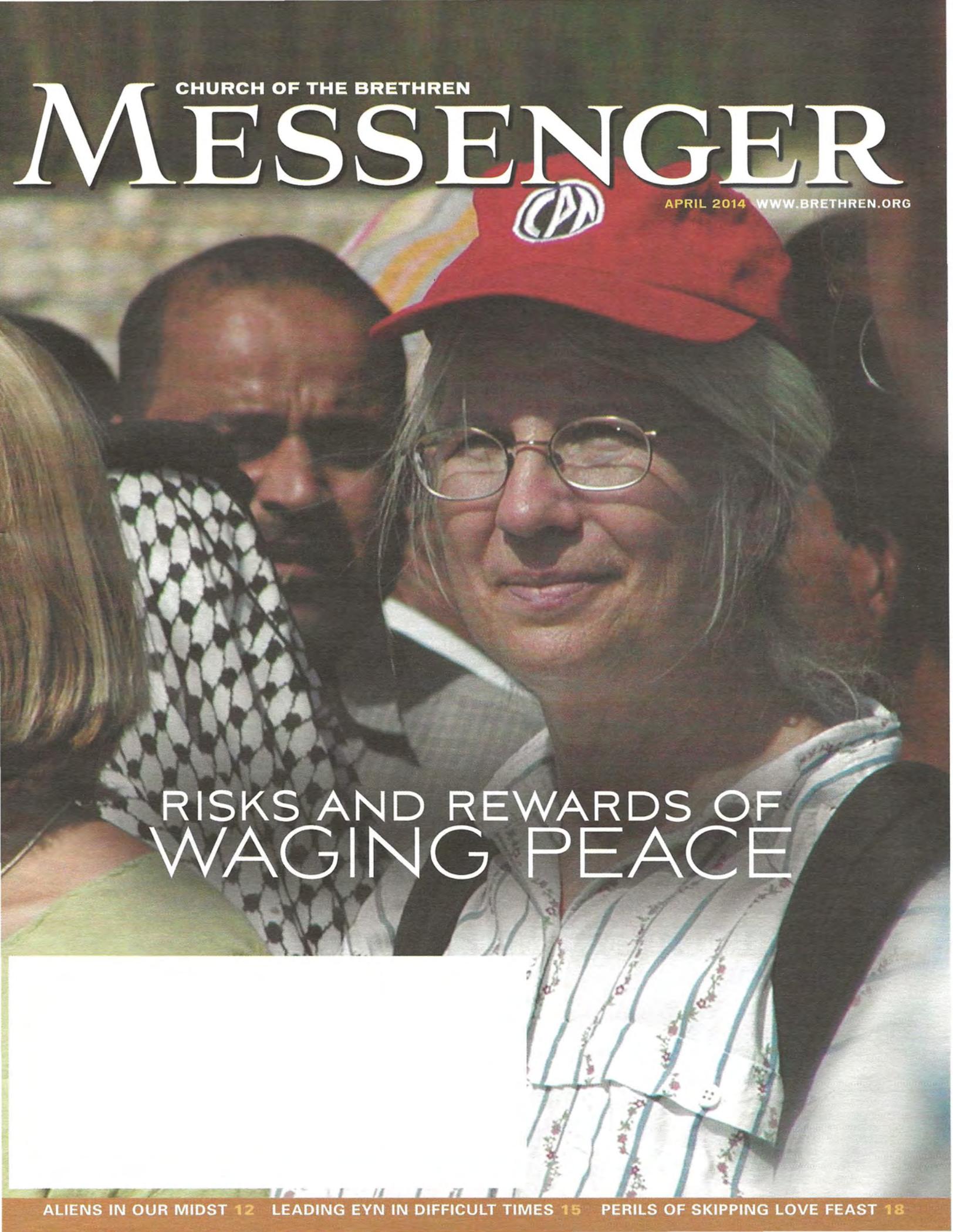
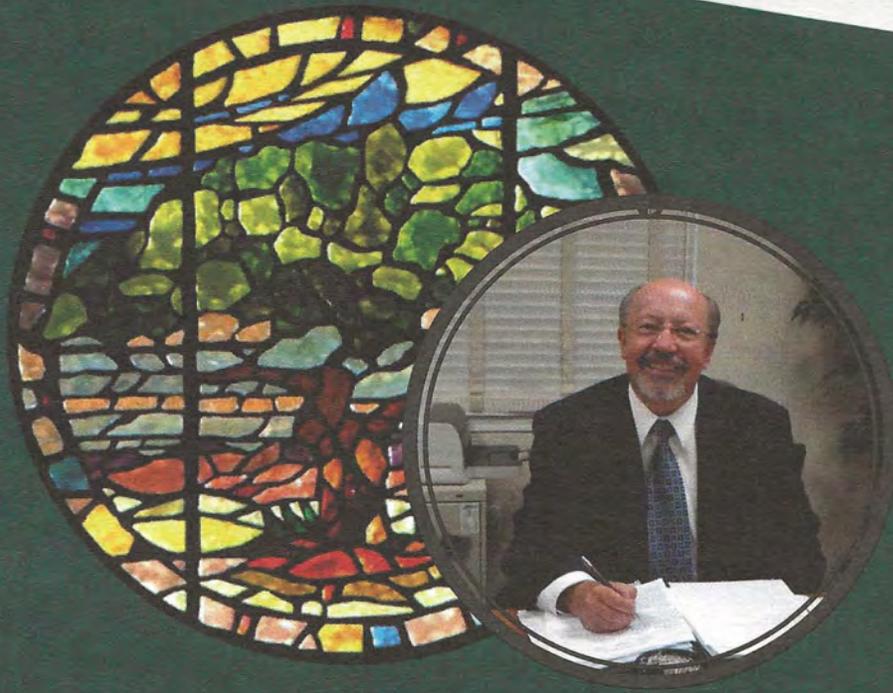
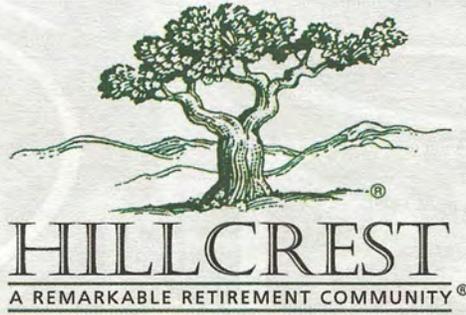


# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

APRIL 2014 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



## RISKS AND REWARDS OF WAGING PEACE



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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Courtesy of Peggy Faw Gish



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

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## 8 Risks and rewards of waging peace

What does Jesus' mandate to be peacemakers mean for us in our own communities? Drawing from personal experiences, author and peace activist Peggy Faw Gish offers practical examples for ways we can wage peace, whether at home or abroad.

## 12 Aliens in our midst

Just who are the aliens among us, and how should we treat them? Answers may be found in Leviticus—and Shakespeare.

## 15 Leading EYN through its most difficult time

Samuel Dante Dali, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), talks about the tumultuous events grabbing headlines in Nigeria, where Brethren have been involved for decades.

## 18 The perils of skipping love feast

One of the greatest challenges facing the church isn't that we are divided along conservative and liberal lines, it's that we just don't want anyone telling us what to do. But maybe it's time for a little self-examination and soul-searching, especially before we sit down to love feast.

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**on the cover** Peggy Gish among other Christian Peacemaker Team members in Iraq. She was part of the first team in Iraq in 2003, during the US invasion 10 years ago. Photo courtesy of Christian Peacemaker Teams.

**T**he bad news is that Protestant congregations in the US are declining in attendance, which means a major decline in Sunday school over recent decades. An increasing number of congregations have no children's ministry anymore.

Furthermore, there's a big shift in the way people go to church. Many think of themselves as regular churchgoers if they attend every other week, or once a month. Because of these and other realities, many denominations can no longer produce their own Sunday school curriculum.



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

**The good news** is that the Church of the Brethren still does, through a long-time partnership between Brethren Press and MennoMedia, the Mennonite publishing house. *Shine: Living in God's Light* starts this fall, right after Gather 'Round concludes.

We are also fortunate to have half a dozen other denominations using our curriculum, and individual customers come from an even broader range.

Why do all these folks like our materials? They say that our curriculum is thoughtful, intelligent, carefully developed. It takes the Bible seriously. It's educationally strong. People have marveled that we hold an annual writers' conference, at which writers spend four days studying and discussing each of the Bible stories.

Our curriculum isn't just Bible-based; it's Bible-immersed.

This is unusual. The most popular words in Christian curriculum marketing are "fun" and "easy to teach." Studies show that's what customers want more than anything else.

I have to admit that my heart sinks a little when someone's first question is, "Is it easy to teach?" We certainly work hard to make our curriculum fun for kids. And we do the heavy lifting on prep so that teachers will find the materials easy to teach. We fully understand that teachers find it hard to find time to prepare.

But it's disappointing when "easy to use" means "I'll look at the book when I walk into the classroom." What if a pastoral candidate asked whether the congregation was fun and the preaching easy? What if candidates for baptism made their decision based on whether life after baptism would be fun and easy?

My heart would leap to hear questions like these instead: Will this curriculum help me walk beside children as they grow in faith? Help them want to follow Jesus? Help them know and love God? Help them be doers of the Word, living out their faith in action and service? Will this curriculum help them enter God's story?

How grateful I am for those who see faith formation as a privilege and a ministry, not slots in a schedule to be filled, not babysitting, not entertainment. Children are small theologians—that is, they are naturally eager to learn about God. We teach them, but they can also teach us. Sunday school is holy ground, and really we should all be taking off our shoes.

Wendy McFadden

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Jeff Bookhart



Dawn Blackman, church elder and garden steward, surveys crops in the Randolph Street Community Garden.

## A garden oasis

**T**he word “desert” may conjure images of sand dunes and palm trees.

But there are none of those here. Still, this garden oasis is located in the midst of what the United States Department of Agriculture calls a “food desert” because people living in this part of Champaign, Ill., for years have had no access to fresh, healthy, affordable food. There are no grocery stores or farmers’ markets anywhere—only fast food stands and convenience stores.

But the Randolph Street Community Garden—spearheaded by Champaign Church of the Brethren elder Dawn Blackman—has changed all that. Begun in 2006 with just six plots, the garden today has 46 plots operated by church members, local youth, and area residents, and represents an abundant source of healthy food: an oasis in what was once a food desert.

The beauty of this garden is that it not only provides food for pantries and homeless shelters, but it also grows relationships.

“We’re really the only *community* garden in Champaign,” Blackman says. “Other places have arrangements where you can garden, but you’re not really interacting with others. At ours, there’s lots of interaction. In fact, we tell everyone who has a plot that they have to have a row of ‘starters’ for people who come late to the program. That way the late-comers don’t have to start from seed. They can have plants that they can start with. We have a lot of fun at our garden.”

And the fun goes beyond the plots. At one of the after-school programs at the church, middle-school boys (the YBs—Young Bakers, as they call themselves) have mastered the art of making spaghetti sauce, not to mention skills in canning and pickling, thanks to guidance from Blackman and others who assist with the program.

A \$1,000 grant from the Global Food Crisis Program has helped to provide tools, hoses, and lumber for making new raised garden beds, as well as a slightly used pressure cooker for the church kitchen.

According to Blackman, community involvement is as important—if not more so—than the food, itself. “I think it’s better to teach a person to garden than to give them fresh vegetables,” Blackman says. “It’s empowering for people to take control of their food resources. Our community is stronger because of what we’re doing, because of what God has made us stewards of. We saw a need and stepped forward. Others have joined us. God placed it on our hearts to help.”

Congregation Close-Up

### by the numbers

100,000

Dollars raised by McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren over the past year in support of the Church of the Brethren Haiti Medical Project. (See story on page 4.)

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or [messenger@brethren.org](mailto:messenger@brethren.org).

# A faith-building experience

**T**wo groups of volunteers from Brethren churches in Pennsylvania traveled to the Dominican Republic and Haiti in December and January to help build a church in La Descubierta and assist with a medical clinic in Haiti.

Coordinated by Earl Ziegler, a group of 12 volunteers from the Lititz, Lampeter, Curryville, and Conewago congregations completed latrines and a concrete roof during the week of Dec. 7 to 14. The second group, made up of 18 volunteers from the Chiques congregation and seven from Rockford (Ill.) Church of the

Brethren, and led by Carolyn Fitzkee and Jeff Boshart, visited the DR from Jan. 4 to 11. They helped complete the concrete floor, paint, and began work on a cistern.

The project received funding from Brethren World Mission, the Church of the Brethren denomination, and from both volunteer groups. “Not only was the physical church built,” said Chiques member Carolyn Fitzkee, “but working alongside others who spoke a different language for a common purpose was also a faith-building experience. Prayers and songs sung and translated into English, Spanish, and Creole were heavenly.”

Both groups also spent time with the children of the community. The first group provided coloring books and crayons for about 40 children. The second group, in partnership with Dominican pastors Anastacia Bueno (San Luis) and Cristina Lamu Bueno (Sabana Torsa), provided an abbreviated three-day vacation Bible school. The local pastors coordinated the songs and spiritual content, while the US groups led games and craft activities. The first day 50 children attended under the pavilion next to the church. The second day the group went to the local school in town. The school’s central location



*The McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren’s Haiti Committee devised a creative way to call attention to their fundraising effort in support of the Haiti Medical Project. For every \$100 in gifts, a paper doll was affixed to the back wall of the sanctuary. Before long, the display needed to be expanded to both sides of the hall.*

## McPherson Church meets fundraising goal

Easter marks the conclusion of the McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren’s year-long Haiti Medical Project fundraiser. Although officially begun in February 2013, funds actually began to be raised in 2011 for the people of Haiti and the medical clinics. Dr. Paul Ullom-Minnich has been closely involved with the denominational project since its inception. Through Ullom-Minnich’s leadership—along with co-chair Kendra Bowen and a volunteer committee—a generous congregation and community has raised more than \$100,000 to support the endowment for the Haiti Medical Project.

Money was raised through projects large and small, including T-shirt sales, a coin jar, a garden party, a community-wide garage sale, a community concert, homemade bracelet sales, a monthly Haiti Marketplace sale of breads, pies, pot-holders, notecards, aprons, burritos, and cookies. A celebration of the project is planned on May 4 to mark the achievement of the goal.

**Serving others**





Don Fitzkee

attracted some 300 children. On the final day, 60 children—including some not affiliated with the congregation—came to the church for activities and a concluding worship.

Located near the border with Haiti, La Des-cubierta is a community made up primarily of Haitian immigrants. Pastor Sauveur Charles is the spiritual leader, but he also helped coordinate the work project. Impromptu times of worship inside the church were a highlight for both groups.

While on the island in January, the second group also helped provide a one-day medical clinic for 339 patients at the largest Church of the Brethren congregation in Haiti on Jan. 9. The Gran Bwa congregation is located in a remote, mountainous area of Haiti near the Dominican border.

Part of the Haiti Medical Mission, the clinic was coordinated by Jean Altenor of the National Committee of the Haitian Church of the Brethren, pastor Duverlus Altenor, and Ilexene and Michaela Alphonse. The US group provided a doctor (Paul Brubaker, of the Chiques congregation) and four nurses; the Dominican church provided an optometrist (pastor Onelys Rivas, Betel); and the Haiti Medical Project provided two Haitian doctors and a nurse, plus translators and supplies.

Brother Jean said it was hard to put into words how much it meant for this community to be ministered to in this way, knowing the sacrifice. He said the church was “hungry” for this clinic, which was evident from the turnout.

“Being able to serve alongside and minister to our brothers and sisters in Christ was truly a mountaintop experience,” Fitzkee said.

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## Lessons through service

**F**or two years I had the privilege of serving in Brethren Volunteer Service at a family center called Quaker Cottage in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Quaker Cottage works with disadvantaged families, most of whom have experienced some sort of trauma in their homes. Affiliated with the Quakers in Ireland, Quaker Cottage has an ethos upholding truth, integrity, simplicity, peacemaking, respect, and dignity that goes into all of the work that's done there.



SAMANTHA CARWILE

The primary goal of Quaker Cottage is to support and empower mothers and their children and improve their livelihood. It is a cross-community center where both Catholic families and Protestant families come together.

I was primarily a childcare worker, dealing with infants up through preteens and sometimes teens. In the mornings, mothers and their children who are too young to attend school would join us at the Cottage. The mothers would go into their tea room for group counseling and fellowship while their children were with us in the nursery. Here, we focused on their physical, social, and mental development. I also worked with children in the after-school program, where we provided a safe, loving, and fun place where they could make friends, play games, make art, cook, and have outdoor adventures.

One of my biggest challenges was coping with the many heartbreaking stories the families would share about their situations. I often felt overwhelmed learning of the bur-

kicked them out of their own homes. Working with these families in this environment often led me to feel down. I wondered how the world could be this way for so many people.

Yet one does what one can, and I tried to help these families deal with their burdens, which brought me so many joys and blessings. I saw women who were once threatened by the other side come together as friends. I saw peacemaking in the works. I learned that with enough support, respect, and love, families can improve their situations. Also, I learned the many lessons children can teach adults. Learning to be more creative, inquisitive, curious, enthusiastic, playful, and affectionate were gifts my kids gave to me every day.

Additionally, I think a common gift many BVSers gain is the experience of getting out of one's comfort zone and trying something completely different in order to try and make a difference. Through these experiences, BVSers learn to be adventurous, brave, creative, culturally sensitive, compassionate, and conscientious.

One afternoon at Quaker Cottage, I was leading a group craft activity with our 8-to-10-year-old after-school group. The children were to create a utopian village on poster board with magazine cutouts, markers, and other craft supplies. My group was coming up with lots of great ideas. One boy drew a church in a village. "What does the church represent?" I asked. He responded with one word: "Peace." How incredibly compelling, I thought, for this boy who is living in the midst of sectarianism, violence, and poverty to know the sanctity peace can bring through the church. I found inspiration and hope through the wisdom shared by this child.

**"What does the church represent?" I asked. He responded with one word: "Peace." How incredibly compelling, I thought, for this boy who is living in the midst of sectarianism, violence, and poverty . . .**

dens and injustices thrown upon the children with whom I worked. Many of the families are poor and have experienced domestic violence, sexual abuse, isolation, substance abuse, and mental health issues. These issues affected the parents in a way that often rendered them incapable of providing for their children's basic needs.

In addition, their environment in north and west Belfast is also very sectarian. There are still serious issues between Catholics and Protestants. Many of the families were connected, for better or worse, to paramilitaries—illegal militias devoted to giving their side more power. Some of our families lived with the threat of these scary paramilitaries, which sometimes

What a beautiful reminder of our calling as Christians to provide peace in all the directions we go, for all those around us. I was proud to call myself a Christian that day, to be a part of a community of believers, workers, and peacemakers. I am also proud of the peace that Quaker Cottage provides to its families, and that I could be a part of its mission. By God's grace, BVS blessed me in ways that I could not have imagined. I will forever be indebted to the lessons and strengths gained through this experience. 

Samantha Carwile is a member of Anderson (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. She worked at Quaker Cottage from August 2011 to November 2013. She served on the Brethren Youth Peace Travel Team in 2008.

**“That is the most important message that Jesus ever gave.”**

—Novelist Kent Haruf, in an interview in *The Christian Century* with Amy Frykholm, referring to the Sermon on the Mount

**“Why was Christ’s first miracle to be the ultimate bartender? Jesus was interested in celebration. We separate being human from being spiritual all too easily in Nashville.”**

—Geoff Little, organizer of the Beer and Hymn Sing group in Nashville, Tenn., and a member of Downtown Presbyterian Church

**“First off, I want to thank God, because that’s who I look up to. He has graced my life with opportunities that I know are not of my hand or another human hand. He has shown me that it’s a scientific fact that gratitude reciprocates.”**

—Actor Matthew McConaughey, accepting his Oscar for best actor for his role in *Dallas Buyer’s Club*

**“Look, the same Bible that teaches us about the virtues of chastity and the virtue of fidelity and marriage also tells us not to judge people. So I would say, ‘Bravo.’”**

—Cardinal Timothy Dolan of New York, in an interview with NBC’s *Meet the Press*, about University of Missouri football player Michael Sam, who recently came out as gay and is likely headed to the NFL

**cultureview**

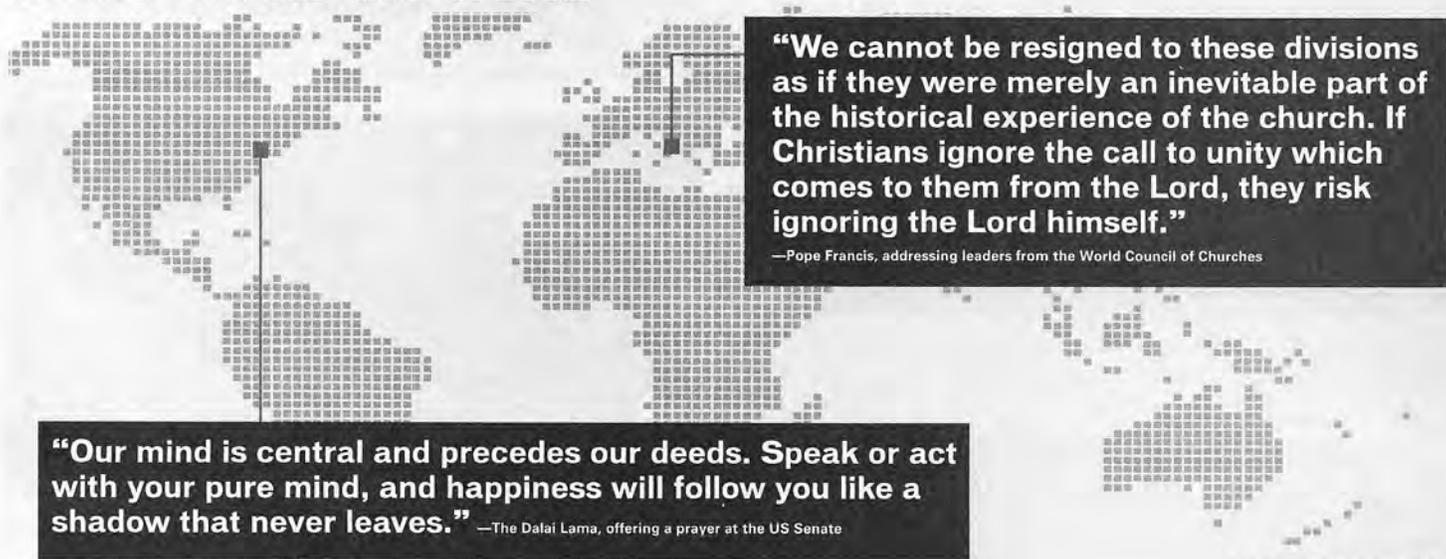
▶ **Millennials** are less tied to traditional political and religious institutions than previous generations, and are more inclined to build their own personal networks through social media. Hard-hit by the recession, they are economically stressed, yet they remain optimistic about the future. They are racially diverse, liberal on many social issues, and to this point solidly Democratic at the ballot box. The results from a recent Pew Research Center survey also revealed that millennials are at or near the highest levels of political and religious disaffiliation recorded for any generation in the quarter-century that the Center has been polling on these topics.

▶ **The abortion rate** in the US has dropped to its lowest level since the procedure became legal in 1973, according to a new data analysis that reflects a

13 percent decline in both the abortion rate and the number of abortions from 2008 to 2011. The report was issued Feb. 3 by the Guttmacher Institute in New York. “A 13 percent drop over a three-year time period is a pretty steep decline. It’s unusual,” said Rachel Jones, the lead author of the study.

▶ **The share of countries** with a high or very high level of **social hostilities involving religion** reached a six-year peak in 2012, according to a new study by the Pew Research Center. A third (33 percent) of the 198 countries and territories included in the study had high religious hostilities in 2012, up from 29 percent in 2011 and 20 percent as of mid-2007. Religious hostilities increased in every major region of the world except the Americas. The sharpest increase was in the Middle East and North Africa.

**Heard 'round the world**



**“We cannot be resigned to these divisions as if they were merely an inevitable part of the historical experience of the church. If Christians ignore the call to unity which comes to them from the Lord, they risk ignoring the Lord himself.”**

—Pope Francis, addressing leaders from the World Council of Churches

**“Our mind is central and precedes our deeds. Speak or act with your pure mind, and happiness will follow you like a shadow that never leaves.”**

—The Dalai Lama, offering a prayer at the US Senate



# RISKS AND REWARDS OF WAGING PEACE

by Peggy Faw Gish

**W**e stood in the southern part of the Iraqi city of Fallujah on March 14, 2005, looking at and taking pictures of vast areas of rubble. Here and there parts of houses were still standing. Tents provided by international aid agencies dotted the landscape.

With us were Iraqi human rights workers, including several Shia Muslims who were part of the newly formed Muslim Peacemaker Team from the cities of Karbela and Najaf. We wanted to be present with the Sunni Muslims in Fallujah after the massive attacks of their city by US military and Iraqi forces four months earlier. We hoped to build relationships and form coalitions to reduce tensions and hostility between Sunni and Shia in Iraq.

Many people insisted that going to Fallujah was too dangerous, but members of our peace team had already chosen to risk the dangers of working for reconciliation and peace in Iraq. As we became acquainted with the Iraqi people before and during the US March 2003 invasion, God gave us a deep love for them that compelled us to walk with them in the horrors of war and the chaos and violence of its aftermath.

We were also in Fallujah for “truth-telling.” Throughout our time in Iraq we sought to tell the truth about war and the consequences of ongoing US presence. We reported about the abuse of prisoners in the American detention system, and then about US Special Forces helping to train and equip new Iraqi

Special Police Forces that act as death squads in the post-invasion society. Today, we were eyewitnesses to the devastation of this city, and horrified to see the homes, schools, mosques, and main hospital destroyed in the bombing.

A woman came out of a tent and invited us in for tea, prepared over a single flame from a gas canister, on which this extended family cooked all their food. We sat with them around the floor of the tent. When our Iraqi interpreter told the family that some of us were Americans, anger flashed briefly in the father’s eyes, and for a moment we wondered about this visit’s outcome. The father’s anger, however, melted into expressions of deep pain as he told us the story of his family leaving the city before the attacks, crowding with other families in a school, and then being forced to return three months later to this tent next to the rubble that had been their home. Those of us who were American said we were sorry for our country’s destroying their home and city.

Peggy Faw Gish



*The peace team is invited to have tea with a family in Fallujah, Iraq.*

In this time of sharing we were drawn together in our common humanity. When we said our good-byes, tears ran down our cheeks. Here we were—Americans and Iraqis, Sunni and Shia Muslims and Christians. We had done nothing to change this family's situation, but had simply listened and cared about what they had endured. We left in awe, having experienced the power of love to break down the walls of hostility and defy the label "enemy."

This and other powerful experiences helped me deal with the more difficult aspects of our work and kept drawing me back to Iraq.

But what does Jesus' mandate to be peacemakers mean for us here, in our own communities? Though the context of our work abroad may be the aftermath of war or a militarily occupied society, how we deal with violence and oppression here might not be all that different. Wherever we are, injustice and violence go hand in hand, so working for peace is inseparable from working for justice. Some of the most pervasive violence exists in the form of institutional oppression. Following the Prince of Peace here will also include accompaniment, advocacy, truth-telling, interrupting or resisting violence, and supporting efforts to build cultures of justice and peace.

Such responses, though under-utilized, are compatible with what Jesus modeled and called us to, and can be effective in breaking down barriers of hostility and transforming threatening situations. Let's look at some ways these methods might take shape.

### **Accompaniment in the form of presence, advocacy, and defying the label "enemy"**

As Christians, we are taught to love others to the extent of being willing to lay down our lives for them and to reclaim our brotherhood or sisterhood under God—even with those we are told are our enemies. When certain groups of people are being threatened or discriminated against, we are called to walk with them.

In the Middle East, when we're told certain people are our enemy or even "terrorists," we go and live among them, listen to them, and even work alongside them to deal nonviolently with the problems at the root of their violent acts. Here, when we are told certain people are dangerous, lazy moochers on our society, or other derogatory labels, we can spend time with them, learn about their lives, and allow ourselves to

be vulnerable to the same dangers or oppressive forces that they face. Then together we can find ways to speak out and work for changing those conditions. In Iraq, we make space for building trust and reconciliation by bringing people from different ethnic groups to listen to each other share about the strengths and suffering of their group. Here, we may bring people from different faiths or races together to do joint social service projects in the community.

Courtesy of Peggy Faw Gish



Sometimes just the presence of other people in a courtroom watching how a judge handles the case of an African American youth being tried for a minor crime might make a difference in whether the youth is seen as a unique human being. Or one might accompany the youth's parents to meet with administrators of a public institution when they believed they were denied equitable treatment because of their race. A group of people trained in nonviolence might have a regular peaceful presence in a park where high school youth have been gathering after school, provoking fights.

Accompaniment in the form of "presence" was used in the 1980s by our local Ohio "Ready Response Team" after a cross was burned on the lawn of an interracial family who

had moved into a nearby town. The following day, our group publicly denounced this action, and members visited the family, offering their supportive presence. After the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, a group from our town visited the local mosque and offered to go along on shopping or other business trips with anyone fearing a backlash against Muslims.

### **Truth-telling**

Jesus spoke harsh truths to the corrupt leaders of his day. Knowing the truth frees our minds and hearts to take action to change the oppressive policies or conditions justified by those lies. Buckling on the "belt of truth"—a part of the armor of the Spirit—empowers us to take a stand against evil in our lives and in society. Exposing the lies and proclaiming the truth weakens the power of those evil forces. Nonviolent movements for civil rights, women's suffrage, prison reform, and environmental protection movements, as well as transformations in our own lives and churches, have all involved exposing lies and embracing the truth.

There is no limit to the lies that we are being told in our society—that military intervention in another country will reduce violence (it certainly wasn't true in Iraq); that a woman who was the target of violence is somehow responsible for what



was done to her; that instituting “stop and frisk” practices will reduce violence in a community; that US antiterrorism policies and practices are making our country safer; that Muslims are out to destroy our society; or that giving large tax breaks to rich corporations will trickle down and help the poor.

Telling the truth today can involve gathering information and writing articles, letters to government officials, or to newspaper editors, as well as using art forms such as song, drama, film, and posters. Creative symbolic actions tell the truth about a situation, but also point to the alternatives or the solutions. Actions can take the form of street theater, mock villages, or die-ins to dramatize what US military intervention, global anti-terrorism campaigns, or drone warfare really mean for the people on the ground. They also can call attention to the plight of immigrants kept in detention centers with no legal representation just because they lack legal documentation, or to the effects of weapons made with depleted uranium. They can help us understand how mass incarceration of African Americans perpetuates a racial caste system. They can reveal what cutting food stamps means for the poor, or how state and federal

deregulation of large oil companies contributes to pollution and global warming. A group might fast to bring attention to hunger in their own community or to the plight of the prisoners in the Guantanamo Bay detention camp.

### **Intervention, resistance, or civil disobedience**

Other times, intervention, resistance, or even civil disobedience are called for. We remember Jesus intervening and exposing the hypocrisy of men who were about to stone a woman for adultery. When he overturned the tables and insisted that the institutionalized economic temple practices stop because they oppressed the poor, Jesus acted with strength, yet without harming anyone.

Once, in the West Bank, we sat on the roofs of Palestinian homes when Israeli bulldozers came to demolish them so they could build a settlement. Another time, we asked an Israeli soldier, who was beating a Palestinian, to “treat that person with respect.”

Intervention for us here might take the form of firmly but lovingly interrupting a racist or sexist remark or joke. It might mean having a prayer vigil or sit-down inside the offices of an institution or agency to protest or disrupt hurtful practices. After Martin Luther King, Jr. was killed in 1968, my late husband, Art, was among a large group who stood as a nonviolent wall between police and members of the Black Panthers, preventing violence, which was coming mainly from the police. One day, at a shopping mall parking lot, Art saw a man verbally abusing a woman and starting to slap her. Without saying anything, Art walked closer to the couple and just stood clearly in the man’s sight and watched. The man soon stopped and walked away.

*Khanaqin election day*



Courtesy of Peggy Faw Gish

**CPT members help some Palestinian farmers harvest barley on their land which is adjacent to the Israeli settlement of Susya in the southern West Bank. Harvesters had been harassed by settlers and requested accompaniment by internationals for their safety.**

Acts of resistance can take the form of refusing to cooperate with laws that are unjust or that ask us to violate what God calls us to. Men in the Church of the Brethren did alternative service or were imprisoned for not cooperating with the military draft. At times being faithful to Jesus compels us to use civil disobedience to make a strong statement or resist an evil and be willing to suffer the consequence of jail or fines. We seek to do such actions out of love, and pray that God's Spirit can work through them to transform the hearts of people perpetuating the injustice or other kinds of violence.

None of these actions or methods will stop or interrupt violence in every instance or automatically deal with the underlying problems that perpetuate it. That's why these methods go hand in hand with the slower work of dialogue and educating ourselves and others, building relationships of trust, with longer campaigns to change entrenched structures and institutions, and with providing communities of healing for victims of violence and those who perpetrate violence out of their own woundedness and fear. Such actions are more

Courtesy of Peggy Faw Gish



**Peggy Faw Gish and other CPT team members talk to children at Zharawa IDP Camp.**

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**When we allow ourselves to be open and vulnerable to those who are hurt or marginalized in our society, the power of love makes it possible to bridge the barriers of fear and hostility, and to see that we are brothers and sisters.**

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powerful if they are taken by individuals or a church body seeking to embody peace and justice in their own lives and relationships, and to allow God's Spirit to work through them. Such groups seek lifestyle choices that do not support local or global injustice. And they seek circles of friendship that include the poor and people of other races and religions. Their children learn to be peacemakers by watching the adults around them and by participating in peacemaking activities.

Responding to Jesus' mandate to be peacemakers isn't easy. The crises in our society can seem overwhelming, and sometimes it's hard to hold on to our faith that love really is more powerful than evil or hate. It may require going beyond our comfort zone, or result in being hurt or even killed as we open ourselves to the anger and pain of others, or as we upset the equilibrium of violent structures. If we go very far down that road, we soon come to the edges of our own strength and find that to sustain such work we need to root it in prayer—staying connected to the vine. We need communities of support and guidance, and help when we need healing and care for our families.

It's often fear that holds us back. What I've learned while

working in Iraq is to pray, not so much for courage, as for love. It has been the power of this love I've been given for the Iraqi people that has allowed me to move beyond my fear and walk with them in dangerous situations.

When we allow ourselves to be open and vulnerable to those who are hurt or marginalized in our society, the power of love makes it possible to bridge the barriers of fear and hostility, and to see that we are brothers and sisters. This love gives us a hunger and thirst for righteousness and compels us to act for justice and reconciliation. We can dare to do "the impossible," and sow seeds of God's kingdom, trusting that God will water and bring forth fruit. In the process, God provides us with the strength and healing we need—and gives us the gift of deep joy! ❧

Peggy Faw Gish is a member of the Church of the Brethren living on a farm outside Athens, Ohio, and is an active participant in Christian Peacemaker Teams. She is the featured speaker at the Brethren Press/Messenger dinner at the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Columbus, Ohio, this summer. Her first book, *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace* (2004), covers the first year and a half of the Iraq War. Her second book, *Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation* (2013), picks up the story from 2004 to 2011.



DEALING WITH THE

# ALIENS IN OUR MIDST

by Frank Ramirez

**S**ay Shakespeare or Leviticus and people's eyes glaze over.

BO-ring. So how about saying them both in the same sentence. That ought to put people to sleep for a couple of hours!

Yet I'd like to pair a favorite verse from what some would consider the most boring book of the Bible with a favorite passage from Shakespeare that almost no one has ever read on the page, nor seen on the stage!

It seems like an odd couple, yet pairing these words together makes sense—the greatest Shakespeare monologue you may have never read, or even heard of, and the greatest ethical passage of scripture that has certainly been ignored by several legislators a little too full of themselves.

Anyway, the story begins about 40 years ago, at the 1974 Annual Confer-

ence (my first!) in Roanoke, Va. I was a teenager, and in the company of several fellow students from what was then LaVerne College (now University of La Verne). We'd traveled thousands of miles from Southern California and found ourselves sleeping on the floor of a house loaned by a kindly Dunker to as many young people who wanted to camp out and attend conference.

It was an impressive and largely a positive experience for me. I got to see how the church worked. At one point I was at a hearing on the General Board report, and the focus was on a section about farming. Among the recommendations were that the Church "commend the United Farm Workers of America for their commitment to non-violence in their struggle for justice."

Whew! That set off some good old Brethren farmers who had lots of words

about immigrants and Mexicans and migrant farm workers. One Brethren farmer, no doubt a capital fellow otherwise, got up to say it was no use giving migrants more rights because they didn't deserve any. He began to recite a series of stereotypes reflecting his prejudices against them, including the fact that they didn't know how to take care of things and couldn't take care of themselves. What he hadn't expected was that there might be someone present who was Hispanic! No, not me. A woman whose name I can't recall who stood up against his pre- and misconceptions, startling him because he assumed there wouldn't be any of us in a room full of Brethren..

It taught me how pervasive prejudice against immigrants can be, even among nice people like Brethren, no matter how important the work performed by those immigrants might be.

*Children play under a giant American flag during a 2010 march in Washington, D.C., for comprehensive immigration reform.*

Fast forward around 15 years. I was married, had kids, had graduated from seminary, and was pastor of a Brethren congregation in California.

I won a radio contest and the prize was a trip to London! Jennie and I were startled to find out, as we entered wearing jeans and backpacks, that we were housed in a luxury hotel just down the street from Number 10 Downing Street.

Among the many touristy things Americans do, like seeing plays, visiting the Tower of London, and glancing at the Crown Jewels, we also went to the British Museum, where we saw the Rosetta Stone, the Elgin Marbles, and Paul McCartney's original manuscript for his song "Yesterday."

But the thing I was looking for was some very old pages written in an almost illegible hand. They were William Shakespeare's attempt to fix up a play that had run into the disapproval of the censor and they were on display for only a few months. However, not even Shakespeare's additions to *The Book of Sir Thomas More* (written by committee by at least six of the era's playwrights) could bring that woebegone work to the stage.

ers and then repeat lies about the dangers they pose. Against this backdrop Sir Thomas More enters. He first asks the rioters to imagine they get their way and all the immigrants are expelled. He pleads for them to put themselves in their shoes and have a little human sympathy. More then suggests to the rioters that if they get their way by rioting, they may well be the next victims when other rioters turn against them. Here's what it looks like:

*Imagine that you see  
the wretched strangers,  
Their babies at their backs,  
with their poor luggage,  
Plodding to th' ports and coasts  
for transportation,  
And that you sit as king  
in your desires...  
What had you got? I'll tell you:  
you had taught  
How insolence and strong hand  
should prevail,  
How order should be quelled.  
And by this pattern  
Not one of you should live  
an aged man....*

Nicholl makes the convincing case that living in the household of foreigners helped him identify with their struggles, and to depict them as real people, instead of, as many of his playwright contemporaries did, depict them as stock characters who were evil, ridiculous, or both.

Okay, that's Shakespeare. Now let's turn to—drum roll please—Leviticus! No doubt one of your least favorite Bible books. But I love Leviticus. Seriously.

A few years ago Christina Bucher and David Leiter were kind enough to invite me to join them as co-editors of the book *The Witness of the Hebrew Bible for a New Testament Church* (Brethren Press, 2010). While most people might dismiss Leviticus as boring and obscure, I chose to write about Leviticus 19, which I think is just about the most Brethren chapter in the Old Testament.

It is here that we learn to treat the disabled with respect, to use the same honest scales for everyone, to pay workers on time, to allow the poor to glean in your fields during harvest time because they have a right to your substance. In other words, to treat the other six days the same as the Sabbath: to live by a high moral



**The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God** (Leviticus 19:34).

Now in Shakespeare's time the Elizabethans harbored anti-immigrant prejudices that sometimes bubbled over into violence and riots. There were laws that targeted immigrants for extra taxes, and other laws that made it hard for them to advance economically, even as the English took advantage of their talents and energy.

Shakespeare was asked to write a scene about an anti-immigrant riot. Good Englishmen and women spout stereotypes about the habits of foreign-

In other words, violence begets violence. You might be the next victim.

Now Shakespeare was a product of his age, and in earlier plays he echoed the prejudices of his own time. So where did this sympathy for immigrants come from?

Well, I've recently read Charles Nicholl's book *The Lodger Shakespeare: His Life on Silver Street*. It focuses on the few years he roomed in London at the home of the Mountjoys, a French immigrant family who specialized in making women's head attire.

code based on the belief that it is God's will for us to treat everyone with respect.

It is Leviticus 19:18 that Jesus is quoting when he says to "Love your neighbor as yourself." And just a little later in the chapter we read: *The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you; you shall love the alien as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt: I am the LORD your God* (Lev. 19:34).

Notice that it doesn't say put up with, try to ignore, legislate against,



**Instead of building walls along borders to keep people out, scripture (and Shakespeare, but that's no never mind) tells us if we associate together we become family.**

demonize, scapegoat, or advance your political career at the expense of the aliens in your midst. You are not merely to tolerate the alien in your midst. You are not simply to allow the alien to live among you when it's financially beneficial to you, then kick out the aliens when there is an economic downturn. You are not to fear-monger the populace with rumors about aliens. You are to love—love—the alien as yourself.

And with words that ought to strike guilt into the hearts of those Americans who have demonized aliens even though they are themselves the descendants of immigrants, the people are reminded, "...for you were aliens in the land of Egypt." Finally the words make it clear that there is no choice regarding this command to love—"I am the Lord your God."

Old Testament expert Jacob Milgrom says it best: "This arguably, is the ethical summit not only in this chapter, but all of scripture."

Shakespeare, having roomed with resident aliens, could no longer dismiss them as stereotypes. Neither could God's people, not after the book of Ruth made its appearance and brought Leviticus to life, challenging us to remember that living among "outsiders" makes them insiders. Ruth is a Moabite, a member of a hated race which God's people are forbidden to associate with—yet as she gleanes in the fields to support her Judean mother-in-law, she works so hard she impresses the other workers, who speak highly of her to Boaz, who owns the fields. With her energy and purpose she displays the *chesed*, the steadfast love, which is an attribute of God.

Brethren history is full of people—Peter Nead, Henry Kurtz, and Helena Kruger, for instance—who came from outside the circle and, having been welcomed into

our church, contributed great things to our fellowship. I, as an outsider, can say I've been welcomed as well.

As a nation of immigrants it makes little sense for us to be erecting fences, figurative, or literal, to "protect" ourselves. Instead of building walls along borders to keep people out, scripture (and Shakespeare, but that's no never mind) tells us if we associate together we become family.

The alternative is to keep tightening the circle, excluding more and more folks, much as Sir Thomas More warned in Shakespeare's scene:

*For other ruffians, as their  
fancies wrought,  
With selfsame hand, self reasons,  
and self right,  
Would shark on you, and men,  
like ravenous fishes,  
Would feed on one another.*

To which Doll, a character who earlier expressed dismay at the prospect of immigrants in their midst, responds, "Before God, that's as true as the gospel."

Or one can come to know and be known. Long before marriage entered into the picture, the native-born Boaz was so impressed by the immigrant Moabite that he said to her,

*"All that you have done for your  
mother-in-law since the death of your  
husband has been fully told me, and  
how you left your father and mother  
and your native land and came to a  
people that you did not know before.  
The Lord recompense you for what you  
have done, and a full reward be given  
you by the Lord, the God of Israel,  
under whose wings you have come to take  
refuge!" (Ruth 2:11-12)*

In October 2006 I was a member of the General Board and had a hand in

writing a "Pastoral Letter on the Current Immigration Issues." I honestly don't remember which parts I helped write—it was a group effort—but I liked the part that reads:

"Obedience to God's Word calls us to honor and respect the poor and the foreigners, people who are least able to care for themselves. Aliens often have no legal recourse when they are cheated. There may not be any system of justice available to them. If they have a dispute with an employer or landlord, who stands up for them? In Leviticus 19, God reminds the people of Israel that they themselves have been in a similar situation when they were aliens in Egypt. We Americans have a similar history, for we are a nation of immigrants."

And later we wrote, "The Lord our God is not a little god who cares only for one group or nation. The Lord God is Creator and Redeemer of all peoples, of every nation."

So I'm assuming if you spout hate speech against immigrants you don't pay attention to the Bible. And if you won't pay attention to the Bible, I ask you at least consider what Shakespeare said—that if you can't empathize with the suffering that would ensue if you got your way and kicked out 14 million undocumented residents of this country and managed to marginalize all the rest of us who don't look like you, at least consider what else Shakespeare said—if you got your way, you might be the next one targeted.

Don't imagine you can be both a Christian and a hater. Heaven's gate doesn't operate that way. Neither should we. **W**

Frank Ramirez is senior pastor of Union Center Church of the Brethren in Nappanee, Ind.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

# Leading EYN through its most difficult time

## An interview with Samuel Dante Dali

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

*[Samuel Dante Dali, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), attended the recent World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in Busan, Republic of Korea, as delegate for the Nigerian Brethren. While there, he spoke with Church of the Brethren Newsline director Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford about the increase of terrorist violence in north-east Nigeria where members of EYN have been among the many killed in attacks by extremist Islamists.—Ed.]*

**What is going on with EYN in Nigeria?** **We thought that the situation was getting better,** when the government placed a state of emergency in three states. But recently terrorists mobilized especially in Yobe State, attacked churches, military offices, and police, and they also went to other parts of the country where most of our churches are. They attacked Christians from house to house and burned almost every church in the Gwoze and Gavva areas. Most of the EYN church is in these areas close to Cameroon. About 2,000 of our church members have fled to Cameroon as refugees.

It makes us very worried that some government

officials are part of this. The state government could have acted to provide security for the common citizen, especially when [the violence] becomes so intense. But it appears the government is not doing much about it.

Since the government is not doing anything, people try to mobilize themselves to provide their own local security. Of course they are armless. [Terrorists] come with AK-47s and especially with machine guns. The people cannot face them, but what can they do? They can't all run to Cameroon.

We as a church are just praying and praying. And sometimes we are very confused and depressed because there's not much you can do. The church cannot mobilize and provide security. The resources aren't there. And sometimes you can't have a church service at all. Worship is out of the question in some places.

**How many EYN churches are affected?** **About 30 percent of the whole of EYN.** Churches in Maiduguri, for example, have a heavy military presence [for protection from terrorists]. The church pays for feeding the soldiers and pays their allowance. That's how the churches can survive within this kind of situation and have their services on Sunday.



Randy Miller

**We have seen news reports of local civilian forces for protection. How is that working?**

**I went to Maiduguri, and I heard about the civilian Joint Task Force.** I met some of them. They are very young people, some even 5 years

old, with sticks and swords. They were checking every car that goes into Maiduguri. The idea was that some of those Joint Task Force were members of the terrorists before, so they know who the terrorists are. Whenever they find a terrorist, sometimes they beat them, sometimes they take them to security.

It made me even more angry with our government. How can untrained civilians without arms become a security force for the society? And after a few months the terrorists came and ambushed this civilian Joint Task Force and killed about 50 of them at once. So you see the danger.

In the recent attack that happened, the armed men came from Cameroon, Niger, and Chad, and joined together with Nigerian terrorists to attack Maiduguri. The terrorists are not only Nigerians. They are from the neighboring countries. And of course from Mali. Most of them are trained in Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Lebanon. So it is a global problem.

**Where are they getting their guns and ammunition?**

**That is another a big question** because the arms are very sophisticated, even anti-aircraft guns. So how are they getting in? Some Nigerian politicians are part of the problem. They import guns for the terrorists and supply them. Recently there was one immigration control officer who was arrested. He was responsible for the terrorists in the Yobe area. If you can find an immigration officer who is part of the group, he is at the border controlling importation of weapons.

Generally our problem is government politicians who are not interested in the life of the citizens. They are busy fighting one another, so they sponsor this kind of terrorist activity. They themselves do not understand it will get out of control and they will also be affected eventually.

**Is there a strong movement to have two separate states, northern Nigerian and southern Nigeria?**

**Because of the tension that has been happening,** Nigerians have been calling for a national conference to discuss whether Nigeria should live together or separate.

This is not going to be good for the country. If Nigeria splits, I think that's the end of Nigerian society. Nigeria will get into a crisis that will affect the whole of Africa.

The struggle of Nigeria is not against a foreign-dominated government like in South Sudan. It's within, against each other. So if it splits, it will not split in two. You will have warlords in different sections of the country fighting one another. By the time the United Nations comes to pacify the situation, they will have killed themselves.

**Does the church have a role to play in the middle of all** **Before my recent trip to Indonesia, I thought the church could do nothing** other than to develop itself. My thinking has been that we should forget that we have a government. Let us as the church do what we can do for our members within the capacity and the opportunity we have.

So we are trying in EYN to develop our own schools, to develop our own health service, to promote our own agricultural activities. Even actually try to create a bank for ourselves.

If the schools are getting bad, we can create a standard and our children will not lose their education. And then if we focus on agriculture, we can show our people how to develop whatever they can develop within their local community. And then with the health service, we may not need a government hospital. And the bank—most of our members send their money in a government bank which is mostly controlled by these politicians. So if we have our own bank, the church will save our own income within this bank so we can give it to our members to do their business, to improve themselves, and to empower themselves economically.

But when I went to Indonesia, my mind began to change from a narrow focus to a wider focus for Nigeria.

**Say more about this conference in Indonesia.** **Myself and a pastor who is teaching about Islam** at the Theological College of Northern Nigeria, a Muslim lady who is participating in an interfaith group with EYN, and the coordinator of the Peace Program of TEKAN [Christian council in northern Nigeria] went with the purpose of sharing our experience as Christians under Muslim persecution in Nigeria and also to hear from them as Christians in a Muslim predominant community.

The first thing I discovered was that most of the interfaith and peace movement in Indonesia was supported and sponsored by Muslims. And most of the Muslims in Indonesia thought that a true Muslim would never force anyone to be converted to Islam.



And that a true Muslim would never kill anybody. They also stress and emphasize diversity and pluralism as phenomena that must be recognized and respected.

We visited Islamic schools, and in each of these they tried to organize a peaceful and interfaith dialogue with other communities. We went into the third biggest mosque in the world, built with assistance from Christians. And then there is a cathedral, built with the assistance of Muslims. That gave me the impression that actually not all Muslims are fanatic mad people, the way we have them in Nigeria.

**There is hope that Muslims and Christians can live together in peace?** **Exactly. I am trying to talk about what Indonesia is doing, and trying it in Nigeria.**

For example, during elections we should only vote for people who are interested in peace and bringing the community together. And we should influence the media. We need to write, and speak ourselves, and talk to people, and give them an alternative view of what is happening.

Even though the church is under persecution, we can still focus on addressing some social problems regardless of tribe or religion that can help the community. In the Christian hospital we visited in Indonesia, five percent of workers are Muslim. In Nigeria we can do something like that, recruit Muslims to work in some of our institutions. If we can get faithful, trained ones. But it will be an enormous challenge.

That's my new understanding: I think it's possible that Christians and Muslims as a community can live together and address the common problems affecting all of us.

**What is one thing you want the church in the US to know about the church in Nigeria?** **That EYN is going through the most difficult time of its existence, and we don't have a solution. For me, it almost made me resign from the work.**

People are being killed and I cannot do anything. I say, what is the point of my leadership? It is very difficult. Very, very difficult.

Church members are taking refuge at Kulp Bible College. Sometimes providing food for them is difficult. EYN depends on offerings from members, so when the members are terribly affected, the whole church is affected. Sources of income for the headquarters are gone. It is very painful to see members who have been sources of support to the church, and now they are homeless.

I'm asking, what is the global church going to do about this global problem? The terrorists have a network. But does the church have a network to handle the problems of the world?

I think we need to do something more than just a prayer. Of course, prayer is number one. But there's

something else needed to encourage one another. You cannot stop the situation completely, but I think it's important we come close to one another.

I have received letters from the US, from church members. We compiled them and sent them to all the district church councils in the form of a big book so that the members can read it. The members feel that someone cares about them and someone is worried about their situation. You give them some comfort that they are not alone.

**In a follow-up conversation,** Dali shared at length and more personally about how the situation has affected him and his church. How can church leadership tell members not to try to defend their homes and families, he asked, expressing the struggle to face a virtually impossible situation and yet maintain a voice for peace.

He characterized the violent extremist Islamist movement as a demonic possession of the spirit of Islam. His greatest fear is that he and others in EYN may let the horrors of the situation push them into enmity, and that demon might possess them as well. There are times he has to stop listening to stories of suffering and death, to protect himself from being overtaken by hatred.



How can Brethren in the US help? No one from outside Nigeria can solve this problem for the Nigerians, Dali said, but US Brethren can help provide disaster relief for refugees and can visit and encourage the Nigerian Brethren with their presence. He requested the sending of volunteer medical personnel, doctors and midwives to work in the hospital EYN plans to develop.

He then asked something more difficult from the American church: in the midst of killing and death, he wants the Church of the Brethren to remind EYN of the need to focus on peace. ❧

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford is director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren.

Mosaic at the Priscilla Catacombs in Rome based upon a third century fresco of women at the agape meal.



## The perils of skipping love feast

by Tim Harvey

**A** careful reading of *Philippians* reveals that while Paul is mostly writing a joy-filled letter to a congregation he loves very much, he does write with some knowledge of conflict within the church. He mentions an issue with other preachers in Rome (1:15-18) and he will eventually address an open conflict within the Philippian congregation (4:2-3). Conflict in the church is really no surprise; as Frank Ramirez writes in his commentary on *Philippians*, “Like many congregations, ancient and modern, the *Philippians* faced the sort of problems that arise because there are people in the church. We’re only human, and sometimes we don’t get along” (*Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, 51).

Before moving on to other topics, Paul finishes his exhortation on life together with a flourish. After a few final instructions (2:1-5) he uses a hymn celebrating Christ’s humility as the example of our behavior (2:6-11).

With the Maundy Thursday love feast soon to be here, it seems that Brethren have a great opportunity to put these words into practice in a very practical way. Might we take the opportunity to think differently about others within our own

congregations, as we consider Jesus’ example both here and in John 13:1-17?

Please take a few minutes to read *Philippians* 2:1-11 and John 13:1-17.

### Adopting the mind of Christ

*Philippians* 2:1 reminds me of my high school days and a “question” my parents would ask before I headed out on a Friday or Saturday night: “You will be home by 11, won’t you?” I was smart enough to realize that there really wasn’t a question mark at the end of that statement!

And so verse 1 begins, “If then there is any encouragement in Christ. . .” The expectation, of course, is that there is encouragement in Christ, and the *Philippians* knew very well what that looked like. References to conflict aside, this was a very strong congregation which had experienced the many benefits of loving, committed, congregational life. Paul mentions five things they had known: “encouragement in Christ,” “consolation,” “fellowship,” “compassion,” and “sympathy.”

Pausing here for a moment, how have you experienced these qualities of Christian life in your congregation? How have they

encouraged you in the faith? Take some time to name these qualities. Write them out on paper, and give thanks to God.

Because the Philippians have experienced these things, Paul is able to give three instructions. The first (v. 2) is a corporate instruction, written to the congregation as a whole: Be of the same mind . . . same love . . . one accord . . . one mind. Paul repeats himself for emphasis. Like times when we sing in unison, the church must be united in order to give an effective and accurate witness of the presence of Christ in our midst. Disunity, no matter the issue, detracts from our mission.

The next two instructions (vv. 3-4) are individual instructions and serve as excellent examination questions for love feast. In two parallel sentences, Paul instructs us to examine our own motives as we relate to one another, setting aside ambition and personal interest. Instead, we are to be humble, and put others ahead of ourselves.

While passages like this make for great preaching—and might evoke an “Amen!” from the congregation—in reality this is very difficult teaching. In our post-Christian, individualistic American culture, we are constantly encouraged to look out for “number one” before all else. Marketing and media (especially social media) actively encourage us to think of ourselves to the exclusion of others. Personally, I have come to think that one of the greatest challenges facing the church isn’t that we are divided along conservative/liberal lines, it’s that we just don’t want anyone telling us what to do. We are individual. Before we sit down to love feast, we might use these instructions to examine our own souls.

### Pointing to Jesus

If we are ever tempted to withhold our affection, encouragement, financial support, or our very presence from the congregation, Paul offers a significant invitation to act differently. He points to Jesus. In words that most scholars believe are an early Christian hymn (vv. 6-11), Paul says to have the same mind as Jesus.

The hymn begins and ends in Heaven, and focuses on the choice Jesus made to humbly obey his Father. Speculations on what Jesus exploiting his equality with God might have looked like are interesting, but must ultimately be abandoned as beyond our knowledge. The point of the hymn is that Jesus made a choice based on humility; Jesus chose incarnation. We celebrate this annually at Christmas, but I wonder if we really think about the remarkable choice Jesus made to leave the direct presence of God and to accept the limitations of human form.

But this isn’t all. Jesus’ humility led him to the cross.

Jesus is the ultimate example of humility because in choosing human form he chose all of the limitations of human form, including the fact that all will die. In making this choice, Jesus secured our salvation. Now, our knees can bend in acknowledgment of our salvation. We can gladly acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, and that he is our Lord.

In choosing self-emptying humility, Jesus eliminated all

**Harsh words, hard hearts, revenge and/or withdrawal of affection ought to wash away into the water, as our lives are renewed in the giving and receiving of footwashing.**

other choices. There would be no doing things his own way (Matt. 4:1-11); no setting up an earthly kingdom to directly challenge the Roman emperor; no calling down legions of angels (Matthew 26:53). Among numerous options available to him, Jesus chose the humble path of putting God’s plan and our needs ahead of his own.

### Will we see you at love feast?

In a few weeks, the fellowship halls of Brethren congregations will be set up with rows of tables and circles of chairs. Within the circles we will find basins and towels. Will we take our place in the circle with our brothers and sisters?

Footwashing is an important time of worship, because it gives us the chance to put the words of Philippians 2 into practice. Anytime we are at odds with someone in our church family, we should keep in mind that we might end up sitting next to them at love feast. Then what will we do? Indeed, choosing footwashing is our way of making a choice that eliminates all other choices. By washing feet, we are choosing the “interests of others,” in the manner of Jesus. Selfish ambition and conceit are not viable options for the believer who chooses to kneel and take someone else’s foot in their hand. Insisting on our own way ought to seem less important as we wash and dry another’s feet. Harsh words, hard hearts, revenge and/or withdrawal of affection ought to wash away into the water, as our lives are renewed in the giving and receiving of footwashing.

In thinking about humility and love feast, I’m reminded of something Paul Stutzman says in his book *Recovering the Love Feast*: “Will Jesus truly be the Lord of our lives, or will he simply be a religious consultant?” (174). That’s a great question to consider as we prepare to practice Jesus’ humility in the love feast. ❧

Tim Harvey is pastor of Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va. He was Annual Conference moderator for the Church of the Brethren in 2012.

# India's First District Church of the Brethren celebrates court decision on property

The Supreme Court in India has made a decision in a decades-long bitter court battle over ownership and control of former Brethren mission properties, following an early 1970s merger with the Church of North India (CNI) that included the former mission of the Church of the Brethren.

The court ruled that the First District Church of the Brethren in India continues as legal successor of the Church of the Brethren mission and is vested with its properties. The ruling states that it does not hold that the resolution for unification to establish CNI resulted in dissolution of the First District Church of the Brethren and, de facto, all properties transfer to CNI.

Church staff in the US including the general secretary and executive director of Global Mission and Service have stayed in touch with leadership of CNI and leadership of First District Church of the Brethren as the court issued its ruling and as the church properties move into the control of First District and its congregations.

General secretary Stan Noffsinger has expressed a desire to leaders of the First District Church of the Brethren to meet later this spring to encourage continued efforts at reconciliation between the two communions as the properties case comes to an end.



Jay Wittmeyer

*The trustees of the CBGB Trust at a meeting. CBGB stands for the Church of the Brethren General Board. It is one of the trusts to which the Church of the Brethren in the US has been required by Indian law to nominate trustees to steward properties during the legal dispute.*



Jay Wittmeyer

*The Church of North India congregation at Ankleswar held a special service and gathering of the historically Brethren congregations of CNI to welcome Global Mission and Service executive Jay Wittmeyer during a visit in 2009.*

The Church of the Brethren is a founding member of the CNI and has been in close relationship with the unified church, which included participating in CNI's 40th anniversary celebration. While the Church of the Brethren helped establish CNI in the 1970s, a number of individuals decided to remain outside of that unification process and continued to worship as First District Church of the Brethren India.

Ownership of the properties, including local churches, schools, and other mission institutions, has been disputed since 1978.

In 2003, Annual Conference made a decision to seek a relationship with both bodies, after relating in an official capacity solely to CNI for more than 30 years. American Brethren have sent delegations to India in efforts to maintain relationships and have sponsored attempts at reconciliation and mediation between the parties to the dispute.

One result of the court decision has been to restore most of the church buildings to the possession of Brethren congregations, said a report from a leader in First District Church of the Brethren. First District Church of the Brethren in India "has been freed from the shackles of conflict, controversy, and uncertainty," said the report. "Our church will henceforth move ahead independently and unfettered as the body of Christ following the Brethren principles of peace and harmony.



Roy Winter

*A graphic image of the destruction wrought by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines, in this photo taken by Brethren Disaster Ministries leader Roy Winter during a recent trip to assess the recovery effort following the typhoon. Haiyan was the strongest typhoon in recorded history, and affected some 12 million people, displaced nearly a million more, and killed more than 6,200.*

## BDM makes assessment visit to the Philippines

Roy Winter, associate executive director of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries visited the Philippines Jan. 18 to 28 to evaluate the response to Typhoon Haiyan. Brethren Disaster Ministries is using information gained to identify local partners and determine how the church may best contribute to ecumenical relief and recovery efforts.

Accompanied by Church of the Brethren member Peter Barlow, who has volunteered for the Peace Corps in one of the hardest-hit areas, Winter visited with partners of Church World Service (CWS) and ACT International, communities where Heifer International is at work, and local Filipino organizations.

They visited with government officials on the island of Leyte and the city of Tacloban, which has received much of the world's attention following the typhoon. They also went to communities where Heifer is doing long-term sustainability work around Ormoc city. They also met with several village community groups, who received them warmly. "They mostly seemed really glad to see people who were there to help," Winter said.

The storm, which was the strongest typhoon in recorded history, made landfall Nov. 8. It affected some 12 million people, displaced nearly a million more, and killed more than 6,200. "For many coastal fishermen, coconut farmers, and rice farmers, the wind and storm surge not only took their homes, it stole their livelihoods pos-

sibly for years to come," Winter said.

He added that some areas they visited were hit by 50-foot tidal surges. In Tacloban, some two months later, the city was still struggling to regain basic infrastructure. He said many buildings remain destroyed, with their roofs blown off. "It was a shock to see so many palm trees down," Winter said, noting that is unusual given the resilient nature of the tropical trees that survive many storms.

The hardest part of the trip was listening to the stories of death and loss. Winter and Barlow met parents who lost children, families in which many died, and communities that have been decimated. One man who survived by clinging to a tree told how his wife was swept out of his grasp and lost to the storm.

Winter views the typhoon recovery in the Philippines as an opportunity for Brethren Disaster Ministries to help a country work at sustaining itself. He plans to focus the Brethren resources on rebuilding livelihoods for at least the next couple of years, with some support given to per-

manent construction work by partner organizations. So far at least \$200,000 in donations have been received for Typhoon Haiyan recovery.

Winter's personal report is at [www.brethren.org/bdm/updates/tindog-tacloban-stand-up.html](http://www.brethren.org/bdm/updates/tindog-tacloban-stand-up.html). A story from Peter Barlow's experience of returning



courtesy of Roy Winter

*Roy Winter (left) of the Brethren Disaster Ministries staff, and former Peace Corps volunteer Peter Barlow (right) met with ICAN staff during their trip to the Philippines to assess the recovery.*

to the Philippines is at [www.brethren.org/news/2014/tita-graces-tiled-floor.html](http://www.brethren.org/news/2014/tita-graces-tiled-floor.html). Give to the Typhoon Haiyan appeal at [www.brethren.org/typhoonaid](http://www.brethren.org/typhoonaid) or mail donations to Emergency Disaster Fund, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

## Upcoming events

**April 4-5** Bethany Theological Seminary Presidential Forum, "Living Love Feast," Richmond, Ind.

**April 13** Palm Sunday

**April 17** Maundy Thursday

**April 18** Good Friday

**April 20** Easter Sunday

**May 1** National Day of Prayer

**May 4** National Youth Sunday

**May 6** Webinar on bullying, with Marie Benner-Rhoades, 7-8 p.m. at [www.brethren.org/webcasts](http://www.brethren.org/webcasts)

**May 15-17** Church planting conference, "Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully," Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Ind.

**May 23-25** Young Adult Conference, Camp Brethren Woods, Keezletown, Va.

**May 29** Ascension Day

**May 30-June 4** Ministry Summer Service Orientation, Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, Ill.

## On Earth Peace joins Stop Recruiting Kids Campaign

On Earth Peace is now a national sponsor of the Stop Recruiting Kids campaign along with the National Network Opposing the Militarization of Youth. Just as society protects minors from the risks of alcohol and tobacco use, the new Stop Recruiting Kids campaign is geared toward mobilizing public opinion and political support for protecting adolescents from exposure to the age-inappropriate risks of military recruiting. Stop Recruiting Kids is working to reach the "movable middle"—those who can be motivated to respond to protect kids—as well as natural allies and protagonists.

Campaign strategies include featuring trusted public institutions and public figures who can lend

credibility to the campaign; using social media to build connections with news outlets, elected officials, local groups, key allies, and supporters; and forming relationships with local school boards, administrators, faculty, parent/teacher associations, and student groups through local organizing teams.

To learn more about the campaign visit [www.SRKcampaign.org](http://www.SRKcampaign.org) or contact On Earth Peace executive director Bill Scheurer at [Bill@OnEarthPeace.org](mailto:Bill@OnEarthPeace.org) or 847-370-3411. Bill Scheurer is directly participating as co-coordinator of Stop Recruiting Kids on behalf of On Earth Peace.

Marie Benner-Rhoades, program director for Youth and Young Adult Peace Formation for On Earth Peace

## Workbook on disabilities produced for Vietnam

Workbooks for helping people cope with physical loss and disability have been delivered to Vietnam, thanks in part to the efforts of Grace Mishler and Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service.

Mishler, who receives support for her work on disabilities in Vietnam from the Church of the Brethren Global Mission and Service, was instrumental in getting 1,000 copies of a Vietnamese translation of *Coping with Physical Loss and Disability Workbook* delivered to the Ho Chi Minh City University of Social Sciences and Humanities (USSH) Faculty of Social Work. The book is by Rick Ritter, M.S.W., who has been part of Lincolnshire Church of the Brethren in Indiana. The Vietnamese translation was published by Youth Publisher, Ho Chi Minh City.

The workbook is designed to foster personal reflection while also providing avenues to outside resources that can aid in recovery. The project was initially

funded by a grant from Global Mission and Service. Further funding was provided by VNAH (Vietnam Assistance for the Handicapped), a long-time supporter of Mishler, who serves at the university as faculty of social work project developer.

The project got its start when Truong Van Anh, a linguistic teacher at Saigon University, read the book in English, fell in love with it, and volunteered to translate it into

Vietnamese. Additional help in editing the translation was provided by a member of VNAH and the dean of the USSH Faculty of Social Work and head of the Social Work Department.

Mishler and her assistant, Nguyen Vu Cat Tien, are organizing an April book launch—with help from students at the School Youth Union—at three universities. The aim is to promote the book more widely among students.



Grace Mishler with a group from the School Youth Union, which is helping organizing a launch of the disabilities workbook.

## Bethany Seminary announces results of essay contest

The three top essays of the 2014 Bethany Peace Essay Contest were announced in early March. Out of 32 entries submitted, the following placed first, second, and third, respectively, and received prizes of \$2,000, \$1,000, and \$500:

**Anita Hooley Yoder**, senior MDiv student at Bethany Seminary, Richmond, Ind.: "I've Read Too Much Poetry for That: Poetry, Personal Transformation, and Peace."

**Charles Northrop**, PhD student at Cambridge University, England, resident of Richmond, Ind.: "Hard Rock Pacifism."

**Gabriella Stocksdales**, student at Larkin High School, Elgin, Ill.: "Colors of Peace."

Open to students enrolled in high school, college, and graduate-level degree

programs, the contest was advertised nationwide through denominational and ecumenical venues and received a national, ecumenical response. Writers were asked to reflect on how personal and local peacemaking efforts can address universal concerns. They could choose to explore this theme in one of the following areas, relating to personal experience: art, music, or poetry; the just peace movement; protest or change movements; social media; or interfaith efforts.

The contest is underwritten by the Jennie Calhoun Baker Endowment at Bethany, funded by philanthropist, teacher, and scholar John C. Baker in honor of his mother and her vision for peacemaking. His goal was to encourage constructive communication about peacebuilding

throughout all segments of society.

A variety of denominations were represented among the submissions, including at least 20 entries from the historic peace churches: Church of the Brethren, Quaker, and Mennonite. Bridgewater, Juniata, and Manchester Colleges (Church of the Brethren) were represented along with Earlham College and Earlham School of Religion (Quaker) and Eastern Mennonite University. Among the others were Harvard and Duke Divinity Schools, UCLA, Truman State University, Clark University, and four high schools.

The winning essays will appear in *MESSENGER* and *Brethren Life and Thought*, as well as *The Mennonite*, and *Quaker Life*.



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# AND YET

by Ken Gibble

Look. Over there.  
At the booth in the corner.  
How old is that baby in the high chair?  
Four months? Five?  
Look at the mother.  
She hasn't touched her food.  
She cannot take her eyes from the child.  
She keeps reaching over to touch him.  
And she cannot, simply cannot, stop smiling.

Some say that's how God loves us.  
Improbable, far-fetched, don't you think?  
And yet . . . 

—Ken Gibble, a retired Church of the Brethren pastor, writes from Camp Hill, Pa. You can read more on his blog at [www.kenslines.blogspot.com](http://www.kenslines.blogspot.com).



**Youth Cabinet meets in Elgin** The Youth Cabinet met at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., recently to discuss, reflect, and continue planning for National Youth Conference 2014. Pictured, from left, are Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries; National Youth Conference (NYC) coordinator Katie Cummings; Brittany Fourman of Southern Ohio District; Sarah Ullom-Minnich of Western Plains District; Kerrick van Asselt of Western Plains District; Sarandon Smith of Atlantic Northeast District; Zander Willoughby of Michigan District; NYC coordinator Tim Heishman; adult advisors Dennis Lohr of Atlantic Northeast District and Rhonda Pittman Gingrich of Northern Plains District; Emmett Eldred of Middle Pennsylvania District; and NYC coordinator Sarah Neher.

## Winners of NYC speech and music contests

The winners of the National Youth Conference (NYC) music contest and speech contest have been announced by the Youth and Young Adult Ministry Office.

Sam Stein, of Wheaton, Ill., is the winner of the music contest. He is a junior in high school and a member of the York Center Church of the Brethren youth group in Lombard, Ill.

There are three winners for the speech contest. Alison Helfrich of Bradford, Ohio, is a junior in high school from Oakland Church of the Brethren in Southern Ohio District. Katelyn Young, also a junior, is from Lititz, Pa., and from Ephrata Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Northeast District. Laura Ritchey, a senior from Martinsburg, Pa., is from Woodbury Church of the Brethren in Middle Pennsylvania District.

speech contest winners will share their speeches during the Sunday morning worship service at NYC, and the music contest winner will have the opportunity to perform his song on stage sometime during the week.

Tim Heishman is one of the coordinators for the 2014 National Youth Conference



### Discount fares to NYC

Southwest Airlines will be offering a 5 percent discount on economy fares and a 10 percent discount on business/first class to anyone attending National Youth Conference. The event takes place July 19-24 in Fort Collins, Colo. Contact [cobyouth@brethren.org](mailto:cobyouth@brethren.org) for more information. Find out more about NYC and register online at [www.brethren.org/nyc](http://www.brethren.org/nyc).



Gary Simment

## Starting fresh

**I**'ve been thinking a lot about fresh starts lately. Maybe it's because the snow is finally melting, but it seems everywhere I look, new life is springing forth. Well, it is that time of year.

Because my brain tends to work in a food-centric way, talk of fresh starts often leads me to ponder breakfast. Of course, this start-of-the-day meal is often anything but fresh, usually consisting of sugary cereals or packaged bars scarfed down while running out the door. Sitting with loved ones for a hearty, healthful meal at the beginning of each day may be the ideal, but is more likely to be seen on TV than at our own

kitchen tables. Aren't there options in between these two extremes—something quick and convenient, but also healthful and fresh?

Thankfully, there are!

Frozen berries, orange juice, and bananas pureed together can render several breakfasts in one blender. Toss in slivered almonds and flax seeds and you've got fiber, protein, and omega 3s mixed in with all those vitamins.



MANDY GARCIA

Hard boiled eggs can be simmered and shelled on Monday for the whole

week. Pair with multigrain toast and an apple and you're out the door and off to a solid start.

Steel-cut oats can soak while your sleep, and be ready when you wake. Make a big pot of any kind of oatmeal, flavor with maple syrup or raw sugar, add pecans and serve with orange slices—and there you go: whole grains to fuel your brain from your first project until lunch.

These options might take more time than just coffee-to-go, but those few extra minutes buy a nutrient-rich beginning for all the other minutes in the morning (plus the cost savings of buying whole foods instead of individually portioned, highly processed items). Every morning is a new opportunity for a fresh start.

Now here's a really crazy idea: what if our first meal of the day wasn't an afterthought, but an intentional time to remember how blessed we are to be able to break our nightly fast? It's miraculous that God provides our juice and cereal alongside new mercies every morning and a love that endures our frantic starts. Maybe it's silly that a small meal at the dawn of a new day could be a reminder of something sacred, but maybe that's all we need to fuel our hearts and minds—at least until lunch! ❗

Mandy Garcia is associate director of donor communications for the Church of the Brethren.



### Nutty Oat Pancakes

*When you can take your time with breakfast, this is a great way to use up oatmeal left over from the week. Serve with poached eggs and fresh fruit for a delicious and balanced beginning.*

- Beat one large egg.
- Stir in 1 cup of cooked oatmeal, 2 tablespoons of vegetable oil, and ½ cup of milk.
- Add 1 cup whole wheat flour, 1/3 cup pecan pieces, 1 tablespoon brown sugar, 3 teaspoons baking powder, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, ¼ teaspoon salt. Stir until just mixed.
- Heat a lightly greased skillet over medium-high heat.
- Use a quarter cup measure to spoon batter into pan, three at a time. Cook until golden brown and bubbles begin to form, then flip, about 90 seconds each side.
- Top with maple syrup, more nuts, and/or fresh berries. Makes 12 pancakes.

# CONTINUING THE TRADITION



Matthew Porter 2001, Andrew Gustafson 2005, Colleen (Porter) Gustafson 2006, Nathan Porter 2005, Amy Porter 2008, Peggy (Clark) Porter 1978, Irwin Porter 1952, Randel Porter 1976, Landon Porter 1999-2000, Denny Porter 1982, Betty Ann (Murrey) Porter 1953, Kay Ann (Porter) Zavala 1979, Jana (Porter) Hakes 1977, and Albert Zavala 1979.

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## Keep it coming

I just wanted to let you know that I continue to enjoy each issue of MESSENGER. For a small denomination magazine, it is so well done, representing various points of view, with good graphics and photos. I especially appreciate the writing by various authors. It is well-thought-out material. Much of it is good for Sunday school lessons. I have enjoyed Christopher Keating's articles, and hope you can find more such contributors for future Bible study articles. I still lean on the three-year series going through all the books and material for personal enrichment and as basic material for lessons. Thanks, and keep the info coming.

**Craig Coble**  
sent via email

## Maintain the ecumenical spirit

With considerable interest, I read the MESSENGER account of the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in the Repub-

lic of South Korea (January/February). It brought back memories of 50 years ago.

In August 1954, I served as a steward at the 2nd World Council of Churches Assembly in Evanston, Ill., the only Assembly thus far held on American soil. The theme was "Christ, the Hope of the World." There were 161 member churches then, fewer than half the present number.

In Evanston, M. R. Zigler was serving on the Central Committee of the World Council (WCC). He was a very respected presence at the Assembly. At that time in our Church of the Brethren history, there was strong opposition for the denomination to be a member of the WCC. M. R. was persistent and successful in his efforts toward achieving that membership. He is quoted as saying: "My vision for the World Council is to allow for differences and give a boost to each other even though we might be different in our communion services, our baptisms, and our vows" (*One Man's Peace*, by Inez Long). As in the present, the Church of the Brethren was recognized for its strong peace position, something so convincingly promoted by M. R.




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After the closing of the Assembly, most of the large cardboard name cards were left where delegates sat. I found M. R.'s and it is among the "treasures" I kept from that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

M. R. was a pioneer in the Church of the Brethren for the denomination's involvement in ecumenical endeavors. After his call to serve on the Central Committee of the WCC, M. R. asked the secretary-general, Willhelm Visser't'Hooft, why he was chosen—someone from one of the smallest member churches. The response: "Your position on relief in the interest of peace, and the service of youth."

Our denomination must feel considerable gratitude for the leadership of M. R. Zigler and for those leaders who for the last 50 years have followed his example and maintained that ecumenical spirit. We especially appreciate those who, at this time, continue to keep alive and give leadership for the peace presence in those ecumenical circles where other denominations have come to recognize the importance of that presence and have the desire to better understand and emulate it.

**Elaine Sollenberger**  
Everett, Pa.



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## Deeply grateful

I am deeply grateful for Audrey DeCoursey's article, "A Conscientious Objector in the War on Cancer" (January/February MESSENGER). In response, I desire to continue the conversation concerning a language with those who are suffering. Living a "non-resistance stance" as a hospital chaplain, the ministry that came to define me was being a compassionate listening presence where everyone could be themselves, using whatever language they chose to share. This is what I heard.

The initial language was one of technology and medical science. They had a new name that defined them as a disease. The promise was, if they assumed this new name, all the powers of the "state-of-the-art" machines, drugs, and expertise would be at their disposal and a "cure" would be at hand. "Just trust us and all will be okay."

Acknowledging how foreign and

confusing this language seemed to be for them, a second language emerged that I called "family." People with cancer began to put the scattered pieces of their life into meaningful narratives and share their stories with others.

Over time these languages no longer touched a soulful longing for something "real and eternal." An altogether new language arose within them. It surprised and amazed them and felt as being genuinely their own. It was the language of the Holy Spirit welling up from within them. They were now listening in stillness to God. They were hearing, feeling, and having their life be whole in a unique way in the midst of losses that said, "All is well."

Self-surrender. Self-abandonment. Self-emptying. This is the spiritual language that I heard. This is the language of Anabaptism. This is the language that I believe is needed to be incarnated by the body of Christ with the mournful for the breaking-in of God's Kingdom—

redeeming, saving, and restoring soul and spirit for the glory of God.

James Mitchell  
Chandler, Ariz.

## CLASSIFIEDS

**Explore God's love with the new Shine Sunday school curriculum!** *Shine: Living in God's Light* has engaging stories and activities that will teach children the Bible, understand that they are known and loved by God, and learn what it means to follow Jesus. Find sample sessions, Bible outlines, and more at [www.shinecurriculum.com](http://www.shinecurriculum.com).

**Remembering John Kline's Life: 150 Years Later.** On June 14-15 the John Kline Homestead, Broadway, VA., will remember John Kline with a two-day event for all ages on the 150th anniversary of his death. The commemoration will include children and youth activities, tours of the homestead and other historic sites, lectures by noted historians, worship, a closing memorial service, and a play: *Under the Shadow of the Almighty*. For information contact Paul Roth (540-896-5001; email: [proth@eagles.bridgewater.edu](mailto:proth@eagles.bridgewater.edu)).

*"Then some people came, bringing to Jesus a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. And when they could not bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him..." Mark 2:3-4*

# Open roof award nominations

Do you know of a Church of the Brethren congregation or district that has done something extraordinary to serve—or be served by—those with disabilities? Tell us about it, even if it's your own!

Visit [www.brethren.org/openroof](http://www.brethren.org/openroof) for the form to nominate this year's recipient.

Nomination deadline: June 2, 2014.

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[Dkline@brethren.org](mailto:Dkline@brethren.org)  
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Church of the Brethren

Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-325-8039, ext. 320; jclements@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

## New Members

**Alpha & Omega**, Lancaster, Pa.: Camyline Morales, Ronnie Sandoval, Jaime Castellanos, Maria Teresa Cazuelos, Elogidina Genao

**Berkey**, Windber, Pa.: Tori Blossom, Kevin Lape, Rebecca Lape, Trae Lape, Hunter Lape, Chase Oaks, Mary Wiley Lewis, Ashlee McMullen, Patricia Misosky, Nicole Truscello, Dean Webb, Jeff Yeckley, Daniel Esworthy, Donna Newlin, Charles Newlin, Michael Ross

**Brownsville**, Knoxville, Md.: Joe Berger, Lauren McGuffin, John McGuffin, Nikki Mongan

**Constance**, Hebron, Ky.: Gretchen Biles, Christopher Jenkins

**Crest Manor**, South Bend, Ind.: Alice Long Martin

**Drexel Hill**, Pa.: George Matthew Wilkie

**Faith Community**, New Oxford, Pa.: Marian Dunlop, Robert Hauck, Sherman Grove, Florence Grove

**Garden City**, Kan.: Troy Dumler, Sarah Dumler, Cameron Skipper-Dumler, Shai Valverde

**Hempfield**, Manheim, Pa.: Deborah Foti

**Lancaster**, Pa.: C. Alvin Cott, Barbara Cott

**La Verne**, Calif.: Jonah Evans, Nicole Bennett, Jerry Terry, Andre Clark, Neil Fancher, John Blickenstaff, Marissa Martinez, Jerry Bedford, Anna Bedford, Jim Lamb, Lindsey Sanders, J. Rupel, Jesse Tavarez, Jack Dejon Howard Clark, Gus Lamont Clark, Lara Parhimoan

**Mountain Grove**, Fulks Run, Va.: Phyllis Dove, Tanja Smith, Clayton Griffin,

Anjanette Macey, Yandiel Bautista, Justina May Bautista, Kelly Miller, Don Bear, Sharon Bear, Jason Bear

**Nampa**, Idaho: E. T. Walker, Linda Walker, Sherylon Roberts

**Philadelphia, First**, Wyndmoor, Pa.: Brianna O'Brien, Kaitlyn Engle

## Wedding Anniversaries

**Alltund**, Ronald and Diane, Dillsburg, Pa., 50

**Black**, Roy and Eleanor, Union Bridge, Md., 55

**Bowyer**, Vinal and Marjorie, Peru, Ind., 70

**Grossnickle**, Byron and Virginia, Union Bridge, Md., 55

**Lewellen**, Arthur and Phyllis, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 60

**Sinnott**, William and Linda, Union Bridge, Md., 50

**Starr**, Norman H. and Margery H., Champaign, Ill., 50

## Deaths

**Adams**, Elsie E. Stockdill, 88, Windber, Pa., April 5, 2013

**Barlow**, Monica Pence, 36, Ellicott City, Md., Feb. 28

**Blickenstaff**, Carmen Groff, 65, Twentynine Palms, Calif., Dec. 28

**Blossom**, Steven J., Sr., 48, Scalp Level, Pa., June 17

**Boring**, Emma Jane Oyler, 92, Johnstown, Pa., Oct. 27

**Bowser**, Joyce M., 78, Huntingdon, Pa., Jan. 25

**Brown**, Claron, 100, McPherson, Kan., Feb. 22

**Brust**, Emma Elizabeth Thompson, 94, Rohrsersville, Md., Jan. 9

**Burkett**, Barbara June Rodgers, 81, Windber, Pa., June 6

**Burkett**, John R., 85, Windber, Pa., April 1, 2013

**Butler**, Gertrude Elizabeth, 92, Rossville, Ind., Feb. 26

**Cannaday**, Gladys Gay Shough, 77, Stuart, Va., April 26, 2013

**Clark**, Augustus Lamont, 59, Chino Hills, Calif., June 19

**Coffman**, Myrtice E., 76, La Verne, Calif., Jan. 20

**Conboy**, Marian R., 78, New Oxford, Pa., Jan. 9

**Cordell**, Doris Almira Grumbine, 87, Waynesboro, Pa., Jan. 1

**Couchman**, Hurley, 94,

Modesto, Calif., Feb. 16

**Craun**, Robert Lee, 87, Waynesboro, Va., Feb. 10

**Davidson**, Hevener J., 95, Lititz, Pa., Feb. 16

**Detwiler**, Ruby Lucille Gates, 102, Huntingdon, Pa., Feb. 5

**Dibert**, Francis Donald, 78, Everett, Pa., Jan. 9

**Ebersole**, Harold Jones, 85, Palmyra, Pa., Jan. 26

**Eby**, Maxine Keller, 88, Dallas Center, Iowa, Dec. 50

**Ferguson**, Robert S., 51, Stanleytown, Va., Jan. 7

**Fields**, Palmer Steve, 53, Greenville, Ohio, Jan. 10

**Fortna**, Ralph W., 84, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 13

**Gregory**, Ted, 69, Yokohama, Japan, Sept. 22

**Harpest**, Lloyd J., 99, Greenville, Ohio, Dec. 14

**Harshman**, Linda Jean Blank, 66, Mount Airy, Md., Jan. 51

**Hess**, Marilyn, 77, Huntingdon, Pa., Jan. 6

**Hickle**, Anna Marie Bricker, 52, Masontown, Pa., Nov. 16

**Horning**, Helen Lorraine Coulter, 90, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 31

**Hundley**, James Albert, 97, Bassett, Va., Jan. 8

**Jones**, Dwayne, 72, Scottville, N.C., June 8

**Kaylor**, Mary Bell, 95, Elizabethtown, Pa., Dec. 25

**Kelley**, Hugh W., 70, Johnstown, Pa., Feb. 20

**Kime**, Carl E., 87, Kalamazoo, Mich., Dec. 7

**Landis**, Janice F., 76, Hershey, Pa., Jan. 29

**Layman**, Frank Benjamin, Jr., 93, Rocky Mount, Va., Feb. 7

**Leedy**, Mary Elizabeth Bear, 95, Chambersburg, Pa., Jan. 19

**Long**, Gary E., 66, Bradford, Ohio, Oct. 10

**Masimore**, Kathryn S., 90, York, Pa., Aug. 7

**McDannell**, William Ray, 87, Rockingham, Pa., Aug. 26

**Messamer**, Carla Mae, 75, Modesto, Calif., Jan. 14

**Miller**, Ernest M., 80, Windber, Pa., Oct. 22

**Moss**, Darrell F., 79, Dixon, Ill., Feb. 1

**Odom**, Betty J., 89, La Verne, Calif., Dec. 10

**Olson**, Gladys, 93, La Verne, Calif., Dec. 19

**Orr**, Flora May, 92, Nampa, Idaho, Jan. 10

**Poleck**, Elsie M., 87, Champaign, Ill., May 20, 2013

**Reeves**, Hazel C., 83, Bassett, Va., June 12

**Richard**, Eva Frances McCary, 93, Port Republic, Va., Jan. 21

**Riley**, Anna Elizabeth, 83, Brunswick, Md., Dec. 21

**Rodriguez**, Robert, 85, La Verne, Calif., July 6

**Rose**, E. Vincent, 94, Bassett, Va., Aug. 27

**Rothrock**, Dayton G., 91, McPherson, Kan., Feb. 6

**Rupel**, Jane, 47, Mount Baldy, Calif., July 22

**Rupel**, Leland D., 77, La Verne, Calif., Aug. 13

**See**, Myrtle Shoemaker, 80, Broadway, Va., May 21, 2013

**Sell**, Glenda Joyce, 70, Bradford, Ohio, Nov. 7

**Shuss**, Marie, 80, Everett, Pa., Dec. 28

**Sivcovich**, Miran, 96, La Verne, Calif., Jan. 27

**Smith**, Verna Martin, 88, Bassett, Va., Jan. 6

**Spoerlein**, Rozella Mae Casebeer, 89, Somerset, Pa., Jan. 28

**Stone**, Cora Lee Dodson, 79, Bassett, Va., June 7

**Stout**, Linda Flory, 68, Fort Defiance, Va., Nov. 28

**Strite**, Martha Louise Petre, 82, Maugansville, Md., Dec. 21

**Thomas**, Betty J. Baldwin, 80, Central City, Pa., Sept. 17

**Weber**, Linda Lou Ficklin, 87, Lombard, Ill., Feb. 4

**Wegman**, Thomas V., 74, Salisbury, Pa., Jan. 6

**Wheeler**, Judith Lee Lowman, 71, Aberdeen, Md., Dec. 12

**Williamson**, Shirley Harris, 75, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 17

## Licensings

**Aguirre**, Robert A., Pac. S.W. Dist. (Cornerstone Community, Reedley, Calif.), Jan. 12

**Bridgeman**, James, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Lancaster, Pa.), Jan. 26

**Eastis**, Todd, N. Ind. Dist. (North Winona, Warsaw, Ind.), Jan. 1

**Fletcher**, Jonathan O., Shen. Dist. (Valley Pike, Maurertown, Va.), Feb. 16

**Hosler**, Jennifer, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Washington City, Washing-

ton, D.C.), Feb. 9

**Hosler**, Nathan, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Washington City, Washington, D.C.), Feb. 9

**Kemmerer**, Joy, S. Ohio Dist. (Prince of Peace, Kettering, Ohio), Feb. 2

**Kenney**, Michael, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.), Jan. 19

**Thompson**, Andrew S., Shen. Dist. (Middle River, Fort Defiance, Va.), Feb. 2

**Troyer**, Timothy L., S/C Ind. Dist. (Huntington, Ind.), Nov. 17

**Underkoffler**, Gerald L., S. Pa. Dist. (Shippensburg, Pa.), April 14, 2013

## Ordinations

**Biemiller**, Jennifer, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Lancaster, Pa.), Jan. 19

**Crespo**, Lorens, Atl. S.E. Dist. (La Casa del Amigo, Arecibo, P.R.), Jan. 24

**Huiras**, Erin R., S/C Ind. Dist. (Liberty Mills, Ind.), Feb. 9

**Otero**, Jose Luis Callejo, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Iglesia de los Hermanos Remanente de Salvacion, Morovis, P.R.), Jan. 24

**Otero**, Maria, Atl. S.E. Dist. (Iglesia de los Hermanos Remanente de Salvacion, Morovis, P.R.), Jan. 24

**Reyes**, Lillian E., Atl. S.E. Dist. (Iglesia de los Hermanos y Centro Familiar, Inc., Bayamon, P.R.), Jan. 24

## Placements

**Aguirre**, Robert A., pastor, Cornerstone Community, Reedley, Calif., Jan. 1

**Hawkins**, John D., Jr., pastor, Cedar Grove, Ruckersville, Va., Jan. 1

**Heck**, Dewayne, pastor, Beech Grove, Hollansburg, Ohio, Feb. 16

**Ramirez**, Frank R., from pastor, Everett, Pa., to pastor, Union Center, Nappanee, Ind., Feb. 16

**Reese**, Karl E., Sr., pastor, Selma, Va., Feb. 1

**Shaver**, Janet S., from team pastor, Creekside, Elkhart, Ind., to pastor, Middlebury, Ind., Jan. 26

**Troyer**, Timothy L., pastor, Huntington, Ind., Jan. 1

## A changing church

**S**he spoke at length about her church's outreach: the after-school programs for kids, the computer lab, the cooking, canning, and pickling sessions for youth who harvested produce from the church's community garden just down the street. There were visits, worship services, seasonal celebrations, and bake sales. There



**RANDY MILLER**  
MESSENGER EDITOR

was a food pantry that helped folks in the neighborhood get through lean times. It sounded like a vibrant and active church. One could be forgiven for thinking it's got to be one of those big outfits, with two or three services on Sunday morning, another Sunday evening, and maybe one mid-week.

But after 45 minutes of explaining all the ways her church was involved in the community she hesitated. I listened expectantly at the other end of the line. "We only have 20 members,"

she said, apologetically, "and there are usually only about 11 people in the pews on Sunday morning."

There was a time when one of the yardsticks used to measure a church's effectiveness was how many people filled the pews on Sunday morning. Maybe it's time to toss that yardstick aside. What was Jesus talking about, anyway? Making sure we're on pitch while singing hymns in four-part harmony, or maybe singing praise songs over and over and over? Or

ny under the direction of Brethren song-leader Alvin Brightbill. We will never again see thousands of Brethren spilling out of the Hershey, Pa., auditorium, a massive structure built in the early 1900s for gatherings such as our Annual Conferences.

But if we are paying attention—if we're not too distracted by the sound of our own anguished cries over what's been lost—we just might catch a glimpse of a new thing that the Spirit is doing right before our eyes.

Working in a garden? Tutoring kids after school? Teaching middle-school boys how to make spaghetti sauce from tomatoes they helped grow in a community garden? Gathering in a pub to sing hymns and read scripture on a Sunday evening?

People are finding new ways to "do church." Young people who haven't set foot inside a sanctuary since their baptism at age 12 are listing with great interest to philosophers, theologians, pundits, and even comedians who prod their conscience, challenge their perceptions, and encourage them to be the kind of people Jesus was encouraging all of us to be: attentive, caring, compassionate, and concerned for society's downtrodden and disenfranchised.

I told the woman on the other end of the line that she had no apologies to make. Her church is alive. It is doing the very things Jesus talked about. They've got clothes for the poor in the winter, food for the homeless and hungry, and ways of drawing in young people who would otherwise be playing video games.

Singing hymns is great. Songs—be they hymns or arias or folk songs—can have great power. Al Brightbill once stood on

**I told the woman on the other end of the line that she had no apologies to make. Her church is alive. It is doing the very things Jesus talked about.**

was it more about rolling up our sleeves, grabbing a hoe, and working alongside brothers and sisters to help grow beans and squash for the hungry?

There's a fair amount of hand-wringing these days about declining numbers in churches. Fifty years ago, pews were mostly filled. Church of the Brethren membership was around 200,000. Some 8,000 people attended Annual Conference. The General Offices in Elgin were bustling.

Things have changed. Numbers are down. One option is to lament what's been lost and decry the direction things are going. It's true, we will never again hear 8,000 voices singing hymns like "Move in Our Midst" a cappella in four-part harmo-

a small platform amid thousands of worshippers at Annual Conference and led them in singing a song about the Spirit of God. Except it wasn't a song one might associate with traditional worship. It was "Blowin' in the Wind," by folksinger Bob Dylan. As Brightbill explained it, the wind was just another term for the Spirit of God.

Dylan also wrote "The Times, They are a Changin'," in which he sings, "Your old road is rapidly aging. Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand, for the times they are a changin'."

Indeed they are. And the Spirit is moving. Let's do our best to keep pace. ❧

**COMING IN MAY:** Poetry, personal transformation, and peace

Can't make it for all of Annual Conference?

Come for the **weekend!**

Photo by Glenn Biegel

Annual Conference is July 2-6, 2014, in Columbus, Ohio.

Select from any or all of these activities:

- **Come listen to some family-friendly music** on Saturday night. Three groups, Blue Bird Revival, Community of Song, and Mutual Kumquat will provide something for everyone to enjoy.
- **Visit the intergenerational event** Saturday evening featuring biblical and modern-day stories of courageous disciples. Choose from games, arts and crafts, a sing-a-long, the book nook, nature exploration, personal challenges, dramatic storytelling, word puzzles, movies, and more!
- **Check out the Exhibit Hall** featuring the Church of the Brethren, Brethren Press bookstore, SERRV store, and much more!
- **Children and youth can participate** with their activity groups as they tour Columbus' Center of Science and Industry.
- **Get a taste of what the business of Annual Conference** is about by sitting in on the morning or afternoon session.
- **Participate in the annual Quilt Auction** for world hunger relief.
- **Select from a large variety of Insight Sessions** for informative presentations, stimulating conversations, as well as personal and professional growth.
- **Worship with thousands of Brethren** during the closing Sunday morning worship.

For more about these special weekend events and to register go to:  
[www.brethren.org/ac/2014](http://www.brethren.org/ac/2014)

Live  
as  
**Courageous  
Disciples**



Go to  
**[www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac)**

for registration for Delegates and Non-Delegates, Hotel Information, Conference Schedule, Volunteer Opportunities, Meal Events, Children's and Youth Activities, and More!

Online registration ends June 3, 2014 • Onsite registration begins July 1, 2014

Questions? Email [annualconference@brethren.org](mailto:annualconference@brethren.org) or call 800-323-8039 ext. 365 or 366.

**See you in Columbus!**



Church of the Brethren

# Calling: Received in baptism



## Pentecos offering

8  
June

“So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added.”  
Acts 2:41 NRSV

Our Pentecost Offering emphasizes congregational vitality and church planting in the Church of the Brethren. This year we remember our baptism—how it proclaims our faith, changes our relationship to the world, and unites us as the body of Christ.

Offering materials coming soon to a congregation near you.

 Church of the Brethren



Learn more about all of our special offerings online: [brethren.org/offerings](http://brethren.org/offerings).