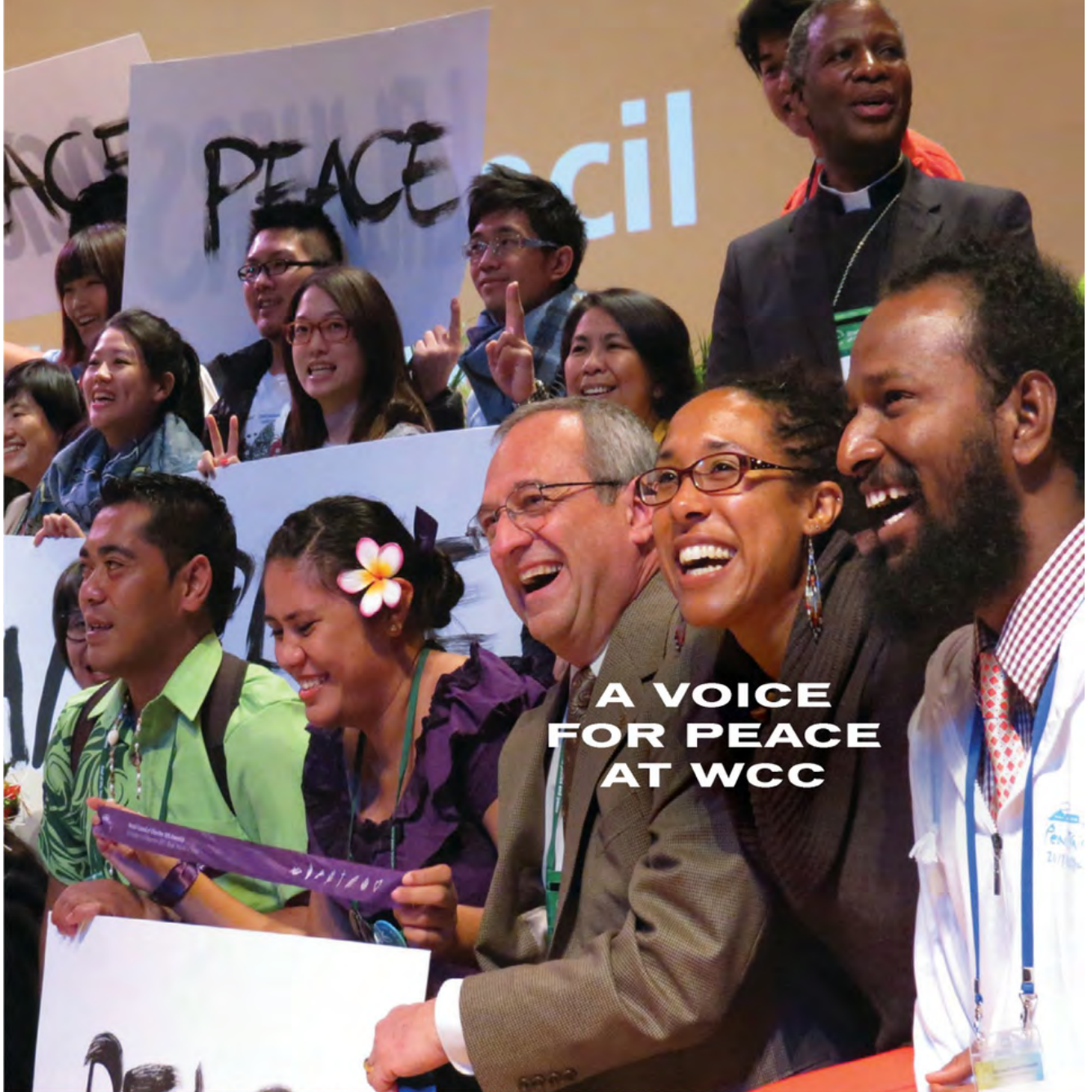


CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2014 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



**A VOICE
FOR PEACE
AT WCC**

A CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR IN THE WAR ON CANCER 14 GETTING OUT OF GOD'S WAY 18

Suggested offering date
March 16, 2014

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One Great Hour of Sharing is a special offering that supports the work of Church of the Brethren denominational ministries like Global Mission and Service, Brethren Disaster Ministries, and the Global Food Crisis Fund. It is just one way that the Church of the Brethren is enabled to share Christ's peace and love with others. When we work together as Brethren, and with other Christians, coming alongside sisters and brothers all over the world, we are one—one body in Christ.



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ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING®

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

8 A voice for peace at the WCC Assembly

The Church of the Brethren made a strong showing at the recent World Council of Churches 10th Assembly in South Korea. That may not have been the only reason that traditional peace church values were so pronounced at the gathering, but it certainly didn't hurt. Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford gives a behind-the-scenes glimpse of Brethren involvement there, as well as reactions from Brethren participants immediately following the event.

14 A conscientious objector in the war on cancer

"Battling" cancer seems like a good thing, at face value. Who wouldn't want to fight to eradicate this deadly disease? But does the very language we use in discussing this struggle affect the way we think about it? And, perhaps more importantly, could it inadvertently do more harm than good?



Sara Child (1998), pastel sketch by Edward Keating

18 Getting out of God's way

According to Acts, early followers of Jesus had to let go of certain ideas and beliefs in order for the church to grow. "It's a story about God broadening the tastebuds of the early church, and a story of how the fellowship of believers became an appetizer in God's great banquet," says Chris Keating, in this final installment of his MESSENGER Bible study series.



Amos (1930), oil painting by Paul Farrow

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on the cover Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger (front row, third from right) poses with the group that was onstage for the Peace Plenary at the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly. Named a special peace church delegate by the WCC Central Committee, Noffsinger was one of four Brethren delegates to the assembly held in South Korea in November.

Photo by James R. Krabill, courtesy of Mennonite Mission Network.

Apparently there's nothing people like to talk about more than the weather. That's been true for a long time, but it seems inescapable now that we have the technological tools to chat about it simultaneously with friends all over the country. What's more, in a remarkable



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

moment of shared experience at the beginning of the year, the polar vortex gave almost the entire country the same weather.

I can't remember another time when such a high percentage of us could share common stories of sub-zero temperatures, broken water pipes, and airport woes. We didn't have to travel (in fact, we couldn't travel) to experience someone else's weather; the weather came to us.

Normally the world seems like a pretty diverse place, but once in a while we are reminded of what we have in common. We all get cold, we're grateful for warm bread, we love our families and friends. For a few

days, our common experience brings us community.

A unity that welcomes and surprises is what happens every seven years through the World Council of Churches, when thousands of folks get together because of their common confession as Christians and their desire to have a common experience of worship, work, and witness. It's an ecumenical experience—"ecumenical" coming from a word that means the whole inhabited world. Few people will ever get the chance to visit the whole inhabited world, but when you attend a WCC assembly the world comes to you.

I wish every member of the church could experience this ecumenical, international, intercultural event. Imagine worshiping in a colorful swirl of humanity, where you can hear half a dozen languages around you. Imagine feeling the spirit of Pentecost every day for a week and a half. Imagine becoming acquainted with the culture of a host country that is completely different from your own. Imagine hearing the fears and dreams and convictions of others who are so much not like you and also so much like you.

This month's cover story gives a taste of the spiritual feast experienced by Brethren at the WCC 10th Assembly, in Busan, South Korea. You'll see that our representatives sensed an ecumenical embrace of the peace witness that has been so foundational to our understanding of following Jesus. What's also true is that their encounters with others at Busan enlarged their own spirits. When you give authentically of your own faith, you also receive.

Wendy McFadden

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La Verne Brethren honored for alternative service

Three members of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren—and a fourth with roots in the denomination—took part in a panel discussion and ceremony recently at the University of La Verne honoring 42 alumni and faculty members who were conscientious objectors during the first and second World Wars.

Church and family members joined faculty, students, and alumni—along with University of La Verne president Devorah Lieberman and chaplain Zandra Wagoner—at the campus chapel to hear the men recount their experiences in Civilian Public Service during the war years. Charles Davis, Delmar Stanley, and Clair Hanawalt, of the La Verne congregation, along with Rodney Lehman, shared their accounts of alternative service, which was followed by the dedication of a plaque listing the 42 who had followed their conscience at a time when opposing war often resulted in ostracism and scorn.

Lehman, who grew up in the Church of the Brethren and attended congregations in Franklin Grove, Ill., and Glendora, Calif., cited his church teachings as being influential in his decision to go into alternative service.

"I'm inspired by these testimonies and by the people listed on this plaque," Wagoner said. "They believe in peace, and they acted in courage in the face of persecution."

The four panelists did service work in areas such as firefighting, forestry, and soil conservation between 1943-1946. Receiving no wages, the men were supported by their congregations and families. The panelists recalled being called cowards and facing ridicule from family, friends, and colleagues.

"It's a matter of conscience," Hanawalt said. "Your final judge is what you decide is right for you."

Alternative service was not an option during World War I, so those who declared themselves conscientious objectors were imprisoned. The only name on the plaque for service in World War I was Jesse Brandt—also a member of the La Verne congregation—who was imprisoned for his views on war.

"I think about the decisions these men made," Lieberman said. "Those decisions were hard, but they were the right decisions for them. It took deep values to be a conscientious objector during World War I and World War II."

"To be honest, I hadn't previously known there was an alternative to fighting in war, and hearing these four men speak about why they chose the paths they did gave me insight as to why it's so important to commemorate their efforts," said ULV student Nicole Miller. —Alana Glenn, *University of La Verne Campus Times* staff writer

Sarah Golden, University of La Verne



La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren member Charles Davis speaks about being a conscientious objector during World War II.

George Keeler



Left to right: University of La Verne chaplain Zandra Wagoner and president Devorah Lieberman with panelists Clair Hanawalt, Rodney Lehman, Charles Davis, and Delmar Stanley.

Congregation Close-Up

by the numbers

17.50

Yearly dollar amount for a subscription to the magazine you hold in your hands—or your computer. It's a great way to keep up with Brethren activities and accomplishments. Encourage your friends to subscribe!

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.

Peoria Brethren mark 30 years of mission trips

Thirty-six years ago, two Jerrys from Illinois loaded pick-up trucks, trailers, and vans with clothing, furniture, tools, and toys for a 780-mile mission trip to Henderson Settlement and Red Bird Mission. Jerry Aldridge and Jerry Lillpop, from the Sanner Chapel, south of Decatur, have continued their mission, and in 1982 made a presentation to Peoria Church of the Brethren. This year marks the 30th year that Peoria Church of the Brethren has joined the Decatur area Methodists on the trip to Kentucky. Members of Peoria Church of the Brethren now contribute the majority of people, trucks, and vans for the trip.



Terry Grabb and Jerry Lillpop lead the group every year.

Since then, Terry Grabb and Jerry Lillpop have led the group every year. They expanded their mission recently to focus on children's clothing, diapers, wipes, and other baby needs, thanks in large part to the efforts of Marilyn Harshbarger. The last two trips to Kentucky have been dedicated to Marilyn's husband Jim, a big force in previous trips, who passed away the day before last year's trip.

With the closing of many of the coal mines in eastern Kentucky, more and more families have come to depend on the missions. There is little other industry in the region to provide jobs to the local citizens of the area, making missions even more crucial to people living in the rural mountains. The group is already beginning to collect items for their next trip in November. —Gil Crosby, Peoria (Ill.) Church of the Brethren



Upon arriving in eastern Kentucky this year, Peoria Brethren were entertained by the Stone Mountain Blue Grass Band, made up of local musicians.



Interactive Christmas pageant is a hit

Frederick (Md.) Church of the Brethren received praise from the *Frederick News Post* for an innovative interactive "pageant" that "captured the essence of the Christmas story in December in a more significant way than sitting in a pew and watching a play," the newspaper said. The event, titled "Search for the Christ Child," transformed the church building into ancient Bethlehem, and visitors were led on a half-hour guided tour through the story of the first Christmas. The newspaper quoted one visitor as saying: "I've been to many Christmas pageants, but nothing like this. It was intellectual—a tool you walked through, not sitting in a church watching." The event was a success despite being held on a day when several inches of snow fell in the area. Read more at www.fredericknewspost.com.



Randy Miller

Celebrating 100 years all year

Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren will commemorate its 100th anniversary with events throughout 2014 that focus on the theme "Following in the Steps of Jesus: A Century of Ministry." The congregation was chartered on Jan. 10, 1914, with 119 members. A worship service Sunday afternoon, Jan. 12, at 3 p.m. included members of the parent congregation, Middle Creek Church of the Brethren. Choirs from both churches provided music, and the congregation sang from the 1901 Brethren Hymnal.

On Feb. 2, a Sunday heritage worship service will be held at 9 a.m. in the style of worship from 1914, with Ralph Moyer preaching. Former pastors will preach throughout the year, including Arlin Claassen on April 6, Jimmy Ross on Aug. 3, and Pam Reist on Nov. 2. A celebration weekend including an anniversary video, a fellowship meal, and a worship service with preacher Earl Ziegler will be held on May 3-4. Bethany Seminary president Jeff Carter will preach on Oct. 19. For additional information go to www.lititzcob.org.



Randy Miller

Remembered

Larry K. Ulrich, 72, a Brethren leader in ecumenical circles and the denomination's representative on the Interfaith Relations Commission of the National Council of Churches, passed away Dec. 7. In January he was named to the Church of the Brethren study committee on "The Church of the Brethren and Ecumenism in the 21st Century." Ulrich was an ordained minister, clinical pastoral educator, and director of chaplaincy services and medical ethicist at Rush Presbyterian St. Luke's Medical Center in Chicago, Cook County Hospital, and University of Chicago Hospitals.

At the 1969 Annual Conference he was instrumental in a resolution that created the Fund for the Americas for racism education and direct assistance to minorities. From 1972-76 he chaired the Annual Conference Committee on Health and Welfare relating to the 22 hospitals and retirement communities of the Church of the Brethren at the time. On behalf of the denomination, he testified to the US House Ways and Means Committee in support of a "comprehensive and accessible" national health insurance (reported by MESSENGER in Oct. 1974).

From 1975-83 he was vice-president and a director of the Brethren Health Education Foundation, and in 1977-79 chaired the Board of Trustees of Bethany Hospital in Chicago after being on the board since 1974. Most recently, he represented the church's Illinois and Wisconsin District on the Council of Religious Leaders of Metropolitan Chicago, which was awarded the Chicago Theological Union's prestigious "Blessed Are the Peacemakers" award in 2004. He was a member at York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill., and a 35-year resident of the interracial York Center Community Cooperative. He spent some years as a pastor in Maryland, Indiana, and Illinois, and also was a family therapist and pastoral counselor.

Rolland Perry Smith, 72, a former mission worker with the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, died Nov. 9 following a lengthy struggle with cancer. Smith served with Brethren Volunteer Service from 1964-67, first at National Institutes of Health in Bethesda, Md., then as a math teacher at Waka Teacher's College in Biu, Nigeria. After he was married to Bonnie Throne in 1968, they served together as teachers at Waka Teacher's College with the Church of the Brethren mission program for three years. In his professional career, he also served as a pastor in Indiana, and as a math teacher in Illinois.

James E. Kipp, a former missionary, passed away Oct. 7. A family physician in Elizabethtown, Pa., since 1975, Kipp took sabbatical leave for 14 months in 1980 and 1981 to volunteer as medical director for the Rural Health Program of the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria. In the mid-1980s, he served as president of the Church of the Brethren Health and Welfare Association.

J. Henry Long, former executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Commission of the Church of the Brethren, passed away Oct. 19. Long joined the General Brotherhood Board staff in 1949 as director of audio-visual education, after which he served as associate secretary of the Foreign Mission Commission, a position which included missionary education and recruitment of missionary personnel. He then served as executive secretary of the Foreign Mission Commission from 1957 through 1968.

Ruth Christ Baugher, 95, the widow of former Church of the Brethren general secretary Norman Baugher, passed away Oct. 15 at Hillcrest Homes in La Verne, Calif. Her husband became general secretary of the former General Board in 1952, and died in 1968. During that time she lived in Elgin, Ill., and after her husband's death she held secretarial positions in several places including the denomination's General Offices. She was a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., for some 33 years prior to moving to southern California.



Photo courtesy of Nancy Ulrich

Anticipating Annual Conference

Jesus taught us to pray that God's kingdom will come on earth as it is in heaven. Scripture tells us that God is spirit. Scripture also tells us that God is love. The Kingdom of God becomes a reality when we



BILL KIDWELL

are open and allow God's spirit to move and reign in our midst.

"Kinder and gentler" is the way MESSENGER described the interactions between sisters and brothers who gathered around tables to transact the business of the church at Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C., last summer. As we anticipate the Columbus, Ohio, gathering this year, each of us in attendance would do well to examine

what is going on inside us that could either enhance or inhibit the movement of God's spirit.

God's spirit will move and reign around the tables, in the hallways, or wherever we gather at Columbus . . .

- ▶ when I am gracious to unstructured people who are born chatterboxes and speak many words in order to express ideas.

in the church occupying not only the pews but also leadership roles.

- ▶ when I am gracious to women who are so consumed with their liberation activities that they have little energy left to extend a helping hand to men who are struggling with life issues, too.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people whose sexual orientation is different from mine.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who have been conditioned by American culture to the point that they are uncomfortable being around people whose sexual orientation is different from theirs.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who do not embrace the Brethren peace position.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who proclaim the gospel of peace with all the anger they can muster.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who read the same Bible I read, but see things differently than I do.

Each of us in attendance would do well to examine what is going on inside us that could either enhance or inhibit the *movement of God's spirit*.

- ▶ when I am gracious to structured people who are born perfectionists who speak few words in order to be focused and clear.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who are less educated than I am.
- ▶ when I am gracious to people who are more educated than I am.
- ▶ when I am gracious to men who are threatened by women who have become the majority gender

- ▶ when I am gracious to people who have stopped reading the Bible and describe themselves as spiritual rather than religious.

If I seek to follow Jesus and live as a courageous disciple, God's Kingdom will come on earth bright in the corner where I am. **W**

Bill Kidwell is pastor of teaching and pastoral care at Oakland (Pa.) Church of the Brethren near Gettysburg.

“We can learn from their courage and unswerving faith.”

—Church of the Brethren mission workers Carl and Rozanne Hill, speaking about their fellow Brethren in Edelesiyar, Yari (now a Nigeria EN), the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria, where they have worked since December 2012

“My sin never made me suicidal, but widespread church reaction to me did.”

—Former evangelical leader Ted Haggard, who fell from grace in a 2006 drugs-and-gay-sex scandal, in a blog post about church reaction to scandal after the son of mega-church pastor Joel Hunter committed suicide after an affair

“Every perceived failure turns out to have a secret success, and every perceived success has some secret failing in it.”

—Actor Ethan Hawke, in *Esquire’s* “What I’ve Learned”

“I couldn’t pass on the other side of the road like a Levite to preserve a rule. All I saw was love for my son.”

—The Rev. Frank Schaefer, recently convicted by other United Methodist clergy for officiating at the wedding for his gay son in 2007, invoking Jesus’ parable of the Good Samaritan to explain why he broke church rules

“I’ve come to believe that the things that really matter are the little moments where you share a smile or do something really nice for someone.”

—Retired pastor and musician Bob Morley, between songs during a performance in the renovated barn/concert venue at his home in Covina, Calif.

cultureview

► Six in ten Americans say that “humans and other living things have evolved over time,” while a third reject the idea of evolution,” according to a new Pew Research Center analysis. Roughly a quarter of adults say that “a supreme being guided the evolution of living things for the purpose of creating humans and other life in the form it exists today.” White evangelical Protestants are particularly likely to believe that humans have existed in their present form since the beginning of time. By comparison, only 15 percent of white mainline Protestants share this opinion.

► The United Nations refugee agency reports that 2013 is on track for some of the **highest levels of forced displacement ever seen**. “It is hard to see such numbers and not ask why so many people are today becoming refugees or internally displaced,” said António Guterres, UN High Commissioner for Refugees. “Humanitarian

organizations deliver life-saving assistance, but we can’t prevent or stop wars—that requires political effort and political will and this is where much more concerted international focus needs to be placed.”

► **The closing of several Protestant denominational newspapers, magazines, and other news services** has played a part in eroding the standards of professional religious journalism, according to members of the Associated Church Press. Officials worry that these outlets have lost their editorial independence and are increasingly performing a public relations role for their denominations. “There has been a strong commitment on the part of many denominations to promote religious journalism that lives up to the standards of what professional journalism should be,” said Meinrad Scherer-Emunds, chair of the ACP Religious Journalism Task Force. “We feel that has been limited in more recent years.”

Heard 'round the world



“I prefer a church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets rather than a church which is unhealthy from being confirmed and from clinging to its own security.”—Pope Francis, in an apostolic exhortation issued recently

“Even an ardent atheist can look at a house of worship and see the signs of an invisible human longing that is common to us all, believer and unbeliever alike.”
—Canadian photographer Mark Schacter, writing in CNN’s Belief Blog about being an atheist who photographs houses of worship

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 10TH ASSEMBLY

Left to right: A choir of hundreds of Korean singers at opening service. Korean buchechum (fan dance) performed during a cultural night. Banners in many different languages proclaiming the theme: "God of life, lead us to justice and peace." Dancers vividly illustrate the crucifixion with their own bodies, during a dramatic presentation of the history of the Korean peninsula.



A VOICE FOR

Brethren see impact of peace church values

It is not unusual that a delegation from the Church of the Brethren attends a World Council of Churches Assembly. But what was different at the 10th Assembly of the WCC was the number of Brethren delegates and their involvement, as well as evidence of a new impact of peace church values in the worldwide Christian movement.

WCC Assemblies are held only every seven or eight years. The denomination typically sends one delegate elected by the Standing Committee of Annual Conference. The Brethren delegation to the assembly on Oct. 30-Nov. 8, 2013, in Busan, the Republic of South Korea, included three delegates from the US and one from Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigerian (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria): general secretary Stan Noffsinger named by the WCC Central Committee as a special delegate from the peace churches; EYN president Samuel Dali; Michael Hostetter, pastor of Salem Church of the Brethren in Ohio, elected delegate; Nathan Hosler of the Office of Public Witness named a special delegate as a young adult actively involved in advocacy work in Washington, D.C.

Four more Brethren attended: alternate delegate R. Jan

Thompson as an observer, recent Manchester University graduate Kay Guyer as one of the young adult stewards, Pamela Brubaker who helped lead sessions related to her work with the WCC on economic justice, and director of News Services Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford.

Special peace church recognition

Noffsinger received special recognition as a peace church leader. He was invited onstage for the plenary session on peace, and was elected to the WCC Central Committee for a term of service until the 11th Assembly. Other delegates from Mennonite and Quaker (Friends) peace church traditions also were elected to the Central Committee.

The Brethren and the peace churches “have not had that type of special recognition in many, many years,” Noffsinger commented. It marks a new opportunity for the Brethren voice to be heard in ecumenical circles, and for the denomination to learn from the worldwide Christian fellowship, he said.

During the peace plenary, Noffsinger was onstage with Agata Abrahamian, a young woman from the Armenian Apostolic



PEACE

at WCC assembly Story and photos by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Church in Iran. It was a powerful moment as an American church leader stood with an Iranian Christian. Abrahamian told how sanctions against Iran adversely affect people like her family. "Every day I see and I feel how ordinary people are struggling with problems . . . caused by the sanctions, and I hope that the sanctions will be removed soon," she said.

Noffsinger showed his emotion as he responded. "What

courage to speak truth to power," he said. "May God have mercy on our souls."

In his remarks to the plenary, Noffsinger highlighted the Church of the Brethren peace witness and cast a Christian commitment to nonviolence as a "movement toward the cross, a movement on the way of Jesus . . . a call to engage in radical, compassionate discipleship."



A real world assembly

In total, the assembly gathered delegates from some 345 member communions from a wide variety of Christian traditions and many different nations. The welcome and generosity of the Korean host churches was on display, with hundreds of Korean Christians volunteering their time to make the assembly possible.

On stage at a major plenary session on peace was Church of the Brethren general secretary Stanley J. Noffsinger (center) who shared the witness of the peace churches. Flanking him were two of the young adult stewards who served as volunteers helping to make the assembly happen. Noffsinger interviewed them during the plenary, at left a young woman from Iran and at right a man from Brazil.

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 10TH ASSEMBLY



Nathan Hosler, representing the Church of the Brethren as a special young adult delegate, is shown meeting with delegations from other peace churches from around the world. Discussion among peace church delegates focused on particular business items that came before the assembly including a statement on the Way of Just Peace and a document on the rights of indigenous peoples.

South Korean denominations that are members of the WCC (many are not members) hosted a weekend trip to the capital Seoul, a peace event at the demilitarized zone (DMZ), an evening entertainment of Korean culture complete with full orchestra and the national dance company, and Sunday morning worship in congregations. Other special events organized by the Korean host committee took place in and around Busan for those who did not want to make the high-speed train trip to Seoul.

Daily events at the assembly included morning and evening prayers (which Brethren would consider to be worship services), Bible study groups, plenary sessions, workshops, ecumenical conversations on a wide range of topics, and business sessions.

Way of Just Peace

In business sessions, the assembly adopted a "Statement on the Way of Just Peace" with an expression of strong support from the delegate body.

'RICHER TOGETHER THAN Reflections on the WCC 10th Assembly

[Director of news services Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford interviewed members of the Church of the Brethren delegation to the World Council of Churches Assembly as they waited in Seoul's Incheon Airport to catch their flights home. General secretary Stanley J. Noffsinger, a specially named peace church delegate; Michael Hostetter, elected Church of the Brethren delegate; and alternate delegate R. Jan Thompson who attended as an observer, answered questions about their experience of the meeting, affirmations and challenges for the Church of the Brethren, and where we go from here.]

QUESTION: Now that it's all over, what are your impressions of the WCC Assembly?

Stanley J. Noffsinger: I'm amazed at the mixture of principal leaders from

each of the communions present, mixed with delegates and representatives of churches that may not otherwise participate in activity at the WCC.

For the days that we were together, there was a spirit that said, "We are richer together than when we are apart." From our worship, to our ecumenical conversations, every aspect of the assembly brought the very best and the richest of each of the communions to bear.

One of the purposes of the World Council of Churches as an ecumenical body is to have the family be together. And it was quite successful.

Michael Hostetter: I really enjoyed the ecumenical conversations, and especially the Bible studies. The perspective of people from other places who see different things in the text from what I

see was really eye-opening.

That was also true at the ecumenical conversations. I chose the one on interfaith dialogue. The group was very respectful because there were interfaith guests each time. There were some Muslims and Jews, one Buddhist. It's helpful to hear from someone of another faith. There are certain things they are aware of, that they are alert to, that I may not be. Just use of language, for example. Sometimes people say, "If you're not Christian, what is your church?" thinking of church as the generic term for a religious assembly.

I think that everyone who goes to seminary or is in any of our Brethren training programs should take a course on interfaith matters or world religions, because they're going to run into that, and it's really helpful to have training ahead of time.



The assembly was met with generous hospitality and showered with many gifts by the Korean hosts, including stoles printed with the assembly theme in various languages. Here, a Korean church volunteer hands out stoles on a weekend excursion to Seoul by high-speed rail, provided for some 900 assembly participants by the Korean churches.

“Just peace is a journey into God’s purpose for humanity and all creation,” the statement’s first paragraph asserts. “It is rooted in the self-understanding of the churches, the hope of spiritual transformation and the call to seek justice and peace for all. It is a journey that invites us all to testify with our lives.”

The statement follows a series of conferences and documents focusing on the concept of “just peace,” a result of the WCC-led Decade to Overcome Violence that ended in 2010. A series of conferences of the peace churches on several

continents helped contribute a peace church perspective to the overall ecumenical conversation.

Find the way of just peace statement at www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace.

The assembly also adopted a number of documents on other situations of concern: politicization of religion and rights of religious minorities; human rights of stateless people; improved US-Cuba relations; Christian presence and witness in the Middle East; situation of the Democratic Republic of Congo; 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915; critical situation of Abyei in South Sudan; climate justice; indigenous peoples; the message of the assembly “Join the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace”; and a statement on Christian unity. [W](#)

APART

R. Jan Thompson: The most memorable experience was the trip to Seoul and going to the border between the Republic of Korea and North Korea. And the experience of attending two mega-churches and seeing their programs, learning how within 60 years a Methodist church went from a small church at the gate to the city, to a church that has 90,000 people on the rolls and 35,000 in attendance on an average Sunday, in seven worship services.

I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and greeting participants, particularly Nigerian and African representatives. It felt very easy to converse with them because of my having lived in Africa for five years.

The business sessions were interesting, to say the least. It helped me to appreciate Annual Conference business sessions.



Two of the peace church leaders at the assembly consult in advance of a business session, at left Church of the Brethren general secretary Stan Noffsinger, at right Fernando Enns, a German Mennonite and a key leader in helping put the concept of just peace onto the agenda of the WCC.

QUESTION: What kind of affirmations of our church tradition did you encounter?

Hostetter: I’m always surprised by how well known we are among ecumenical leadership in particular, given our size. The Church of the Brethren impact on ecumenical bodies is out of proportion larger than our size would suggest. And very respected. Stan [Noffsinger] is very respected. It is clear that a lot of ecumenical leaders have a great deal of affection for him and he for them.

Noffsinger: Back in May [at a meeting of American church delegates to the assembly, held in Chicago] it was really the Church of the Brethren that raised significant concern for a clearer connection to just peace. At the time there was not any intent to have a document on just peace at the assembly.

Yet when we got to Busan I was just thrilled to see that Central Committee had decided along with the WCC general secretary to make a strong statement on just peace. That’s because we named how important it is in the context of a global

WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES 10TH ASSEMBLY

community that is under so much duress of violence and challenge.

This is a point that can bring us together for the good of the human family. That the assembly adopted a document on the Way of Just Peace is rather remarkable, because it signals a move toward a deeper understanding, at least socially, of the importance of working on the side of the oppressed and those who are treated unjustly. Theologically, it is a direct call of the gospel narrative for us to



During a weekend excursion to Seoul, hosted by the Korean churches, half of the 900 participants had an opportunity to travel to the demilitarized zone (DMZ) between South and North Korea for a time of prayers for peace.

be in the midst of all of humanity. If not the church, then who?

Other affirmations. Well, the peace plenary was awesome. Afterward, I was just overwhelmed by the number of affirmations from the other peace church delegates stating that they felt good about how I presented not only the Church of the Brethren but the whole Historic Peace Church movement. And people from the most unexpected areas expressed their appreciation for a prophetic voice for the cause of God's shalom and Christ's peace.

Brethren need to know that we are respected. Our being a part of the Historic Peace Churches is recognized

clearly as emerging out of our theology and not out of being social activists. Seeking God's justice and God's peace is a result of the transformation that happens as we move into relationship with God through Jesus. It is not a social program. And that was a noticeable affirmation that people recognized.

QUESTION: What issues came up at the WCC Assembly that you think are important for the Church of the Brethren?

Hostetter: I think the whole matter of conscientious objection, matters of conscience in relationship to participation in the military. That was particularly important because of our being on the Korean peninsula and South Korea's policies regarding conscientious objectors [who are not given the opportunity to do alternative service but must serve a prison term].

That whole area of freedom of conscience, respecting the conscience of those who are opposed to war or to participating in the training for war, that is particularly important because we don't talk about that in the United States anymore. We don't have a draft and so it's kind of in the background. The US would make allowances for COs since it's such a part of our history, but that is not assumed in a lot of other places.

It's a good reminder to me that people in other places risk so much more than I do for their Christian convictions. I was talking to a man from Australia and I tried to explain who we Brethren are. He said, "What did you do when there was a draft?" And I said, "Well, I was a conscientious objector." He was so amazed that I could manage that. He said, "That must have been terribly difficult." Well, frankly for me it wasn't. I had a whole community behind me, in an area where there were a lot of COs, Mennonites and Brethren

particularly. His reaction to being a CO was, "Wow, that's really such a difficult thing to do." Well, it is in Korea. Not so much where I grew up.

Also, each day had a theme. The day we did missions, what was being set forth seemed to be a pretty dramatic paradigm shift in what evangelism is and how we approach it. In my personal opinion it is a welcome shift. But a lot of people may find it troubling because it is really a rejection of imperial Christianity, the idea that by virtue of being Christian our understanding of truth is *a priori* better than everybody else's.

Thompson: There is strong support from many of the religious groups represented for the just peace paper. Many groups other than the Historic Peace Churches were desirous of having a strong peace stance come out of the assembly. Particularly there was a strong interest in encouraging the Republic of Korea to permit conscientious objection within their strong militaristic nation.

I attended a session where there were groups from the islands around Korea and China, Jeju Island in particular, where persons and entire villages are being displaced so newer and larger naval bases can be built. And there is quite a concern that environmental issues are not being considered, and that coral reefs and water supplies and so forth are being misused due to the new construction going on.

I was impressed with the young adults and the LGBTQ presence and the opportunity to be in conversation with those representatives.

There is a need for fellowship and cooperation with the many different Christian bodies around the world. And it's okay to have theological differences as long as we can still sit around the table and have a conversation with each other and move toward welcoming the marginalized people of our society.

The biggest challenge is, how do we as Brethren around the world continue to speak for the oppressed? For our Haitian brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic who are facing loss of citizenship? For the Nigerian church in their crisis?



Meeting people from around the world was a highlight of the assembly, resulting in many impromptu group photos such as this in which two Brethren pose with an African colleague and Korean dancers who were at the conference center that day. Second from right is Samuel Dali, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). At left is Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren in the United States.

QUESTION: What challenges do you think this assembly brings for the Church of the Brethren?

Noffsinger: In the wider sense, for over 50 or 60 years we along with the other peace churches have been on the forefront of speaking against war and violence. And in some respects that has gained us a position of privilege in the ecumenical community. As a church, that is to be recognized and handled very carefully, because a position of power can be abusive. The challenge is to use that position of power for the voiceless.

It's really not about us. We have this moment in the sun, and if we become bullies with the peace position then it really isn't a position that comes out of our roots.

The biggest challenge is, how do we as Brethren around the world continue to speak for the oppressed? For our Haitian brothers and sisters in the Dominican Republic who are facing loss of citizenship? For the Nigerian church in their crisis?

to our call to discipleship. That's a huge challenge, and quite frankly it's not about being American, Brazilian, Nigerian, etc. It's the challenge of the whole church. It's about being followers of Jesus within this tradition.

Hostetter: Such assemblies—whether world, national, or otherwise—remind us of the unity we have in Christ Jesus. There are also lots of things that happen that remind us of how far we have to go toward unity. There are some deep, deep divides. And I'm not just talking about [inclusivity]. I'm talking about perceptions of reality. Christians are apart in religious traditions but we're also apart in cultural traditions, and nationalities, and some of those gulfs are difficult.

QUESTION: Anything else you feel ought to be said about the experience?

Hostetter: I'm just very grateful for the opportunity. I'm from a small town in Pennsylvania. I grew up in a world where anything beyond what I knew was mysterious to me. And it's been wonderful to be able to get out there in the world! It has opened my eyes about so many things, and so many different kinds of people. Good people who view the world differently than I do.

QUESTION: Where do you see our church going from here, in terms of ecumenical involvement?

Hostetter: On the positive side, I think for the foreseeable future the contribution of the Church of the Brethren will not only be welcomed at ecumenical gatherings, but sought out.

The negative side is I'm not sure how much longer that'll last. The ecumenical movement is changing so much. But another part of it is how much less interest there is in our denomination for such involvement. If those who have no interest in ecumenism or who have a negative feeling toward it end up being the decision-makers, it won't happen any longer. I don't know if they will be the decision-makers, but I fear it could happen.

Noffsinger: Out of the faith expedition to Israel and Palestine in December 2012, the people of the Middle East have been pleased that we are paying attention again. [At the assembly] several people said to me, "We're so glad you're paying attention." They are most willing to walk with us as we learn about the tensions and the struggle and the history and the complexity, and there was a genuine appreciation for our interest in the plight of the people of the region. There are some points of criticality that are approaching in the Middle East, and we need to be informed internationally and ecumenically. [WU](#)

Go to www.brethren.org/news/2013/wcc-assembly for full coverage of the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly including onsite reporting from South Korea, more interviews with Brethren who attended, photo albums, a blog, and links to WCC video recordings online



The host city of Busan put up banners on the streets to celebrate the presence of the WCC assembly. Shown here with one of those banners are the Brethren delegates to the assembly: (from left) Nathan Hosler, coordinator of the Office of Public Witness named a special young adult delegate; Michael Hostetter, elected delegate for the Church of the Brethren; general secretary Stan Noffsinger named a special peace church delegate; and Samuel Dali, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

Sick Child (1896), pastel sketch by Edvard Munch (Norwegian artist, 1863 – 1944)



A conscientious objector in the **WAR ON CANCER**

by Audrey deCoursey

Sarah was just 40 when she was diagnosed with breast cancer.

After a first round of treatment the cancer subsided, but then Sarah received that dreaded diagnosis: the cancer had come back and metastasized to her lungs. My friends and I were shocked and saddened by this news about a young, healthy woman forced to face one of the scariest diagnoses imaginable. What would it mean for her husband, her teenage children, her brother, and parents? She drove from state to state

seeking second opinions, underwent surgery, and continued a course of chemotherapy in the hope of finding a cure.

Despite advances in medical and surgical technology, cancer is still a scary, life-changing illness we are only beginning to understand. The story of cancer is told one person at a time. Sadly, there are far too many stories to be told.

We tell these stories with words—certain words in particular. And it is those words I suggest we stop and

ponder. Language shapes our experience. In the midst of grief, we reach for words. Which words do we reach for? And why?

I hear updates from loved ones who explain that, despite the challenges ahead, the person with cancer is “ready to fight” or “beat this” or to do “whatever it takes to win this battle.”

Battle? In the midst of this terrifying diagnosis, where did this image of warfare enter in? And what does it mean for a pacifist to join this “war on cancer”? If we conscientiously object to warfare itself and the ways militarism creeps into many corners of our society, might we not also object to militaristic metaphors creeping into other aspects of our lives? What would a conscientious objector in the war on cancer look like?

In 1971, President Richard Nixon authorized the National Cancer Act, which strengthened the existing National Cancer Institutes (as independent from the National Institute of Health) and set cancer apart as a disease. This legislation is seen as the start of what has been called the “War on Cancer.” This new “war” was supposed to be waged with research, seeking an end to this disease that takes too many lives.

In the early years of research, with the Cold War underway, a war metaphor helped marshal resources for the campaign, as Siddhartha Mukherjee notes in his definitive tome, *The Emperor of All Maladies: A Natural History of Cancer*:

Potent, hungry, and expansive, the word war captured the essence of the anti-cancer campaign. Wars demand combatants, weapons, soldiers, the wounded, survivors, bystanders, collaborators, strategists, sentinels, victories—and it was not hard to find a metaphorical analogue to each of these for this war as well. . . . Wars also demand a clear definition of an enemy. They imbue even formless adversaries with forms. So cancer, a shape-shifting disease of colossal diversity, was recast as a single, monolithic entity. It was one disease.

The hope underlying this view of one disease is that there might be one cure. This may prove to be a distraction: “Cancer is not one disease but many diseases. We call them all ‘cancer’ because they share a fundamental feature: the abnormal growth of cells” (Mukherjee, xvii).

Militarized language has spread into our discussions of cancer on a personal level as well as the research “war.” We

talk of “doing battle” with the illness, “survivors,” “winning” or “losing” the “fight,” and more. In a July 2009 *Harper’s Bazaar* article, President Barack Obama wrote, “Now is the time to commit ourselves to waging a war against cancer as aggressive as the war cancer wages against us.”

The “War on Cancer” consists of research into new

War names the enemy and the enemy is cancer. But then it gets tricky. Because the cancer that is the enemy is part of us. It is our own cells reproducing out of control.

treatment options for cancer, with the goal of eradicating it as a major cause of death. The “war” is also waged through the medical interventions for individual patients—each person’s struggle perhaps being a single “battle” within the larger war. But research and medical treatment is not actually a war; it’s a metaphor we’ve grown comfortable with. Does this metaphor work for us?

As with other “wars” declared against abstract, non-human targets, such as the War on Drugs or War on Poverty or War on Terror, the metaphor can quickly reach its limits. Declaring a war on something so pernicious as cancer sounds right: it feels dynamic, assertive, and hopeful of a conclusive victory. Yet as this “war” rages on, the terms of engagement become distracting and, at times, misleading. Is this “battle fatigue” setting in? Like our wars on drugs and terror, the martial terms do little to sustain hope when, year after year, the enemy continues to take lives. What does it mean to be engaged in a war we aren’t winning? Does this language help us heal?

“Even an ancient monster needs a name,” writes Mukherjee. Speaking of something so powerful as cancer is how we make meaning of the experience: “To name an illness is to describe a certain condition of suffering—a literary act before it becomes a medical one,” he says. “A patient, long before he becomes the subject of medical scrutiny, is at first, simply a storyteller, a narrator of suffering. . . . To relieve an illness, one must begin, then, by unburdening its story.”

The metaphor of “battling” cancer may seem to work better on a personal than a societal scale. What the “War on Cancer” does best is identify cancer as the enemy of life that it is. War names the enemy and the enemy is cancer. But then it gets tricky. Because the cancer that is

the enemy is part of us. It is our own cells reproducing out of control.

It's normal to want to see one's illness as outside oneself: to see myself as discrete from that which is hurting me. I don't want this experience; I don't want this illness to be mine. By splitting myself from the illness, I can call on reserves from the healthy part of me—be it my soul or mind or relationships or other parts of my body.

And if this war is "victorious," that language might hold up and be useful. But when it isn't? Might the metaphor add to the trauma?

Chaplain Kate McGraw works with elders in nursing care settings who often are in end-of-life treatment. "The idea of knowing you're going to die, and believing you're a 'failure' in the war you were trying to wage—that might make it harder," she observes. "It's hard enough as it is, without the extra burden, to get into the mindscape to make that transition."

The brilliant literary critic Susan Sontag became a cancer patient in the 1970s. Reflecting on her own experience—and hoping to save future cancer patients some suffering—she wrote pivotal essays entitled, "Illness as Metaphor" and "AIDS and its Metaphors." In these articles she deconstructed how we talk about cancer and other illnesses as warfare. "My point is that illness is not a metaphor, and that the most truthful way of regarding illness—and the healthiest way of being ill—is one most purified of, most resistant to, metaphoric thinking," she writes. "There's a time and place for speaking directly with ourselves, removing the metaphors we're used to."

Sontag wanted to remove the metaphorical trappings on cancer because she saw cancer carrying a stigma that contributed to suffering. Which, in turn, raises the question: Why do we talk about cancer the way we do, so differently from other deadly illnesses? More US Americans die from heart disease than from cancer, as they have for decades. So why is heart disease "treated" or "medically managed" while cancer is "beaten?" Why do we respond like all cancers are a death sentence, when they might not be?

Other illnesses have been loaded with the metaphorical

Autumn Sun (1912), oil painting by Egon Schiele (Austrian artist, 1890–1918)



baggage cancer now carries. Today, HIV/AIDS has perhaps supplanted cancer for its unfair social stigma. But these are not the first, either, as Sontag notes: "[D]isease is regularly described as invading the society, and efforts to reduce mortality from a given disease are called a fight, a struggle, a war. Military metaphors became prominent early in the century, in campaigns mounted during World War I to educate people

about syphilis, and after the war about tuberculosis."

Sontag argues that "abuse of the military metaphor" can lead to acting like it's "an emergency in which no sacrifice is excessive," but then, "the move from the demonization of the illness to the attribution of fault to the patient is an inevitable one, no matter if patients are thought of as victims." Sontag wrote about the stigma, shame, and scandal a cancer diagnosis seemed to cause. Poorly understood diseases, particularly those with unknown causes, can lead to blaming or isolating patients. Before bacteria and infection were understood, the ill could be told their sickness resulted from "sin." Today, the cause may be attributed to negative thinking or a defeatist mindset.

The reputation of the illness can add to the suffering when it gets wrapped up with ideas about morality and blame. Sontag describes other ways "the metaphoric trappings that deform the experience of having cancer have very real consequences," such as discouraging people from finding out their diagnosis or getting the right treatment, for fear of the social stigma it might carry.

The thing is, dying is enough. We don't need to add more layers of suffering onto it. Dying well takes work: saying goodbyes, spiritual processing, and a whole lot of courage. We need our words to help us, not hold us back. Dying is a new frontier for each and every one of us—something we do only once!—so the more helpful words and metaphors we have available to speak about our experience of it, the better.

And we have to talk about death not just in hospitals and ICUs. We need to bring these conversations into our most sacred spaces, and into the heart of our beloved communities, well before our health forces us to.

Churches are an important place to start. (I know many a physician who would thank us for helping each other have these conversations before we reach their offices.) Church of the Brethren congregations from coast to coast are taking on this tough work and holding adult education classes to discuss end-of-life choices and preparation. Highland Avenue in Elgin, Ill., and Sunnyslope in Wenatchee, Wash., are two that have offered such series in recent years. Church of the Brethren Older Adult Ministries offers resources for these conversations.

In a study of faith practices old and new, Allen Verhey explores *The Christian Art of Dying: Learning from Jesus*. He offers a critique of “the reduction of death to a medical event” and calls on churches to engage the spiritual dimensions of dying. “The church remains a distinctive community of discourse, deliberation, and discernment by remembering Jesus,” he says, “and by transforming questions of character and conduct into the question of how its people may live the story they still love to tell—even as they lie dying.”

Verhey opens a space of significance for people of faith who rue the waning influence of religion in society. If our mainstream culture avoids talking about death in meaningful ways, this is one place the church is needed all the more.

Despite Sontag’s wise words, I don’t know that we can eliminate all metaphor from our thinking when we face the most significant, painful, or meaningful experiences of our lives. On the contrary, our spirits need them. But we need to make our own metaphors for them to be most true to us.

What pacifists—“conscientious objectors in the war on cancer”—might be able to offer our public discourse about this topic is the option of another way of speaking. In the midst of political debates (which we call “battles”!) about healthcare and insurance reform, we need all the words of peace we can get.

We can start by noticing that the war metaphor isn’t sufficient. It’s not the only “tool in the toolbox” or “medicine in the doctor’s kit.” A war on cancer may be the right metaphor for some, but the wrong one for others—and never the only one needed.

Many cancer patients have found empowerment

language to fit their experience. In the face of too many messages of what cancer might take away from them, these patients proclaim that “I am not my cancer” and that “My cancer does not determine who I am.” All our ways of speaking about cancer can emerge from this fundamental base: The cancer is mine, I do not belong to it; I am the one to determine what my cancer is and means.

One oncology chaplain I know confronts the upsetting fact of cancer’s locus in one’s own body. Has my body turned against me? She speaks of inviting patients to loving, embracing, and nurturing themselves to health, instead of waging a war against part of themselves.

Sarah died from her cancer last summer. I still find it hard to say that she “lost her battle with cancer.” Somehow those words don’t fit, don’t describe it well. We

I still find it hard to say that she “lost her battle with cancer.” Somehow those words don’t fit, don’t describe it well. It does not do justice to her experience, because Sarah’s legacy lives on, not only in her family but also in her students and friends.

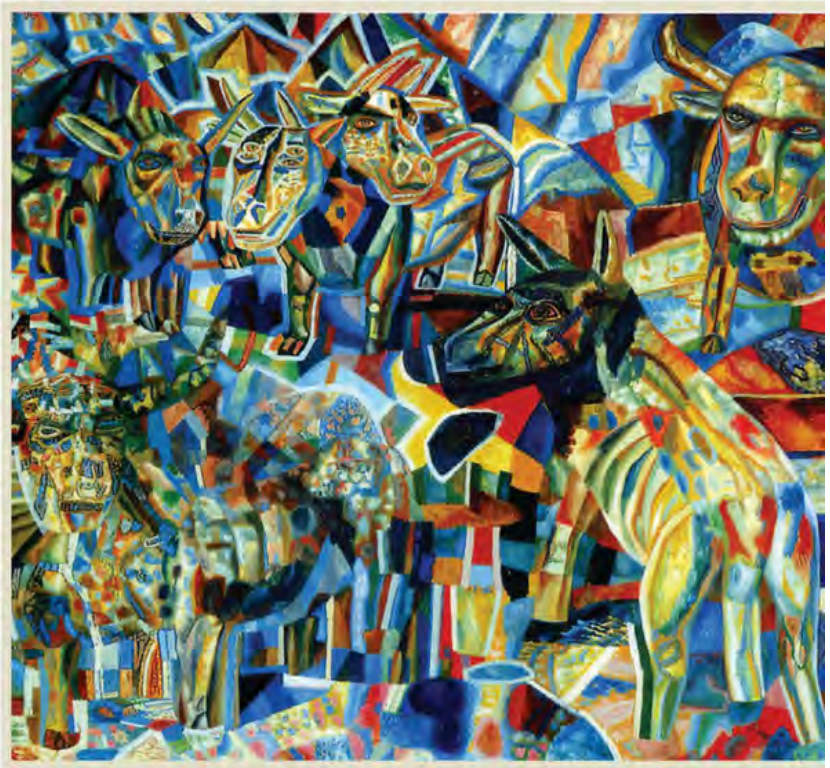
don’t need to add defeat as another burden on the grief. It does not do justice to her experience, because Sarah’s legacy lives on, not only in her family but also in her students and friends.

One of her former students was so inspired by her life, and the pain of losing her too young, that he began a campaign of music videos that raise awareness about cancer. He calls it “Rocking Out Cancer.” This was a way to reach other teenagers around the country, and tap into their compassion for something for which they may lack personal experience.

Cancer is big. It is scary. It is sad. And it is with us, meeting each of our families in different ways. As conscientious objectors in the War on Cancer, may we encourage one another to listen to those scary, sad stories, and to love in all the languages we know. ❗

Audrey deCoursey is the founding pastor of the first online Church of the Brethren fellowship, Living Stream Church of the Brethren, based in the Pacific Northwest District and connecting worshippers digitally around the world. She has served as associate pastor at Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill., and as a hospital chaplain resident in Portland, Ore.

Animals (1930), oil painting by Pavel Filonov (Russian artist, 1883 - 1941)



Getting out of God's way

by **Chris Keating**

When I was young, I had a reputation in my family as being a picky eater.

That's possible, I suppose—though I prefer to think that I was just strongly opinionated about the food I ate. All of this changed about the time I had to start paying for the food that I was eating.

During our courtship, my soon-to-be-wife asked me if I liked asparagus. I told her I was allergic to it. (In truth, I had never tasted asparagus; it was my mother who was allergic to it.) Because of my mom's allergy, asparagus had never been served in my home. I simply assumed that I was allergic to it, as well.

My wife, however, wouldn't let the subject rest. She pursued her line of questioning like a defense attorney grilling a witness. "And exactly what happens when you eat it?" she asked. There was no escaping the truth. I had to own up to having never eaten asparagus.

Carol transformed me from a picky eater, enabling me to clean my plate of a few long-held food prejudices. The whole experience has become a parable of sorts for me—teaching me what it means to let go of ideas that no longer work, and

broadening my appetite in new ways.

Something similar occurs in the Acts of the Apostles. Luke narrates stories of how the church's appetite expanded to include foods previously considered unclean. But Luke's interests are more than culinary. Luke tells the story of how the church let go of old ideas and beliefs in order to incorporate Gentile believers into its fellowship. That's particularly true in Acts 10 and 11, where Peter encounters the centurion Cornelius, and the church discovers what it means to get out of God's way.

It's a story about God broadening the tastebuds of the early church, and a story of how the fellowship of believers became an appetizer in God's great banquet. Peter's account of dining with the Gentiles is a story of challenge and confrontation. In facing these challenges, the believers discovered just how prayer led them in new directions. But first they had to get out of God's way.

In Acts chapter 10, Luke introduces the Roman army officer Cornelius. Luke spells out Cornelius' religious credentials carefully: he fears God, gives alms generously, and prays constantly. This much is clear—here is a Roman who earnestly



Has our resistance to change caused us to get in **God's way**? Do we feign allergies to things that we're afraid to try, or people we're afraid to welcome?

believes. God responds to Cornelius' faith with a vision that calls him to go and find Peter. This God-fearing Roman's life is about to get quite interesting.

Meanwhile, Peter has gone up on a roof for his own time of prayer. As it happens, it's just about lunch time. Peter is hungry and, as blood sugars drop, he begins dreaming of food—all sorts of food. A sheet descends before his

eyes containing a veritable banquet. Peter sees cattle, reptiles, birds, and all sorts of creatures both clean and unclean. This picnic basket dances before his eyes. It's a huge selection, and Peter drools in anticipation of eating.

Yet he knows he can't eat any of it.

A voice prods him: "Get up, Peter; kill and eat." It shatters all of Peter's preconceived notions. He's not allergic to this food, of course; but he is aware of how killing these animals will violate the deeply held rules and traditions of his faith. There's no way he's going to cross that line.

Peter yearns to be faithful. But he simply cannot imagine preparing unclean food. And he certainly can never imagine how he could ever sit down to eat with those whose diets made them unclean. The notion of God crossing boundaries escapes him. Yet, as often happens in the Acts of the Apostles, the Spirit is working behind the scenes. God is steadily developing new possibilities and, like many people in Acts and the Gospel of Luke, Peter is about to discover once again that nothing is impossible with God.

The voice shakes Peter again: "What God has made clean, you must not call profane." While this puzzles Peter, it is yet another reminder of how God is taking the initiative. Salvation comes as a gift from God. Peter is reminded time and time again that God brings the gift of faith to all who are responsive and ready to receive it. Three times Peter is challenged to begin seeing from a new perspective.

Later on, Peter is called to account for his behavior with the elders in Jerusalem. They're curious about his decision to

break with tradition and eat with the Gentles. By now Peter has had time to digest the experience, and he comes prepared to give his testimony. He shares what had happened and then declares: "If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could hinder God?" (Acts 11:17).

In response, the church stood in silent awe of God's mighty work.

There's a lesson in this for the contemporary church. Has our resistance to change caused us to get in God's way? Do we feign allergies to things that we're afraid to try, or people we're afraid to welcome? If so, we might well be hindering the work of God. This story is important to us, because it is the story of what happens if we are willing to get out of God's way. The Spirit moves in the lives of both parties so that what first seems completely irreconcilable becomes unified.

Nelson Mandela, the late, great president of South Africa, understood something about getting out of God's way. Early in his presidency, Mandela led his country to begin loosening the knots of racial tension. And he did so by getting involved with the nation's rugby team. The movie *Invictus* details the courageous stands Mandela took by aligning himself with the primarily white sport.

When Mandela donned the jersey of the South African Springboks, he showed he wasn't allergic to the symbols of the white regime. His opponents were flustered, and his allies confused. Yet this was the beginning of reconciliation.

As Peter says, "Who was I that I could hinder God?" (11:17). In the face of impossibilities, God creates possibilities.

In a wonderful reflection from his book *Can You Drink the Cup?*, Henri Nouwen comments on the astonishing work of God in creating sacred community. "Nothing," he says, "is sweet or easy about community. Community is a fellowship of people who do not hide their joys and sorrows but make them visible to each other in a gesture of hope. In community we say: 'Life is full of gains and losses, joys and sorrows, ups and downs—but we do not have to live it alone.'"

And that is what happens when we get out of God's way. **W**

Chris Keating is pastor of Woodlawn Chapel Presbyterian Church in Wildwood, Mo. Serving as MESSENGER's Bible study writer during this past year, Keating is connected to the Church of the Brethren through the University of La Verne and an internship with MESSENGER in the 1980s.

Royer Family Charitable Foundation offers major support to Haiti Medical Project

The Haiti Medical Project is receiving a major multi-year grant from the Royer Family Charitable Foundation that will enable a doubling of the number of communities in Haiti that are served by mobile clinics.

A \$104,300 grant contributes \$20,000 toward the Haiti Medical Project endowment fund, \$34,300 toward the purchase of a truck, and \$50,000 to double the number of clinics in the coming year. The additional money

Kendra Johnson



means the Haiti Medical Project will be able to provide another 20 one-day clinics serving five more communities quarterly in 2014. The foundation's intention is to continue to support this additional number of clinics each year for five years.

The Haiti Medical Project is a partnership of US Brethren with Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) to provide mobile clinics in under-served communities where Haitian Brethren have congregations. A team of Haitian physicians, nurses, and other workers provide the medical care.

The effort has been funded by gifts from congregations and individuals, and has the support of the Global Mission and Service program. Leading the project is Paul Ullom-Minnich, a physician from central Kansas who convenes the coordinating committee.

"The Royer Family Charitable Foundation seeks to improve the quality of people's lives internationally and domestically through sustainable programs that have a long-term impact on individuals and communities," says the foundation's mission statement. The foundation was started in 2008 by the family of Kenneth Royer and his wife Jean,

now deceased. They were former owners of "Royer's Flowers and Gifts," started in 1937 by Kenneth's mother Hannah, and now passed on to next generations of the family. Kenneth's father, Lester Royer, was a licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren.

Now Kenneth and several children and grandchildren are focusing their sights on doing good through the work of a family foundation.

Becky Fuchs, pastor of Mountville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, is one of the Royer family who sits on the board of the foundation. She expressed excitement at the prospect of supporting the church's medical work in Haiti. "One of our desires is that our grants make a noticeable difference in people's lives," she said.

Fuchs added that she is thrilled "that my parents' hard work all their lives can make this kind of difference." She hopes her family's contribution will inspire others to see that making a difference is possible.

More information is at www.brethren.org/haiti-medical-project.



New: Shine On storybook Bible

Coming in March from the creators of the Shine curriculum for Christian education: *Shine On: A Story Bible*. This new children's storybook Bible will feature more than 150 Bible stories for use by families and congregations.

Published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia, the 320-page, hardback book will retail for \$24.99, plus shipping and handling. Pre-order from Brethren Press by calling 800-441-3712.

Shine On will be a valuable new resource for families and Sunday school leaders, providing an exciting way to nurture faith in children. *Shine On* has colorful illustrations designed by a variety of artists, that will capture children's imaginations. Its clear and engaging language stays true to the biblical text.

Shine: Living in God's Light is a dynamic Sunday school curriculum for age 3 to grade 8 that engages Christian communities in their life together. It is a joint project of Brethren Press and MennoMedia and will be available beginning in the fall of 2014. For more about *Shine*: www.shinecurriculum.com.

Brethren attend ECHO Caribbean conference in the DR

Brethren representatives from the Dominican Republic and the United States were part of an ECHO Caribbean conference recently, including Jeff Boshart, manager of the Global Food Crisis Fund (GFCF).

ECHO (Educational Concerns for Hunger Organization) is a non-profit, interdenominational Christian organization that provides resources for mission and agricultural workers in over 160 countries.



Onelys Rivas, a Dominican Brethren leader, gives morning devotions at the ECHO Caribbean conference.

The ECHO Caribbean conference was a success on many levels, Boshart reported, but also a disappointment as Haitian Brethren leaders were not able to get visas to attend despite efforts on their behalf by him and others. In the end, the two Brethren delegates from Haiti—Jean Bily Telfort and Adias Docteur—were replaced by Dominican Brethren delegates.

The Dominican Brethren in attendance included Anastacia Bueno, Onelys Rivas, Flora Furcal, Ariel Rosario, and Juan Carlos Reyes.

“The ECHO conference allowed DR Brethren to rub shoulders with university professors from the US and other countries, as well as hear presentations from Christian development agencies working in the DR, Haiti, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and Africa,” Boshart said.

The visa situation for the Haitian church leaders may be related to a recent court decision in the Dominican Republic that strips the right to stay in the country from people of Haitian descent. A significant number of Dominican Brethren are of Haitian descent and leaders in the church there are in process of putting the situation on their agenda, Boshart reported.

For more about the Global Food Crisis Fund, go to www.brethren.org/gfcf.

Brethren disaster response in Philippines and Midwest

In November the church “witnessed two devastating disasters within days of each other,” said Brethren Disaster Ministries coordinator Jane Yount. “First, Typhoon Haiyan hammered the Philippine islands. . . . Days later, an outbreak of severe storms and powerful tornadoes struck the Midwest.”

Brethren Disaster Ministries has been active in both responses. Online donations for Typhoon Haiyan can be made at www.brethren.org/typhoonaid. Online donations for tornado response in the Midwest can be made at www.brethren.org/edf. Donations are received by check to the Emergency Disaster Fund, earmarked on the memo line for the Philippine Typhoon or the US Tornadoes. Mail to Emergency Disaster Fund, Church of the Brethren, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

Illinois and Wisconsin District disaster coordinator Rick Koch took a lead in the clean up of tornado destruction in Illinois after powerful storms struck the Midwest in November. Koch is representing Illinois and Wisconsin District and Brethren Disaster Ministries on the Long Term Recovery Team for the areas of Illinois affected by severe tornadoes in November. He has taken a leading role in helping organize Brethren volunteers taking part in the tornado clean up. Peoria Church of the Brethren, located nearby, also is involved.

Brethren Disaster Ministries has also opened a new Hurricane Sandy recovery site in Spotswood, in northern Monmouth County, N.J., on Jan. 5. The program continues to work with current partners from Future With Hope (UMCOR, N.J. conference), Monmouth LTRG, and Ocean LTRG.



In November, a tornado destroyed large areas of Washington, Ill.

Upcoming events

Jan. 19-23
Council of District Executives Winter meeting, Cocoa Beach, Fla.

Jan. 21 Webinar: Call and Gifts Discernment, led by Bekah Houff

Jan. 26-Feb. 14
Brethren Volunteer Service Winter Orientation

Feb. 2 Service Sunday

Feb. 4-7 Christian Churches Together Annual Meeting, Newark, N.J.

March 4 Webinar: Intergenerational Relationships, led by Becky Ullom Naugle

March 5 Ash Wednesday

March 7 World Day of Prayer

March 14-17
Mission and Ministry Board meeting, Church of the Brethren General Offices, Elgin, Ill.

March 16 One Great Hour of Sharing offering emphasis

March 21-24
Ecumenical Advocacy Days, Washington, D.C.

March 28-30
Intercultural Gathering, Pacific Southwest District

PERSONNEL CHANGES

Zach Wolgemuth has resigned as associate director of Brethren Disaster Ministries, as of Jan. 18. He has served in the position since April 2006. He has helped spur growth of the disaster rebuilding program in the US, and provided leadership for Brethren Disaster Ministries to become active in new places across the country. Respect for his leadership resulted in his election to the board of National VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster). Additionally, he has facilitated several grant awards over the last four years, the largest being a \$280,100 Red Cross grant for Hurricane Sandy recovery.

Kathy Fry-Miller of North Manchester, Ind., has been named associate director of Children's Disaster Services. She has worked with CDS as a volunteer, has been a trainer and project manager, and has received Critical Response and FEMA training. She served on the advisory committee of Brethren Disaster Ministries in 2012-13. She founded and spent 12 years administering a nationally accredited preschool program at Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind. From 1988 to the present she has been an education specialist for Early Childhood Alliance, a 10-county Child Care Resource and Referral agency in Indiana, also a United Way agency. Her previous work for the denomination has included writing and consulting for Gather 'Round and the new Shine curriculum, and she has authored Brethren Press books including the *Young*

Peacemakers Project Book.

Nathan (Nate) Polzin has been called to serve as district executive minister for Michigan District, to fill a half-time position beginning immediately. This is a change from the interim position he has held since March 7, 2009. Polzin is also a church planter, start-up and continuing half-time pastor of the Church in Drive in Saginaw, Mich. He serves on the board of trustees of Bethany Theological Seminary representing clergy.

Héctor Pérez-Borges has announced plans to retire as associate executive for Atlantic Southeast District, working with the Puerto Rico churches, effective on July 1. He began his service as associate district executive on Oct. 1, 2011. His ministry career began in September 1994 upon early retirement as a chemist from a pharmaceutical firm where he held a position of quality assurance manager. He and his wife, Annie, joined Iglesia de Los Hermanos (Church of the Brethren) in Vega Baja, P.R., in January 2002. The congregation called him as pastor in February 2004.

Anna Speicher and Cyndi Fecher are completing their employment with Gather 'Round, the Christian education curriculum produced jointly by Brethren Press and MennoMedia. Gather 'Round is in its final year of production and will be available through the summer of 2014. The successor curriculum, Shine, will be available beginning this fall. Both Speicher and Fecher will continue some responsibilities on a contract basis through the summer to help finish out

Gather 'Round's final quarter.

Anna Speicher has been project director and senior editor of Gather 'Round for 10 years, since fall 2003. She began her work as the curriculum project was initially being created by Brethren Press and Mennonite Publishing Network. She has played a lead role in the creation and production of Gather 'Round and its materials for teachers and students. With its conceptual roots in the Shema, the "Hear O Israel" passage from Deuteronomy that is the foundation scripture, Speicher helped shape Gather 'Round as biblically based Christian education. She has led the curriculum's intentional foundation in sound educational principles and academic research, alongside an emphasis on meeting the needs of students with a variety of learning styles. Gather 'Round has featured the Anabaptist emphasis on Christian education set within an active faith community, with strong ties between congregation and home.

Cyndi Fecher has been managing editor of Gather 'Round since August 2009. Her last day at the General Offices will be Jan. 21. In her role as managing editor, she has held responsibility for making sure all the pieces of the curriculum come together, shepherding the quarterly production of teacher's guides, student books, resource packs, and music CDs. She has negotiated contracts with writers, editors, designers, illustrators, and musicians, and helped oversee the editorial schedule as well as doing copyediting, proofreading, and troubleshooting for the curriculum.

*I (Paul) planted,
Apollos watered, but
God gave the growth.*

—1 Corinthians 3:6



Plant Generously, Reap Bountifully Toward an Intercultural Future

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Bethany Theological Seminary, Richmond, Indiana

This vibrant gathering focused on church planting is rooted in worship and prayer while providing practical training, nurturing conversation, and stimulating idea-sharing. The entire conference will work toward an intercultural future, including a unique training track offered in Spanish.

Keynote Leadership



Efrem Smith

Efrem Smith is an internationally recognized leader who uses motivational speaking and preaching to equip people for a life of transformation. He consults with churches on issues of multi-ethnicity, leadership, and community development.

He served as Founding Pastor of The Sanctuary Covenant Church and currently is the Superintendent of the Pacific Southwest Conference of the Evangelical Covenant Church. Efrem is an author of three books. He is married with two daughters.



Alejandro Mandes

Dr. Mandes is director of Hispanic Ministries for the Evangelical Free Church of America. He serves as a catalyst for multiplying healthy Hispanic churches and has a special commitment to love, train and send immigrant leaders.

Alex has planted three churches and writes and speaks regularly about the need to recalibrate the American church's vision to see, serve and send the immigrants among us. Alejandro is married and has five daughters.



Opening worship preacher


Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference moderator for 2014, will preach at our opening worship service.

Registration Now Open!

Fees: Early bird through March 17 - \$179.00 Regular after March 17 - \$229.00 Bethany or Academy student - \$129.00

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 Church of the Brethren Planting Network

Sponsored by the Church of the Brethren through the office of Congregational Life Ministries and the New Church Development Advisory Committee.



Church of the Brethren

To be truly alone—almost

A lone. We've all experienced some version of **aloneness**: the soul-sapping nature of loneliness; the fear and loss that come with isolation; even the calm of self-sought solitude. Ultimately, however, being alone isn't something we tolerate well. Christians, as with people from many other faith traditions, have a safety net against the dark side of aloneness: Where can you go where God is not? Joshua (1:9) taught that God is with us wherever we go.

And anyway, even when we feel alone, we're not *really* alone, are we? Usually, there are people in the other room, across the street, a phone call away.



RYAN HARRISON

But what if that wasn't the case? What if you were truly alone: on your own, without friends and family, without anyone, even (seemingly) without God? That's the story of the film *Gravity*.

Academy Award winner Sandra Bullock plays Ryan Stone, an accomplished doctor turned anxious astronaut in this hold-your-breath sci-fi/drama/thriller about a human being utterly alone in the inhospitable, impersonal expanse of space. While working on a satellite in Earth's orbit, Stone abruptly finds herself stripped of both companionship and assistance, and, at times, of hope. Within moments, her entire team is gone and she is alone in the truest sense of the word. Her life and her return to Earth suddenly depend on a cascade of hopeful (but improbable) death-defying leaps of faith.

Only, Stone doesn't seem to have faith. At least, she never reveals any hint of a personal belief in, or reliance on, God. "No one ever taught me to pray," she utters at one point. And there are no frantic deals with the Divine, or tearful supplications.

Gravity could be seen in several different ways: as a story of luck, or of the power of determination, of the capriciousness of fate, or even of the grace of divine Providence. As I sat in the theater, I felt something else. Later, as I stood in my yard, eyes turned spaceward to contemplate the film, what struck me as the core message was its portrayal of what it means to be really, truly, starkly *alone*.

Stone epitomized this. Floating in space, disconnected from all others and even from the entire planet which was her home, she

embodied aloneness. We learned that she had no one on Earth; she led a disconnected life. Even her young daughter is gone, dead before her time. Mission Control may have been trying frantically to reestablish contact with her, but they could not. Stone was staggeringly alone, to a degree that none of us has ever experienced.

(Spoiler alert)

And yet, although Stone was distinctly isolated, her survival depended on the work of others. Her solitary journey from spinning in space to standing on terra firma depended on a vast number of other people: the US personnel who trained her, the Russians who helped build the International Space Station, and the Chinese who unwittingly provided her with an escape pod from one of their own satellites. None of these fellow human beings was in space with her, but their influence was essential for her survival. Thus, Stone revealed both how alone we can be, and yet, simultaneously, how dependent on others.

One thing more. Sometimes, we need to be reminded that spiritual cinema isn't necessarily "Christian cinema," but that spiritual lessons can come in somewhat foreign attire. So, I personally appreciated that on her final, death-defying attempt to return to Earth, Stone looked up from the seat of her Chinese escape pod to see a small Buddha statuette smiling at her.

In Buddhism, aloneness is a core belief. Ultimately, we can only be responsible for ourselves, and thus must work out our own way to enlightenment. No one, not even a god, can do that for us. Buddhism recognizes this. Stone characterized it. So much so, that when she returned to Earth—through fire, ice, void, and flood—she stood on trembling legs, surveyed the view, and, although triumphant, was still alone.

What can we learn from this? Perhaps that our individual journeys through life are at once separate and interconnected. Maybe, to recognize our need for others, even as we acknowledge our sole responsibility to ourselves. Hopefully, that no matter the gravity of our darkest hour, we are not—none of us—truly alone. ❗

Ryan Harrison attends La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren where he started and led monthly Spiritual Cinema Circle gatherings for more than five years. He now works as the director of Resident Life & Wellness at Hillcrest Homes, a Church of the Brethren retirement community, and is completing his doctor of psychology degree at the University of the Rockies.

ABOUT THE MOVIE

Title: *Gravity*. **Theatrical release:** October 4, 2013. **DVD release:** Feb. 25, 2014. **Running time:** 93 minutes. **Director:** Alfonso Cuarón. **Producers:** Alfonso Cuarón and David Heyman. **MPPA rating:** PG-13. In the film, a medical engineer and an astronaut work together to survive after an accident leaves them adrift in space. "For all its stunning exteriors, it's really concerned with emotional interiors," writes Matt Zoller Seitz on RogerEbert.com. "The film is about that moment when you suffered misfortune that seemed unendurable and believed all hope was lost and that you might as well curl up and die, and then you didn't. Why did you decide to keep going? It's a mystery as great as any in physics or astronomy, and one we've all grappled with, and transcended."



NYC speakers announced

The following speakers have been announced for National Youth Conference 2014, to be held July 19-24 in Fort Collins, Colo. Visit www.brethren.org/NYC for pictures and more detailed biographies.

Samuel Sarpiya is the pastor of Rockford Community Church, a Church of the Brethren fellowship in Rockford, Ill.

Leah Hileman is an indie recording artist, freelance writer, and licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren.



Jarrod McKenna is the National Advisor for Youth, Faith, and Activism for World Vision Australia as well as the founder of EPYC—Empowering Peacemakers in Your Community.

Katie Shaw Thompson is the pastor of the Ivester Church

of the Brethren, in Grundy Center, Iowa.

Ted and Company features Ted Swartz, a playwright and actor from Harrisonburg, Va., who brings the Bible to life through storytelling and humor.

Kathy Escobar is co-pastor of The Refuge, a church community in north Denver, Colo. In addition to being a pastor, she is also a spiritual director, writer, and a retreat and workshop leader.

Jeff Carter is the new president of Bethany Theological Seminary. He recently served as pastor of the Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

Jenn Quijano is from Brooklyn, NY and is currently studying at Bethany Theological Seminary.

Rodger Nishioka is a professor of Christian Education at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Ga. Before joining the faculty at Columbia, he served as denominational staff for youth and young adult ministry in the Presbyterian Church (US).

Bethany invites junior high youth to ‘Immerse!’

This summer has a special event in store for junior high students: “Immerse!” will bring youth who have completed seventh, eighth, and ninth grades together to share questions, experiences, and ideas about faith, all within a community of friendship and support. Sponsored by the Institute for Ministry with Youth and Young Adults at Bethany Seminary, Immerse! will take place at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College June 12-17, and is free.

Russell Haitch, professor of practical theology at Bethany, is overseeing the event as director of the institute. “As its name implies, the purpose of Immerse! is to dive more deeply into learning about the Bible and questions of faith. For young people who may be thinking about baptism or just what it means to be a Christian, we want to create an engaging, friendship-forming, potentially life-changing experience.”

Participants will take part in worship, classroom time, group activities, and recreation, enjoying the amenities of Elizabethtown College and surrounding area. The central Pennsylvania location is ideal for incorporating Brethren history into the week’s schedule, such as visits to historic sites. Leadership will be provided in part by Bethany faculty and staff, including Bekah Houff, coordinator of outreach programs; Steve Schweitzer, academic dean; and Haitch.

Register the Bethany Seminary website at www.bethanyseminary.edu/immerse/register. In compliance with the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act, parents of children under 13 are required to complete the Parent Consent Form as part of the application process. For more information, contact Bekah Houff at houffre@bethanyseminary.edu. Participation is available to roughly 30 participants.

(**Note:** Although Immerse! happens to have the same location and similar date range to the Church of the Brethren National Junior High Conferences, it is a separate, grant-funded program of Bethany Theological Seminary.)





Just do it

A good friend of mine often reminds me that the only difference between not doing something and doing it, is doing it.

She tells me to stop talking about taking a vacation, throwing a party, or writing a song, and to just do it.

I, on the other hand, am quick to think of the expenses of a vacation, the things that could go wrong at a party, or the people who probably won't like my songs. I assess all angles of an idea, write a cost/benefit analysis, and think about the pros and cons for before doing just about anything.

We are a good pair, my friend and I. I think through all the potential problems in a plan while she gets the ball rolling. Because of her impulses we've made a lot of wonderful memories, and because of my hesitations we've avoided injury (for the most part).



MANDY GARCIA

This dear friend is the same one who comforts my fear of raising children by saying, "You won't ever birth a 16-year-old—you have years to get ready for that." She calms my apprehension about going back to school by saying, "Just take one class! You can always drop it if you hate it." When I'm overwhelmed with a longer to-do list than I can handle, she says to "pick one thing, set a timer, and focus on that thing until the timer goes off." Without a doubt, my friend is a doer, and she inspires me to be one, too.

So naturally, when I told her I was thinking about suggesting to MESSENGER readers that we all resolve to live more simply in 2014, she put it in a doable perspective. "It doesn't have to be a radical thing," she said. "It could be just one small change. But if all those people made one small change to simplify their lives, think of the big difference it would make."

How could I argue?

So then, dear readers, what if we all resolved to live a little

simpler this year? What if we choose one thing to do differently and try our best to stick with it for 365 days? And what if we start a tradition of simple-living New Year's resolutions? We can do that, can't we? After all, the only difference between doing it and resolving to do it, is doing it.

May God bless your new year, and all the things you resolve to do. ❧

Mandy Garcia is associate director of donor communications for the Church of the Brethren. She also produces eBrethren, stories of Brethren stewards, every other week for the Church of the Brethren. For information, contact mgarcia@brethren.org.



Here's a list of simplicity suggestions to get you started:

1. Remember that simple living is a journey, not a destination.
2. Start composting. www.wikihow.com/compost
3. Sort and file your mail as soon as you bring it inside.
4. Mix one part vinegar, two parts water together in a spray bottle for a safe, cheap, and effective cleaning solution for glass surfaces in your home.
5. Carpool, ride your bike, or take public transportation once a week.
6. Plan weekly meals ahead of time and assemble one grocery list to save stress and trips to the store—and calling for take-out.
7. Turn off audible e-mail notifications on your mobile device. Be present.
8. Create a budget. Start saving for a rainy day.
9. Take breaks.
10. Practice gratitude.

Too much prayer?

In the November MESSENGER Bible study entitled "When scorpions sting and prayers go unanswered," Chris Keating places the Lord's Prayer in its context in Luke's account. In Matthew's account, however, the Lord's Prayer appears as part of the Sermon on the Mount which includes Jesus's command, "Whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret..." Is Jesus' command something to be taken seriously, or something to be dismissed as exaggeration in his making a point about hypocrisy? Could it be that today there is *too much* public prayer in congregation and society?

Charles Thomas
Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Not called to 'forge peace'

Do we remember the Great Commission? "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father

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Sisters and brothers among the Brethren,
providing worship and program leadership

ENGAGE Visit Day:
April 4, 2014
www.bethanyseminary.edu/visit/engage

**6th Annual
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April 4-5, 2014

www.bethanyseminary.edu/
forum2014



(Yahweh—not translatable), and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:18-20).

Jesus—Yahshua—gave commandments! He didn’t call us to “get an education”; to debate/use dialects; to build brand new buildings; to “organize” or re-invent the “church”; to cooperate with the world on projects; to “forge peace”; to engage in ecumenism and “interfaithism”; to create a plethora of “new” translations of the Bible; to exalt any man in the church; to create search committees to find pastors or other leaders; to emphasize academic degrees in theology, divinity, or psychology, etc.; to create paid ministries; to ask

questions (asking “why” creates systematic ambiguity!); to disregard/excuse incompetent leaders; to have endless display of our works.

The MESSENGER might consider more space to repeating the Gospel of Jesus—Yahshua; to articles that expound on deep knowledge of the whole Bible (not just the New Testament); and to call us to worship and watch for His soon return (for a remnant?).

Daniel I. Landis
Indianapolis, Ind.

Homosexual ‘lifestyle’ is not the issue

About Brethren “mission drift” (October MESSENGER), I can agree with

Ronald Keener’s emphasis on strong leadership, and mission focus with action, to revitalize a congregation or denomination. But when he says, “The Brethren have been tempted to embrace the homosexual lifestyle, to rethink the meaning of scripture when it comes to same-sex trends,” I disagree with his conclusion of historical and mission drift. Moreover, homosexual “lifestyle” is not the issue. Our acceptance of God-given identity of persons is.

His reference to the Brethren Revival Fellowship as being “loyal to the heritage and life of the Brethren,” discounts early Brethren teaching about being open to new revelations from the Holy Spirit. We are not “creedal” people, but we seek the “mind of Christ” for being faithful in

Where will Nursing take you? Can the Church of the Brethren help?



Rachel Alderman
Mount Hermon Church of the Brethren
My dream is to be a nurse at St. Jude’s Children’s hospital, giving of my love and care to those precious children – helping them through that journey! This scholarship will help me tremendously!



Kirsten Eller
Ephrata Church of the Brethren
During a trip to Cambodia I saw firsthand the conditions of a third world hospital. I prayed to God never to let me forget what I was seeing, or the passion I was feeling to come and help these amazing people. This scholarship will help me accomplish the dreams God has planted in my heart.



Kirstie Studebaker
New Carlisle Church of the Brethren
I hope to use my experience for missions and disaster services. I want to be the nurse that delivers *excellent care* to every single patient. I am so honored to have been chosen to represent the church in such a wonderful way!



Marcia McCartney
Plymouth Church of the Brethren
After serving in geriatrics, I am furthering my goal of working in missions and community health. My studies require travel to Chiquimula, Guatemala, to learn more about Hispanic cultures and health beliefs – which will be a great benefit in serving my community. This scholarship will significantly assist in this endeavor.

This Nursing Scholarship program is available to members of the Church of the Brethren enrolled in an LPN, RN, or nursing graduate program. *Application deadline is April 1.*
Application materials are available at www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships.
For further information, email rowan@brethren.org or call (800) 323-8039, ext. 303.



Church of the Brethren

our age and culture. This openness to new truths coming from the Spirit leads to re-assessment of traditional biblical interpretations. Examples: freedom from slavery; gifting of woman in ministry; moving from “just war” to “just peace”; inclusiveness of all of God’s children (acceptance of LGBT people in our churches).

If we are doing the work of Jesus in our neighborhoods—i.e., Brethren service “love in action”—we are not in “mission drift.” Love of God and love of neighbor are basic to Brethren values of simple living and service in Christ’s name to all in need. To quote Pope Francis (maybe a closeted Brethren?): “A poor church, for the poor.”

Alfred P. Nyce
Harleysville, Pa.

Is this what the church is promoting?

Your November MESSENGER featured Jerry O’Donnell’s work with US Rep. Grace Napolitano. I’m sure your writer just took whatever was told to him, but did he challenge O’Donnell at all about the “values” that fit with his? Grace Napolitano supports abortion without reservation, and supports Americans United, which is always fighting against the churches in church/state issues. Your featured person sounds like a real “values” kind of guy. Is this what the church is promoting?

Margaret Kimes
(sent via email)

CLASSIFIEDS

Andy and Terry Murray are releasing a “40th Anniversary CD Edition” of the original vinyl album, *Summertime Children*, recorded in Nashville for the 1974 National Youth Conference at Glorieta, New Mexico. The CD is mastered from the original Nashville studio tapes and will include all songs, lyrics booklet and photographs. Songs include the first NYC theme song, “Summertime Children”, “The Ballad of John Kline”; “Grace Revisited” (Earle Fike); “Cowboy Dan” and “The Great Botetourt Bus-Truck Race.” CD’s are \$14.95. To order, contact Andy and Terry at andyandterrymusic@icloud.com.

The New Inglenook Cookbook website has all-new content: www.inglenookcookbook.org. Share your favorite Inglenook recipe or story in our new blog, Kitchen Scrapbook. Visit the online store to see all our cookbooks and merchandise, including mugs and aprons. And don’t forget to check the home page for an updated list of cookbook corrections. Stay connected, spread the word, and keep cooking!



Please send information to be included in *Turning Points* to Jean Clements, 1451 Dundee Ave, Elgin, IL 60120; 800-525-8039, ext. 320; jclements@brethren.org. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

New Members

Agape, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Joel Brenneman, Linda Cramer, Lauren Kiracof Hale

Arlington, Va.: Cynthia Harper, Suzanne Lay, Debbie Miller

Beaverton, Mich.: Elizabeth Hoag, Brenna McKimmy, Mikayla McKimmy, Jan Posey, Lena Emond

Bedford, Pa.: Gene Gall, Dawn Gall, Bonnie Rummel

Fairview, Unionville, Iowa: Ashley Brinegar

Florin, Mount Joy, Pa.: Jason Risser, Ashley Maxwell, Hunter Thomas

Freeport, Ill.: Steve Boettner, Chris Engel, Jean Engel, Scott Juern, Norman Lancaster, Scott McWorthy, Gail McWorthy

Garbers, Harrisonburg, Va.: Steve Crawford

Hanover, Pa.: John Paul Fike, Sr., Susan Bressler

Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Megan Heisey, Ashley Martin, Zachary Patches, Anthony Patches, Joyce Stauffer

Holidaysburg, Pa.: Dalton Byrnes, Lois Decker, Debbie Decker, Carolee Hajnosz, Earla Shehan-Reffner

Indian Creek, Harleysville,

Pa.: Marie Hill

Knob Creek, Johnson City, Tenn.: Martha Green, Franklin Sell

Lakewood, Millbury, Ohio: Chloe Huston, Joshua J. Jacobs

Lansing, Mich.: Steve Dumond

Locust Grove, New Castle, Ind.: Lora Ervin, Margaret Barnes, Bud Barnes, Phyllis Darnell, Cameron Darnell, Logan Driskell

Maple Grove, Ashland, Ohio: Megan Beebe, Scott Taylor, Reese Vaught, Vanessa Wallace, Wendy Taylor

Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.: Darin Bowman,

Karen Bowman, Dana Good, Gene Mottesheard, Barbara Ritchie, Emily Warren, Michael Warren

Mount Hermon, Bassett, Va.: Don Street, Lisa Street, Drew Nolen, Kaylee Crawford

Mount Vernon, Waynesboro, Va.: Maya Elox, Emma Flora, Jordan Ramsey, Doris Graves, Larry Ayers, Gloria Ayers, John Flora, Carol Flora, Chris Painter

Mountain View, McGaheysville, Va.: Alan Knicely, Patty Knicely, Bradley Knicely, Rebecca Lane

Nappanee, Ind.: Marianne Ervin, Chris Losee,

Balinda Losee, Tom Brock, Sue Brock, Robert Hartman, Clarabelle Hartman, Ruby Slagle, Roy Slagle, Jr.

Nettle Creek, Hagerstown, Ind.: Brian Mackie, Karen Mackie

Olivet, Thornville, Ohio: Kyle Schooley, Alexis Schooley

Paxton, Harrisburg, Pa.: Deb Varner, Amy Witmer, Keisha Stretch, Joe Stretch

Poages Mill, Roanoke, Va.: Emma Fields, Jordan Young, Heather Anglin, Tom Anglin, Vickie Toups, Dana DeWitt, Rodney DeWitt, Brenda Reynolds, Jack Reynolds, Sharon Barnes, Kelly Conner, Steve Conner, Benjamin Russeau

Rossville, Ind.: Melissa Finley, Braxton Good, Brecken Good, Bryce Oliver, Carson Mills, Mackenzie Oliver, Macy Oliver, Lori Oliver, Jeff Oliver

Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Melissa Brannon, Skylar Brannon, Christian Brannon

Shiloh, Kasson, W.Va.: Pamela Fries, Kathy Osbin

South Waterloo, Waterloo, Iowa: Barb Grimson, Jeff Isaacs, Mary Oelmann, Duane Overton, Dorothy Zacharias, Simon Estes, Ovida Estes, Amy Rousselow, Madison Rousselow, David Stull, Jennifer Scoggin

Spring Creek, Hershey, Pa.: Nathaniel Houck

Waterford, Calif.: Daniel Hay, Rebecca Hay, Kaitlyn Hay, Ryan Hay, Stephen Lasater, Priscilla Jean Parker, Jester Alexander

Welty, Smithsburg, Md.: Andrew Doddington, Avery Green, Dakota Graybill, Brandon Graybill, Zane Garrett, Angelo Trezza, Dominic Trezza, Heather Myers, Brendan Green, Teagen Graybill, Hannah Irelan

Wyomissing, Pa.: Katie Fehr, Michael Fehr,

Matthew Henderson, Ruth Mathews, Abby Meckley, Don Solinger

Wedding Anniversaries

Bolt, Kenneth and Esther, Rohrsersville, Md., 60

Bond, Stanley and Lois, Hagerstown, Md., 55

Brandt, Glenn and Sandra, Palmyra, Pa., 50

Broman, George and Marilyn, Dixon, Ill., 65

Coulter, James and Elaine, Knoxville, Md., 60

Fralin, R. Thomas, Jr. and Retta, Sharpsburg, Md., 50

Geib, Clarence and Alta, Manheim, Pa., 60

Gillin, Dean and Marian, Wenatchee, Wash., 65

Horst, Kenneth and Lorraine, Manheim, Pa., 60

Inler, John and Shirley, Burket, Bedford, Pa., 50

Johnson, Lavane and Rosanna, Eagle, Neb., 50

Keeney, John Woodrow and Mary Hartman, York, Pa., 74

Keiper, John and Joyce, Bedford, Pa., 50

McMillin, Bill and Shirley, Everett, Pa., 50

Miller, Melvin and Eleanor, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 60

Myers, Elvin and Dorothy, Largo, Fla., 60

Re, Vincent and Katrina, Orrtanna, Pa., 50

Royer, Dale and Phyllis, Lincoln, Neb., 60

Shenk, Glenn and Audrey, Lititz, Pa., 55

Showalter, Sam and Janet, Nappanee, Ind., 50

Stone, Charles and Evelyn, Everett, Pa., 50

Stout, William and Ruth, Greens Fork, Ind., 71

Sullivan, Dee and Roylynn, Lincoln, Neb., 60

Sunday, Robert and Jean, Everett, Pa., 60

Yoder, Stephen A., and Marilyn, New Paris, Ind., 55

Deaths

Albert, Leon B., 81, San Diego, Calif., Oct. 21

Aukerman, Kathleen L., 90, Pitsburg, Ohio, Nov. 13

Bales, Willowese Elda Rice, 86, Stet, Mo., Nov. 9

Baughner, Beulah Kensinger, 100, Huntingdon, Pa., Nov. 18

Baughner, Ruth Christ, 95, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 15

Beers, Nichole L., 51, Hummelstown, Pa., Nov. 26

Benedict, C. Harold, Jr., 86, Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 4

Best, Rosa Viola Potter, 88, Yarrowburg, Md., Sept. 25

Brubaker, Shirley G., 69, Mount Joy, Pa., Oct. 9

Buffenmyer, Diana, 94, Lombard, Ill., Oct. 28

Carper, Anna Mae, 75, Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 23

Clipp, Cecil, Jr., 82, Boonsboro, Md., Oct. 26

Combs, Rosella J. Shade, 82, Riverside, Ohio, Nov. 29

Copeland, Joseph Thomas, 88, Decatur, Ill., Nov. 13

Cox, Stanford E., 87, Lancaster, Pa., Nov. 29

Daum, John Ernest, 78, Mount Lebanon, Pa., Sept. 7

Davis, Marion Virginia, 91, Stuarts Draft, Va., Oct. 19

Deener, Kenneth Irvin, 78, Knoxville, Md., Sept. 12

Dicken, Donna L., 82, Everett, Pa., April 11

Dooley, Carolyn Kay, 71, Hutchinson, Kan., May 31

- Dunsavage**, Ora Nell Plessinger, 89, Everett, Pa., Feb. 14, 2013
- Easterwood**, William D., 85, Live Oak, Calif., Oct. 29
- Eichelberger**, Charles Preston, Jr., 85, Newport News, Va., Oct. 31
- Embick**, Ronald Paul, 87, Mount Morris, Ill., Aug. 7
- Evans**, Blanche, 106, Pinellas Park, Fla., April 4
- Frasso**, James G., 87, Reading, Pa., June 19
- Gardner**, Georgina L., 91, Arcadia, Calif., Oct. 21
- Gilllin**, W. Dean, 87, Wenatchee, Wash., Oct. 14
- Gnagy**, Virginia E., 93, Wenatchee, Wash., Nov. 18
- Goode**, Dewey E., 74, Daleville, Va., Oct. 25
- Gowans**, Lois, 87, Modesto, Calif., Nov. 5
- Grim**, Josephine Edna, 95, Kansas City, Kan., Nov. 8
- Guthrie**, Ward David, 67, Chandler, Ariz., July 14
- Hanft**, Paul W., 91, Louisville, Ohio, Sept. 11
- Harlerode**, Kenton Zane, 84, Everett, Pa., Feb. 14, 2013
- Harr**, Myron Elwood, 75, Hagerstown, Md., Sept. 24
- Hartman**, Barry L., 72, Everett, Pa., March 27, 2013
- Hatch**, Gordon, 92, Mount Morris, Ill., Nov. 3
- Heistand**, Dorothy Kaylor, 90, Manheim, Pa., Nov. 11
- Herbst**, Helen Myers, 97, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 19
- Hilbert**, Harold D., 80, Hagerstown, Ind., Sept. 18
- Hollinger**, Isabelle Ruth, 95, Greenville, Ohio, Oct. 14
- Hostetler**, Ned C., 79, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 1
- Howard**, Darrel Dean, 70, Piqua, Ohio, Sept. 15
- Ikenberry**, Ernest Alva, 89, La Verne, Calif., Oct. 30
- Johnson**, Ruby Adeline, 92, Gridley, Calif., Oct. 16
- Jones**, Thelma Delilah Fink, 83, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 16
- Justice**, Neil A., 75, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Oct. 30
- Kenderdine**, Rebecca J., 66, Elizabethtown, Pa., Nov. 16
- Kime**, Arthur, 85, North Liberty, Ind., Nov. 25
- Kime**, Cinda Lee, North Liberty, Ind., Nov. 30
- Kinzie**, Dorothy E., 91, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 25
- Kopp**, Mary E., 89, Hanover, Pa., Nov. 30
- Leister**, Roy D., Sr., 85, Hollidaysburg, Pa., March 26, 2013
- Long**, Gary E., 66, Bradford, Ohio, Oct. 10
- Long**, J. Henry, 89, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 19
- McAllister**, Donald L., 84, Saint John, Kan., Nov. 2, 2013
- McClanahan**, Viola Ann, 44, Fort Scott, Kan., Sept. 1
- McClure**, Marie G., 102, Wooster, Ohio, Nov. 1
- McConahy**, Pamela K., 61, Everett, Pa., March 8, 2013
- Metzger**, Evelyn Mishler, 92, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 21
- Miller**, Jacob C., 89, Woodbury, Pa., Nov. 15
- Miller**, James C., 53, Thurmont, Md., Jan. 3, 2013
- Miller**, Richard N., 84, Bridgewater, Va., Oct. 4
- Miller**, Robert M., 96, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 5
- Mock**, Clair, 108, Bedford, Pa., Sept. 22
- Mongan**, Helen Susanne, 62, Clear Spring, Md., Aug. 15
- Morgan**, Gladys M., 84, Everett, Pa., Jan. 25, 2013
- Myers**, Betty Lou, 76, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 25
- Naff**, Paul Martin, 76, Pilot, Va., Sept. 9
- Nusbaum**, Pauline G., 85, Goshen, Ind., Oct. 12
- Platz**, EvaDean June, 84, Walkerton, Ind., Sept. 9
- Powers**, Georgia C., 75, Adrian, Mich., Sept. 27
- Radatz**, Charles Albert, Jr., 88, Lewiston, Minn., Sept. 25
- Ramsey**, Duane Hughes, 89, Wichita, Kan., Sept. 26
- Reed**, Forrest Glen, 80, Nappanee, Ind., Oct. 26
- Reimer**, Judy Mills, 75, Roanoke, Va., Nov. 15
- Rentschler**, Virginia H., 91, Shillington, Pa., Sept. 2
- Rich**, William D., 86, Council Bluffs, Iowa, March 29
- Runyon**, Helen Louise Wenger, 86, Chambersburg, Pa., Sept. 14
- Rupert**, Sally Elaine, 65, Johnstown, Pa., Dec. 16, 2012
- Schroder**, Dwight W., 95, Council Bluffs, Iowa, April 19
- Senseman**, Allen S., 76, Tipp City, Ohio, Nov. 13
- Sesser**, Helen Irene, 95, Modesto, Calif., Sept. 29
- Sheets**, Clara Catherine, 88, Staunton, Va., Aug. 28
- Sherbine**, Gertrude E., 94, Windber, Pa., Nov. 24
- Smith**, Larry J., 65, Berlin, Pa., Sept. 8
- Southerly**, Justina Elizabeth, 85, Chambersburg, Pa., Oct. 25
- Spang**, Elizabeth, 78, Newmanstown, Pa., Sept. 19
- Stouder**, S. LaMar, 91, Nappanee, Ind., Sept. 29
- Stroup**, Julia Gehrler, 93, Harrisburg, Pa., Sept. 17
- Sumpter**, Gloria J. Lerch, 74, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 2
- Swihart**, Mary E., 101, North Liberty, Ind., Nov. 11
- Taylor**, Barbara, 72, Middlebury, Ind., Sept. 23
- Taylor**, Cynthia B., 65, Minonk, Ill., Sept. 8
- Ulrich**, Larry K., 72, Lombard, Ill., Dec. 7
- Vest**, Nancy Virginia Gordon, 81, Grottoes, Va., Sept. 22
- Weimer**, Keith E., 75, Hollansburg, Ohio, Nov. 6
- Wine**, Ralph Emmet, 95, Mount Sidney, Va., Oct. 1
- Wolford**, Florence Evelyn Troupe, 92, Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 24
- Young**, Ray W., Jr., 86, Frederick, Md., June 4
- Zuck**, Michael R., 52, Shannon, Ill., Nov. 12

Ordinations

- Koehler**, Marilyn, N. Plains Dist. (Fairview, Unionville, Iowa), Sept. 29
- Pratt**, Jason D., Virgina Dist. (Fairview, Floyd County, Floyd, Va.), Nov. 3

Placements

- Bell**, Jodi Christine, team pastor, Peace Community, Windsor, Colo., Jan. 1, 2013
- Bell**, Stephen Joe, team pastor, Peace Community, Windsor, Colo., Jan. 1, 2013
- Creager**, Martha, from interim to pastor, Dixon, Ill., Nov. 1
- Dimmick**, Nicholas J., youth pastor, Castine, Arcanum, Ohio, Nov. 17
- Eller**, Enten, co-pastor, Ambler, Pa., Nov. 1
- Eller**, Mary A., co-pastor, Ambler, Pa., Nov. 1
- Garber**, Evan B., pastor, Bremen, Ind., Oct. 20
- Owens**, Matthew, pastor of worship arts, Eaton, Ohio, Nov. 24
- Palmer**, Chad A., associate pastor, Mohican, West Salem, Ohio, Sept. 15
- Steele**, Dorothy L., from older adult ministries coordinator, Roaring Spring, Pa., to hospice chaplain, The Village at Morrisons Cove, Martinsburg, Pa., Nov. 1
- Tanguay**, Benjamin A., pastor, Woodberry, Baltimore, Md., Sept. 1
- Ziler**, David W., assistant pastor, Danville, Rawlings, Md., Nov. 17

Licensings

- Dimmick**, Nicholas J., S. Ohio Dist. (Castine, Arcanum, Ohio), Nov. 17
- Grossnickle**, Karen, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.), Nov. 17
- Lair**, Steven R., S. Ohio Dist. (Eaton, Ohio), Nov. 24
- Owens**, Matthew, S. Ohio Dist. (Eaton, Ohio), Nov. 24
- Petty**, Shayne T., S. Ohio Dist. (Eaton, Ohio), Nov. 24
- Winkler**, Larry, S. Ohio Dist. (Eaton, Ohio), Nov. 24

Keep the discussion going

Psssst! Hey, you!

Yes, you . . . the one reading this magazine.

I want to take a moment to thank you for being among the ranks of loyal MESSENGER subscribers. As editor, I'm biased, of course. But, in my humble opinion, you embody a key characteristic of what it means to be truly Brethren.



RANDY MILLER
MESSENGER EDITOR

You are still here, reading articles and letters with which you agree, and others with which you disagree. Doing this is one way to remain engaged in the dialogue that is so important to our denomination.

Unlike you, some former readers have decided to leave the discussion. Granted, some may have had to cancel their subscriptions due to tight finances, and I get that. If you have to choose between paying for utilities and extending your subscription to

MESSENGER, well, is it really a choice?

But for others it's something else. They've found a phrase, a quote, or an article with which they disagree and so, rather than share their opinion via a letter to the editor or an offer to write an article outlining their point of view, they have picked up their marbles and left the playground.

It seems that, somewhere along the line, they failed to grasp that key Brethren trait that you appear to understand

something found in these pages seems to indicate a mindset in which there is no room for dialogue. Some former subscribers received a standard letter from us reminding them that their annual subscription is due. They then returned those letters with an angry message written in the margin, telling us exactly why our theology is of the devil—or worse. We were put on probation for a year by one pastor whose congregation had a MESSENGER club with some 25 members. Sadly, we failed to live up to his stringent standards, so he cancelled all but one subscription, holding onto that one just to “keep an eye on us.”

This is disappointing from a publishing perspective, of course. But beyond that, I fear it may also be indicative of a cynical, poisonous outlook among some of our Brethren at large. When we become unwilling even to engage in dialogue with our brothers and sisters in the faith, we are in real trouble.

Pope Francis, in presenting his hopes for 2014, said, “We are all children of one heavenly father, we belong to the same human family and we share a common destiny.” Speaking from his studio window overlooking St. Peter's Square, jammed with thousands of listeners, he added, “This brings a responsibility for each to work so that the world becomes a community of brothers who respect each other, accept each other in one's diversity, and takes care of one another.”

I still think Pope Francis is secretly Brethren. (See my May 2013 editorial.) His statement here embodies perfectly that aspect of who Brethren are when we are at our best: listening to and caring for one another with love and respect, hearing

when we're at our best, we disagree not just with a grudging tolerance for those who hold differing viewpoints, but *also with respect.*

pretty well: we can hold different perspectives and still be Brethren. I know—it seems obvious. But some readers find that a little hard to comprehend.


Yes, Brethren disagree. (What a surprise!) But when we're at our best, we disagree not just with a grudging tolerance for those who hold differing viewpoints, but also with respect. There's never any question that our theological “opponents” are every bit as Brethren as we are. (Boneheaded, perhaps, but still Brethren!) To me, that's one of the Brethren's most admirable characteristics. It is an outlook that represents maturity, grace, and civility.

But leaving the discussion just because one disagrees with

one another and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, trying to understand the different perspectives within our community.

One of the best vehicles we have for doing this is MESSENGER, and I encourage you to use it. Write a letter. Pitch an article. A quick and easy way to do this is to send an e-mail to messenger@brethren.org or rmiller@brethren.org. Or drop a letter into the mail, addressed to MESSENGER at 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120.

That's it. That's all you have to do to join in the discussion. Please keep reading, write when you have a chance, and by all means, encourage your friends and family to subscribe!

Thanks. I look forward to hearing from you! 

COMING IN MARCH: Rooted, but not root-bound: On being Brethren today



2013 Annual Conference
photo by Debbie Surin

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"We could really feel the Spirit of God moving in our midst at our tables, in the Exhibit Hall and in everything that happened."

—Todd Eastis

"...joining other brothers and sisters in Christ who are in this denomination to worship and grow to live together, and to realize we're not alone in our various locations but we are one body in Christ."

—Marcus Harden



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LeadingAge

Food for thought and questions for discussion to help individuals, classes, and small groups use MESSENGER as a focus for study and reflection.

connecting with the content

Read scriptures on peace that connect with the theme of the World Council of Churches 10th Assembly, *God of Life, Lead Us to Justice and Peace*.

- The Beatitudes in **Matthew 5:1-12**.
- Other sections of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, particularly **Matthew 5:38-48**.
- The Ten Commandments, **Deuteronomy 5:6-21**.
- The exhortation to "do justice and to love kindness," in **Micah 6:6-8**.
- God's call for the prophet to go to the enemy, in the **book of Jonah**.
- Jesus saving the woman caught in adultery in **John 8:2-11**.

what other scriptures connect with the theme?

Questions for Discussion

1. What is the world council of churches Assembly? How often does it occur? Who attends? Who represented the Brethren at the assembly?

2. In "A Voice for Peace" (pp. 8-11) and "Richer Together Than Apart" (pp. 10-13) what reasons are given for the Church of the Brethren to participate in the WCC? Why is it important for Brethren delegates to go to the assembly? On a sheet of newsprint, note each reason given in the two articles. Then, if you think of other reasons, add them to the list. What does the Church of the Brethren receive from the WCC? How does our denomination benefit from participating in the WCC? And what do Brethren have to give to the other Christians and churches who participate in the WCC?

3. What is the concept of "just peace," and how did it play a role at the WCC Assembly? Read the "Statement on the Way of Just Peace" at www.ckkoumene.org/en/resources/documents/assembly/2013-busan/adopted-documents-statements/the-way-of-just-peace. What affirmation do you have for this statement? How does it connect with your faith? Does the statement raise any questions for you, from your experience of Christianity and the church?

4. Why does general secretary Stan Noffsinger call this a "moment in the sun" for the peace churches? How have peace church concerns come to the fore in the worldwide church? Are there both pros and cons to this development, and what are they?

what concerns does Noffsinger raise about the current prominence of peace church concerns? How would you answer the biggest challenge he identifies? How do we as Brethren around the world continue to speak for the oppressed? Divide a sheet of newsprint into two columns, and on the left list places of oppression around the world, on the right, brainstorm ideas about what your congregation and/or the Church of the Brethren denomination can do to address them.

5. In "A Conscientious Objector in the war on cancer" (pp. 14-17) Audrey deCoursey describes her discomfort with militarized language in discussions of cancer. What are her concerns? Why is a warfare metaphor used against abstract or nonhuman targets distracting, misleading, or unhelpful to healing? In the case of cancer, why is it "the enemy that is part of us"? Do you agree with deCoursey's argument, and why or why not? Brainstorm peaceful language that we may use to talk about cancer.

6. "Has our resistance to change caused us to get in God's way?" asks Chris Keating in the Bible Study on pp. 18-19. Read the story of Peter's call to go to Cornelius in Acts 10-11, then answer Keating's question in light of the story about the early church's discovery of what it means to get out of God's way. Have you had an experience of learning to love foods you never used to eat? If so, what did that experience teach you? Did it lead you to open up in other areas of life as well?

7. Think of an event or experience in which your church learned to accept or even like things it never used to. What was that experience, and what did your church learn? How has your congregation changed because of that event or experience? Write down that learning, in only one or two sentences if you can. Then make an attractive poster to display that learning, and put the poster up on the wall of your study room or hang it in another place in your church building. Use it as a focus for meditation, praying that God will offer more opportunities to "get out of the way" so that the Holy Spirit may move.

MESSENGER is the church of the Brethren magazine published by Brethren Press, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Yearly subscriptions are \$17.50 individual, \$14.50 church club or org., \$1.25 per month student. For subscriptions contact Diane Ströbeck at 800-323-8039 or messengersubscriptions@brethren.org.