

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2022 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



A shared faith in Christ,
a shared vision for peace

***"Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob,
whose hope is in the LORD their God."
- Psalm 146:5, NIV***

On Giving Tuesday, November 29, we celebrate our hope in God and how the Lord sustains the work of the Church of the Brethren.



Join the celebration at www.brethren.org/givingtuesday

Photos by the Office of Global Mission, Brethren Volunteer Service, and Glenn Riegel for National Youth Conference

***"I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds."
- Psalm 9:1***

Even as the seasons change, we give thanks to the Lord wholeheartedly for you and for the wonderful deeds God reveals through our shared missions and ministries.

Have a very blessed Thanksgiving!



**Church of the Brethren
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**Your gifts do great things!
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on the cover

At the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, morning and evening prayer services were held in a large tent.

Cover photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Marginal notes

Anabaptism at 500 is a monumental project of our friends at MennoMedia, the publishing house for Mennonite Church USA and Mennonite Church Canada. They have invited folks from a wide range of other groups with Anabaptist roots to join in.

One part of the project—an Anabaptist study Bible—is impressive all by itself. At a small conference in August, I got a front-row seat for a piece of the planning.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

To be honest, if not for this project I couldn't have told you that 1525 was the birth year of Anabaptism. The Brethren movement wasn't born until 1708. But now I know that these spiritual ancestors of the first Brethren will be celebrated in 2025.

What's an Anabaptist Bible? No, it's not a new translation, which would be quite an undertaking indeed. In this Bible, each book will carry an introduction by an Anabaptist scholar, including some from the Church of the Brethren, and there will be other resources in the front.

Especially ambitious is the involvement of 500 local Bible study groups whose input will be used as marginal notes. In this way, the Bible will embody a hallmark of Anabaptism: lay people gathering around the Scriptures to discern God's word together.

The conference was a place for 40 people from a range of backgrounds to learn about the plan, hear a Bible scholar speak about our Christ-centered approach to reading the Scriptures, offer feedback about the process, and inspire small groups across our denominations to join in Bible study. You can sign up your Church of the Brethren group at www.anabaptismat500.com.

My mind thoroughly enjoyed the lectures, presentations, and table discussion. But what my heart remembers is the racial and cultural array in the room—people who are Black, Asian, Indigenous, and Hispanic, and white people of European heritage. (There were so many Asians that we had to rush outside for a celebratory group picture.)

I resonated with the guidance offered by one of my new friends, an immigrant with no traditional Mennonite pedigree. Her advice was to focus more on today than on 1525, that is, more on who we are becoming than who we used to be.

"Usually, European Mennonites are the authoritative ones," Hyejung Yum explained to *Anabaptist World* magazine. "Now it's time to change that. If our people's interpretation is included in this Bible, it will shape our Anabaptist identity in a new way."

Wendy McFadden

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“You know your way around the faith. Now do what you’ve been taught. School’s out; quit studying the subject and start *living* it! And let your living spill over into thanksgiving.” —Colossians 2:7b (The Message)

“Life in abundance comes only through great love.” —author Elbert Hubbard

“The test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have little.”
—former President Franklin D. Roosevelt

“I believe that God gives you hopes and dreams in a size that’s too large, so you have something to grow into.” —author Lynn A. Robinson

DID YOU KNOW?

The cornucopia (Latin for “horn of abundance” or “horn of plenty”) dates back several millennia, originating in Greek mythology. In more modern usage, it has come to be associated with Thanksgiving and the abundance of the harvest—most often a horn-shaped wicker basket overflowing with fruits and vegetables and other bounty. It’s also included in the state seal of North Carolina and on the flag and state seal of Idaho.

Sources: AgAmerica.com, atlasobscura.com, countryliving.com.

Still making our mark on the world

The now-familiar logo of the Church of the Brethren—a cross with flowing lines and a quarter-circle at its lower-right corner—made its debut 35 years ago, in 1987.

In a June 1987 MESSENGER article, Wendy McFadden introduced readers to the new logo, which had been approved by the denomination’s General Board in March of that year. “It’s no easy task to summarize the Brethren with a few strokes of the pen,” she wrote. “But that was the assignment given to design consultants when the

General Board commissioned a logo for use in the Church of the Brethren.”

She said the task was to create an official logo or mark that felt “Brethren” but was “not so literal that it will wear out in five years.” The result drew together the cross with a partially defined circle representing “the whole world into which we are sent by Christ” and the wave of water symbolizing new life demonstrated through baptism, foot-washing, and service.

“The Church of the Brethren does not need a logo to preserve its identity or to survive,”



McFadden observed. “But there’s a noteworthy relationship between public identity and witness. A church that goes unrecognized has a diminished witness.”

A WORLD OF FAITH

Can you unscramble the names of these cities that have hosted the World Council of Churches Assembly, its largest gathering? As a hint, the country where the city is located is included in parentheses. Answers are below. Read more about the WCC and the most recent assembly beginning on page 7.

MEATDRAMS (The Netherlands)
STONENAV (USA)
WNE HIDEL (India)
SAPLAPU (Sweden)

RAINBIO (Kenya)
ACOVERUVN (Canada)
BRANRACE (Australia)
RAHEAR (Zimbabwe)

TROOP GLAREE (Brazil)
SNUBA (South Korea)
HEARSLURK (Germany)



ANSWERS: Amsterdam, The Netherlands (1948); Evanston, Ill., USA (1954); New Delhi, India (1961); Uppsala, Sweden (1968); Nairobi, Kenya (1975); Vancouver, Canada (1983); Canberra, Australia (1991); Harare, Zimbabwe (1998); Porto Alegre, Brazil (2006); Busan, South Korea (2013); Karlsruhe, Germany (2022).

A little creativity goes a long way for Whitestone

Whitestone Church of the Brethren is a rural church in north-central Washington state with an average attendance of 10-15 people. The neighborhood church had not

hosted a Vacation Bible School (VBS) for more than 20 years due to changing demographics.

Then, this year, several young families moved into the area and asked about VBS. Having only a few people to put it on, the congregation searched for a family-based format that could bring family groups to the church to play together. The church patterned family theme nights after the David C. Cook “Zipped to Gather” curriculum, hosting three themed evening events—Water World/Living Water, Retro Field Day/Run the Good Race, and Carnival/Joy—where families attended together for fun and reflection.

The church provided games each week according to the evening’s theme, followed by songs and snacks. There was a talk time integrating the games



Sally Hylton

and biblical principles. The experience was received with enthusiasm and good participation from neighboring families and churches.



Sally Hylton

Woodbury brightens its building with new stained glass window

Woodbury (Pa.) Church of the Brethren has received a new stained-glass piece made by local artists, according to an article in the *Huntingdon Daily News*.

“Dion Dillon and CJ Ray of Djday’s Stained Glass in Tyrone completed the commissioned piece this spring after approximately two years,” the article said. “I was thrilled to death in the end,” Dillon told the paper. “It’s the first stained glass window they have.”

The article reported that “an elementary school teacher local to Woodbury drew up an idea of the elements the church wanted in the window, then Dillon and Ray turned those ideas into a pattern they could work with, chose colors and glass, and cut pieces including the tiny individual ovals to create the wheat grain.” The interior window will hang between the vestibule and the sanctuary.



Courtesy of Woodbury Church of the Brethren

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.



Linda Evans

Fairview renovates to grow its ministry

Fairview Church of the Brethren, located in rural Cordova, Md., recently underwent a \$1.5 million renovation.

“The purpose of this renovation was to add more space, a baptismal pool, a larger kitchen and dining area, classrooms, elevator, and more,” said Bruce Marvel, contractor for the renovations and a member of Fairview.

Marvel’s familiarity with the historical significance of the church came in handy because it enabled him to retain the look and feel of “before and after.” Other members of the church also played a significant role in the project. Money was and still is being raised internally through a “matching funds” campaign that continues to reduce the debt.

Pastor Bob Davis, who was a member of the congregation before he was called to be its leader, said the changes have been the hope of many members for years.

“To have undertaken this renovation when we did, with the COVID-19 virus at full effect, and at a time when a lot of

churches are losing members, was something incredible. It truly is a blessing,” Davis said. “I feel so blessed to have been part of it all. For many of the older members, this had been a long-time vision. It has been spiritually uplifting.”

John Earl Hutchison, 82, is one of the oldest congregants and has attended Fairview for close to 75 years. “I like (the new church). A lot of money was spent on the renovations,” said Hutchison. “I hope we will grow as a church.”

Fairview, originally named for its “fair view” of the beautiful countryside, celebrated its 129th anniversary Oct. 1.

—John P. Evans III

Baptist Brethren in 1871. Renamed the Church of the Brethren in 1908, the charter as a separate congregation was granted in 1922.

The year-long celebration has included former pastors preaching, the reorganization of extensive photo albums, a historical display, a signature quilt of all those attending during the year, collecting items for Church World Service school kits, Mother’s Day and Father’s Day tributes, a historical booklet, a catered dinner and hymn sing, and a “Living Last Supper” drama at Easter.—Margaret Behnke

Pennsylvania bridge honors long-term Brethren politician

Altoona’s 17th Street bridge has officially been named in memory of the late Rick Geist, a long-term Pennsylvania politician who served in the state House of Representatives. Geist died in 2019. He and his wife, Jeanie, who survives him, were both raised in Altoona First Church of the Brethren. He held the 79th District seat for 34 years.

Jeanie Geist said her husband had a “servant’s heart,” according to the *Altoona Mirror*, and “was more focused on others than on himself.” Among his other projects, Geist was “instrumental in founding the Tour de Toona bike race and conceived of and contributed to development of Penn State Altoona’s four-year Railroad Engineering Degree program,” according to the article.



A century of service and ministry at Waynesboro

Waynesboro (Pa.) Church of the Brethren has been celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2022 with a variety of events.

Waynesboro was one of many churches coming from the Antietam (Md.) congregation, which was well-established by the 1750s. The present property was purchased by the German



Courtesy of Curryville Church of the Brethren

Dunker donkeys: Pastor Chris Heinlein of Curryville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was featured by the Morrisons Cove Herald newspaper for giving a home to donkeys Ted and Fred. Heinlein and his wife, Kathy, took in the unusual white donkeys after their previous owners were no longer able to care for them. The article also noted that the congregation offers an ice cream meet-up each Wednesday evening, but no word on whether the donkeys get a scoop.

Six decades on holy ground

Camp Emmaus' Bill and Betty Hare receive a bittersweet farewell

by Walt Wiltschek

Near the back of Camp Emmaus' 97-acre property in Mount Morris, Ill., stands a grove of towering black walnut trees. It's a project that Bill Hare began decades ago, part of a healthy forest management plan that also delivers regular income for the camp.

"Everything reaches maturity," Bill says. "Trees that are mature are harvested—for money for the camp coffers—and that allows the younger trees around them to grow. Trees are like a garden; it's a long-term crop. You plant tomatoes in the spring, and you can harvest them in summer. You plant trees, make sure they grow straight, and in 60, 80, 100 years they are harvested as a mature crop."

Bill has served as manager of the camp along with his wife, Betty, for an incredible (and unmatched) 58 years. And after all those years of nurturing growth, Bill has realized that it's time for him to make way for some younger trees, too, figuratively speaking. The passion is still there, but his body can no longer keep up—sapped of energy and strength by medical issues earlier this year.

The couple will be moving to an apartment at the nearby Pinecrest Community in the coming months, and the camp board made sure to send them off in style. On the afternoon of Sunday, Sept. 11, more than 250 people rolled into the camp to say thank you and wish them well.

"Our desire was to not only honor Bill and Betty, but also to give all those who had known them through the years an opportunity to visit with them and replay those stories from long ago," said Pat Ball, a board member from Dixon, Ill., who helped to plan the event. "Bill and Betty have been the one constant of camp for decades. They have been shining examples of stewardship and of God's leadership at work."

A long line formed in the lodge at times, waiting to greet them as they sat in special chairs amid photos and decorations and beamed in the presence of so many friends, former staff, and family members. Guests came from eight states, as far away as Kansas and Tennessee.

"It was a wonderful, wonderful afternoon, bittersweet but



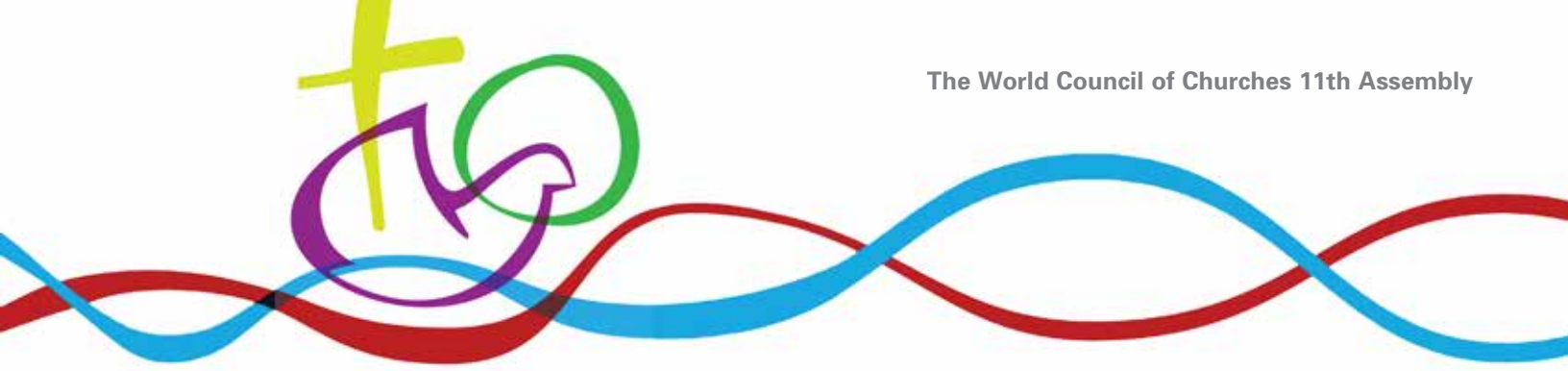
very good," Betty said. "The board did a lot of work to make it nice. People were there that we had no idea would come. That made it extra special."

Those attending covered a long span of history. The Hares have been part of the camp for six generations. Bill has a black-and-white photo of himself around 10 years old standing with his father on the roof of one of the camp's first cabins after helping to build it. His father used to bring his grandfather to camp to fish. Now Bill and Betty's great-grandchildren run around when they visit.

In between, Bill met Betty, and they went to serve on the mission field in Nigeria. Then they came back to northwestern Illinois where Bill taught science and Betty served as a nurse. One summer while Betty was nurse for a week at the camp, Bill came along and started helping where he could. The young couple was soon asked to come serve as camp managers. They've been there ever since. Bill said they felt something was missing after they came back from Nigeria, and serving in camp ministry "filled an empty spot."

"We felt all these years it really was a ministry, not only to the camp but to the people—especially the youth that would come. It's just been a wonderful experience helping people to find and recognize Jesus and God in an outdoor setting. We heard time after time over the years how meaningful camp was to the people who were here. It's a set-aside, special place. I've talked with many people, and they agree that when you come through the gate things change. This is holy ground, and people can feel it."

And all the seeds that have been planted there over the past six decades, literal and figurative, will keep on growing in that sacred soil.



A shared faith in Christ, a shared vision for peace

by Elizabeth Bidgood Enders

*“And with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”
(Colossians 3:16b-17, NRSVue).*

As I reflect on my experiences at the World Council of Churches 11th Assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, I am filled with gratitude. I am grateful to have been called to serve as the Church of the Brethren delegate and to have the support of family and congregation to be able to attend. I am grateful for the companionship of others representing the Church of the Brethren and Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). I am grateful for the many people I met from multiple traditions and countries, some of whom have become friends and, I hope, long-lasting contacts.

Before we arrived in Karlsruhe, Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford and I encountered travelers from Nigeria, Kenya, and

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Agnes Abuom leads the assembly as moderator of the WCC Central Committee (shown here onscreen during a business session), assisted by several vice moderators and acting general secretary Ioan Sauca. From the Anglican Church of Kenya, Abuom was the first woman and the first African ever to serve as assembly moderator.

(Below) The opening prayer service of the assembly. Morning and evening prayers were held outdoors under a large tent.





The Church of the Brethren group from Nigeria and the United States: (from left) Joel S. Billi, president of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria and EYN's delegate; Nate Hosler, director of the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, advisor to the Church of the Brethren delegation; Anthony Ndamsai, vice president of EYN, advisor to the EYN delegation; Liz Bidgood Enders, delegate for the Church of the Brethren; Koni Ishaya, who has been working for EYN in the area of peacebuilding, attending as an international theological student; David Steele, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren; Jeff Carter, president of Bethany Theological Seminary, completing a term on the WCC Central Committee; and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, director of News Services for the Church of the Brethren.

Zimbabwe who were also on their way to the assembly. As we saw people wearing clerical collars and other religious garb, it seemed as if we met delegates and other representatives everywhere we turned. As we came closer to Karlsruhe, it was clear that the city was expecting us and excited for us to come. We saw welcome signs with the assembly logo along the streets and on billboards. A flag with the assembly logo waved from the top of the Karlsruhe Palace, at the center of the city, where one night a special light show was held in honor of the assembly.

The peace church voice

I am grateful for the opportunity to have served the church on a deeper level by representing the historic peace churches on the public issues committee. Representatives from the Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers gathered before the assembly began, and several times during the assembly. Moravians joined us during these gatherings as well.

Christ's love moves the world to reconciliation and unity

by Nathan Hosler

A seminary student from Hong Kong. A pastor in the Salvation Army in northern England. A pastor working in women's ministry, from a Pentecostal church in Nigeria. An activist from Fiji working on climate justice for the regional council of churches. Someone who worked with the White Fathers Catholic order for decades, now working and living by the site of the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem. A young Greek Orthodox monk working in the finance office in Greece, originally from Pennsylvania, dressed in traditional black robe, beard, and long hair in a bun (we did this before hipsters, he said).

There were about 20 of us, each from wildly different churches and contexts, and we met daily for sharing and reflection at the 11th Assembly of

the World Council of Churches.

In the mornings and late afternoon, the entire assembly, about four thousand participants, met under a gigantic canopy. Song, prayer, litanies, and scripture reading flowed between languages and styles. Armenian chants of *Kyrie eleison* ("Lord have mercy"), to Portuguese reggae-inflected tunes, to

Zulu traditional songs, to European hymns sung in Korean—if not for the massive amount of coordination required, and months of Zoom calls across virtually every time zone, it could have been Pentecost. (Incidentally, the coordinator was a German pastor whose brother has worked at the Brethren Nutrition Program at

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Carter and Hosler eating lunch together.

Peace church influence has long been recognized at the World Council of Churches. Programs of peace and justice have shaped assembly gatherings and themes. Although the peace churches are not as large as many other bodies in the WCC, our voices have been respected at all levels.

It was because of this influence and respect that space was opened for peace church representation on several committees, even after official representatives had been announced. Beyond what I would have otherwise experienced as a delegate, participation in the public issues committee brought me into deeper contact with about 30 other delegates working on multiple issues to be presented to the business sessions.

Statement on Ukraine

I had a particularly close working relationship with the subgroup presenting a paper on “War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region.” Among the other members



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Bidgood Enders presents a paper on “War in Ukraine, Peace and Justice in the European Region,” which also addressed the migrant crisis. She served on the writing team for the paper.

Washington City Church of the Brethren through Brethren Volunteer Service.)

These times of worship and sharing were held under the assembly theme, “Christ’s love moves the world to reconciliation and unity,” with delegates and participants from, and beyond, the 352 member churches of the WCC. The work was toward greater visible unity among Christians, and joint mission. This work of peacemaking was both between and within churches, as well as in the broader world.

That they may be one

In John 17 we read what has been called Jesus’ high priestly prayer, set during Holy Week. Jesus, having entered Jerusalem on a donkey as a triumphant and peaceable king, challenged assumptions of rule and power. Having washed his disciples’ feet, he challenged notions of leadership and power through service. Immediately after this, Jesus is betrayed and executed by the empire and the ruling classes.

The passage pivots to the relationship of the disciples to Jesus and to each other. The disciples, having come to know and believe Jesus, are called



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Bidgood Enders (at right) meets with a small group as a delegate.

into ministry with Jesus. They have received a gift and a calling from Jesus. While Jesus’ departure from the world is imminent, the disciples will remain. Since they have become one with Jesus, they are one with God. As such, they continue the work of Jesus—participating in the healing work of God.

All mine are yours, and yours are mine, and I have been glorified in them. And now I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to

you. Holy Father, protect them in your name that you have given me, so that they may be one, as we are one (John 17:10-11, NRSVue).

“[T]he basic aim of Jesus’ prayer is ‘that they may all be one’ . . . and by extension the unity of humankind,” writes Petros Vassiliadis, an Orthodox biblical scholar from Greece (“John in an Orthodox Perspective,” *Global Bible Commentary*, 417).

Gifts of grace, life, and unity that



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Young adults urge climate action at the WCC Assembly.

of this group were a Nigerian archbishop of the Church of the Lord (Prayer Fellowship Worldwide), who was the newly called WCC president for the Africa region; a Russian Orthodox Church priest; a lay member of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, originally from Belarus, but now living in Germany and working on human rights issues; and a WCC staff member from Germany.

The subgroup, like the larger public issues committee, was diverse in background and perspective. Because the WCC works from a consensus model in affirming all business decisions, it was a challenge to work from a draft statement to create a paper that all could support. Diversity of perspectives and page limitations required each of us to set aside pieces we might have wanted to include, and to focus on what was essential and mutually acceptable.

Listening to the other members of the subgroup, especially the ones from Russia and Belarus, gave me a greater awareness of the complexities of seeking peace amid conflict in Ukraine. Stories were shared that helped me to hear

Jesus prayed for are for the disciples and those who would follow, but the gifts of God are never simply for our consumption. They are gifts freely given and freely received and freely given again. This is not a false unity, or a unity based on glossing over of differences. While a gift, it is also work. However, it is good work to be done joyfully. God's gift of peace is also a call to peacemaking. The gift is also a responsibility.

Jesus also addressed the disciples' state of being in the world, not of the world, and for the world. Our call to peacemaking is worldly. While we are called to be and act differently, our call is deeply connected and engaged to what goes on around us. We are called to truth seeking and truth telling. We are called to repentance and community discernment.

They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. . . . I in them and you in me, that they may become completely one (John 17:16-18 and 23a, NRSVue).

This work of peace

The first WCC Assembly met in 1948 in Amsterdam under the theme “Man’s Disorder and God’s Design”—not long after the world wars in which nations and people substantially identifying as Christian killed each other in vast numbers. Under this shadow of a failure of Christian unity, the statement of the first assembly was, “War is contrary to the will of God.”

This year, there were several resolutions brought to the assembly for consideration and approval. Liz Bidgood Enders, the Church of the Brethren delegate, was added to the Public Issues Committee as a voice from the historic peace churches. She helped

write a resolution on Russia’s war in Ukraine. Members of both delegations, from the Ukrainian churches and the Russian Orthodox Church, raised concerns and objections, but the statement was eventually adopted.

A resolution on Palestine and Israel also saw significant disagreement, focused on whether or not the situation could be called “apartheid,” as has been stated by Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. The German Protestant churches were opposed, at least in part because of their history of complicity with the Holocaust. However, this pitted them against the requests of the historic churches of and in Palestine. In the end, the passage on



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

seemingly simple differences in a broader context. In the end, we were able to come to consensus in the subgroup, bring the paper to the committee, and work out further differences there to bring it to the assembly as a whole.

The same process worked with other papers and subgroups. Conflicts and peoples I barely knew, aside from reading brief news stories, took on greater depth as people spoke passionately about how policies affected them personally. Discussion ranged from what terminology we used for human rights challenges in the Middle East, to the importance of self-determination when speaking of the plight of people of West Papua in relation to Indonesia. I now not only have a greater awareness of the issues, but I also now know faces, names, and stories of people who live through these struggles every day.

Carter (second from left) speaks during a presentation by the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs. He was a member of the CCIA during his term on the WCC Central Committee.

Shared faith and vision

Under the theme “Christ’s love moves the world to unity and reconciliation,” we came together with a shared faith that in Christ, we hold a shared vision for peace. Beyond consensus, we sought unity and were amazed at the generally harmonious atmosphere we were able to create. At the delegate level, we passed the statement on the war in

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



apartheid was modified to say that while some churches support this analysis, some do not.

This work of peace, which necessarily includes justice, is a process and an invitation to ongoing prayer, discernment, and difficult work.

Although we had beautiful prayer services at the assembly, we never celebrated communion as a body. Indeed, even naming these services as “morning and evening prayer” was an indicator of theological division. Given the centrality of the Eucharist for many churches, it was a glaring absence and a sign that our Christian unity is not yet complete.

After the assembly, my family joined me in Germany for a vacation. We concluded our trip in Schwarzenau, the site of the beginning of what we now know as the Church of the Brethren. As we drove in along the Eder River, many of the hills overlooking the river were bare from logging dead trees or still covered with dead pines. A very dry two years, which mirror the impacts of climate change around the world, have pushed beetles to burrow into the bark, killing the trees . . . a sign of our collective connectedness and need for change.

After visiting the historic home of Brethren founder Alexander Mack Sr., we went down


to the river. In the waters of baptism in the Eder, the first Brethren committed themselves to lives shaped by Jesus through discipleship. They sought to radically follow the Spirit in prayer and reading of scripture together, in nonconformity and simplicity, in resistance to the militarized logic and allegiances of the ruling powers. They baptized as a sign of Christ’s peace.

How are you called to the struggle for peace?

Jesus’ prayer for his disciples is that we would be one with God and with one another. With one another not only in our congregation, or denomination, but with all followers of Jesus—with all Christians. This unity is not only for us but for the world—that all things would be reconciled in God and through God. This is not a sentimental hope that brushes aside injustice but a hope that must work through the hard

edges of historic trauma and harmful policies both in the church and the state. This requires truth telling and reparations. It requires overturning, dismantling, and healing.

Death is overcome.
War is overcome.
This is a present reality through the Spirit.
A future hope and promise in God’s creative power.
It is our calling and vocation today.
It is not yet fully visible—often painfully so.
It is a blessing and gift to be received but not controlled.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9, NRSVue). 

Nathan Hosler directs the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy for the Church of the Brethren. At the WCC Assembly, he served in the role of advisor to the Church of the Brethren delegate.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

Groups of young adults “take over” the microphones on the business floor in an attempt to call for more young adult leadership in the WCC and its member churches.

Ukraine, as well as “Seeking Justice and Peace for All in the Middle East,” “The Living Planet: Seeking a Just and Sustainable Global Community,” and “The Things that Make for Peace: Moving the World to Reconciliation and Unity.”

We also passed four brief statements on Syriac-Aramaic genocide, consequences of the 2020 Narono-Karabakh War, ending war and building peace on the Korean Peninsula, and the situation in West Papua.

These statements may be read in their entirety at www.oikoumene.org/resources/documents.

Although the assembly lasted from Aug. 31 to Sept. 8, there wasn’t enough time to process all the public issues or

to resolve all the challenges the global church faces, including but not limited to a global climate crisis, racial justice, justice for indigenous peoples, ongoing world health concerns, gifts and challenges of technology, full inclusion of people with disabilities, and fair representation of women and youth at all levels. We named the issues before us, and there were invitations and opportunities to sit down for a meal or coffee break and begin to talk about them on an individual level.

Statements on confronting racism and indigenous peoples that were completed and approved by the public issues committee have been approved for release by the newly called WCC Central Committee. The other texts will be presented to the executive committee in November.

A well of living water

In my home group and ecumenical conversations, I met and got to know people from Jamaica, China, Norway, the Netherlands, Mexico, England, South Africa, Indonesia, and other locations.

As one group addressed issues of marginalization, I heard how this term is understood and experienced in multiple contexts, some unique to a person’s country and culture and some common to all.

Meanwhile, morning and evening prayers (worship services) shared daily themes through scriptures, songs, and prayers in multiple languages, with multiple traditions represented. I wouldn’t have thought a tuba would naturally accompany conga drums, but as I heard them blended with other instruments, a magnificent choir, and the participation of those who gathered, they seemed perfect together. The morning services never failed to set a spiritual high note for the day. Evening prayer services, presented by different traditions each night, gave opportunities to reflect

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



on the variety of gifts and ways of experiencing God's presence and holiness.

The days were packed, and there wasn't a lot of time for rest, but I continue to draw from the well of living water that was as plentiful as water bottle-filling stations throughout the venue. I am filled with gratitude for so much of what I experienced, from plenaries to business sessions, small groups, worship, focused conversations, and even the tram rides each day where we could recognize assembly participants by the badges we wore.

Shukran, danke, thank you

However, a brief but meaningful encounter happened on the fringes of the assembly. I had a late meeting on the final night, and was concerned about riding the tram and walking back to the hotel alone in the rain and dark. I had been given information about taking a taxi, but I wasn't clear about where to find one.

I found a security guard who was watching over the exhibit tents outside the main gathering spaces. (Security checked bags every time we entered the venue.) I asked him for help, and it was immediately obvious that the man did not speak more than a few words of English. German was not his first language either, but it was better than what I had retained in school. However, a translation app on his phone allowed us to communicate.

The security guard called a taxi for me, and he waited until it came. I could see that the translation on his end was Arabic, and I said to him, "*Shukran*" (thank you), a phrase I learned while on a Community Peacemaker Teams delegation in Israel/Palestine some years ago. He smiled and asked if I knew Arabic. I shook my head no, but it opened space for him to share that he was from Syria and was studying to be in the medical field in Germany. His name was Mikael, and this job was helping to pay for school.

He then said he was Muslim and how it was ironic that he was working security for a Christian gathering. As we were trying to communicate, he said (through the translation), "My heart understands what you are saying, but I can't express a response in words." A short time later, the taxi arrived, and he made sure the driver could get me where I needed to go and that the fare was reasonable.

I saw him briefly the next morning, and there was mutual joy in seeing each other. His assistance meant so much to me, but it was his words about the understanding heart that encapsulated what I experienced at the assem-



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

General secretary David Steele in conversation with EYN president Joel S. Billi (right) and vice president Anthony Ndamsai.

bly. While English was the primary common language, it was not the first language for most participants. Many relied on translation devices for in-depth communication. However, simple phrases like "thank you" in a variety of languages (*danke* in German), especially said to staff, go a long way to bridge differences of language and background. Gratitude and a desire to recognize God's presence in each person created a sense of unity despite differences.

The gifts of the assembly will live in my heart throughout my life, affirmed as I continue to share stories and revisit photos and videos of my time there.

From the prepared message of the assembly, available to all member churches, is this shared vision of unity in Christ:

Meeting together in Germany, we learn the cost of war and the possibility of reconciliation.


Hearing the word of God together, we recognize our common calling.

Listening and talking together, we become closer neighbors.

Lamenting together, we open ourselves to each other's pain and suffering.

Working together, we consent to common action.

Celebrating together, we delight in each other's joys and hopes.

Praying together, we discover the richness of our traditions and the pain of our divisions. 

Elizabeth Bidgood Enders is pastor of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa.

Prayer during a meeting of the historic peace churches.



Christ Breaks the Rifle, woodcut by Otto Pankok

THE THREAT OF NONVIOLENCE

by Tim Harvey

Sitting across the dining room table from some persons who had recently stopped attending our church, I knew there were concerns. What I wasn't expecting to hear, though, was, "Pastor, I think we worship different gods. My God is a god who *fights*."

This was the third conversation in three weeks that I'd had with someone who was unsure they wanted to be associated with a church that teaches war is sin. And even though I've encountered these concerns before, having several of these conversations in such a short period of time caused me to wonder what it is about nonviolence that people find so threatening. Is the belief that we would be safer with fewer weapons and a greater investment in peace, justice, and reconciliation really a reason to get angry, or even to leave a church?

A matter of spiritual formation

I do not believe the issues here are ones of worshipping different gods; this is a matter of spiritual formation, not heresy. What spiritual beliefs and practices shape our relationship with God, one another, and our enemies? As in

all things, there is a choice to be made—but it's a choice that is easy to overlook.

I like to tell people who are new to the Brethren that our theological convictions aren't that complicated; we try to do the things Jesus said to do, and not do the things Jesus said not to do. When Brethren first began studying scripture together, they read that we are to love God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength; love our neighbors as ourselves; and love our enemies. Looking around at a society that was still dealing with the outcomes of the destructive Thirty Years War—a war in which Christians of one nation marched, plundered, and killed Christians of another nation—Alexander Mack Sr. and the other Brethren couldn't figure out how to follow Jesus and also be willing to kill. They recognized that there was a choice to be made about which spiritual values would shape their discipleship.

Christian spiritual formation shapes us in *particular* ways, and it is just those particularities that make discipleship costly. In a world where there will always be other, more culturally acceptable, options, the particularity of Christian spiritual formation challenges our tendency to prefer spiritual generalities. It is much easier to affirm

“ Nonviolence challenges us to consider how many violent acts might be avoided if we trusted Jesus enough to side with the most vulnerable. . . . ”

inspirational statements such as “God moves mountains” and “prayer changes things.” But in a world where we are in relationship with both one another and with enemies, do generic statements like these really help guide our choices on real-world challenges? I don’t believe they do.

Rejecting “spiritual stupidity”

Nonviolence is threatening because the particularity of this kind of spiritual formation challenges the temptation to spiritual stupidity. There is a kind of stupidity that causes us to become so caught up in the moment that we forget to think deeply about the context of our beliefs and actions, never challenging what either the crowd or the culture says is acceptable. In the case of nonviolence, one symptom of spiritual stupidity is the acceptance of slogans and ideologies in the place of substance and relationship.

Consider the outcomes of believing that righteous violence will overcome unrighteous violence and lead to peace. Such thinking leads our nation to invest billions of dollars annually in military spending—more than the total of the next nine countries combined—without considering how many bridges (both literal and metaphorical) this might build, or how much health care, education, or international goodwill those dollars might purchase instead.

Such thinking also tempts us to believe slogans like “an armed society is a polite society” or “the only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun,” fear-based ideas designed to increase gun sales in a time of rising violence in our communities. But neighborliness will always be more effectively achieved through the depth of our front-porch conversations, not the size of our sidearms.

Nonviolence actively threatens a spiritual stupidity that leads us to become the evil we deplore. Walter Wink says it this way:

The very act of hating something draws it to us. Since our hate is usually a direct response to an evil done to us, our hate almost invariably causes us to respond in the terms already laid down by the enemy. Unaware of what is happening, we turn into the very thing we oppose (*Engaging the Powers*, p. 195).

An active nonviolence

But even for those who accept the truth that Jesus teaches nonviolence, this spiritual formation remains threatening as it reveals places we have not yet learned to trust God and to fully be God’s representatives in this world.

There is no question that we live in a violent world. That violence—and our response to it—must be taken

seriously. Arguments against nonviolence often focus on situations where someone invades our space (home or nation) and attempts harm against us, our family, or our property. These situations are decidedly rare, but they do happen and are reasons why people make different choices about nonviolence.

But these hypothetical arguments can also become a way of avoiding the harder work of understanding the root causes of violence in our communities. In a world where evildoers exist, we should reject a spiritual formation that allows our commitment to nonviolence to remain a passivism that rejects violence but does little or nothing to resolve injustices that are often the cause of such violence.


Nonviolence challenges us to consider how many violent acts might be avoided if we trusted Jesus enough to side with the most vulnerable members of the community while simultaneously challenging the economic and political systems that keep people trapped in generational poverty. Robert Johansen writes:

The same love for neighbor that leads pacifists to non-killing should also motivate them to intense efforts to end poverty . . . and to promote justice throughout the world (*Lines, Places, and Heritage*, p. 31).

The commitment to a spiritual formation that loves God, neighbor, and enemy calls us to engage with people in communities where violence is more typically seen, walking alongside those persons who are victims of violence, while also challenging the systems and institutions that keep people trapped there.

A threat and a promise

Even though I disagree with those persons who are so threatened by nonviolence that they no longer wish to be associated with the Church of the Brethren (and grieve when they make this choice), I do maintain that they see the issue correctly: nonviolence is threatening.

I do wish, however, that they (and all of us, for this temptation touches us all) would be more open to the need to repent of the belief that our civilization must be based on power enforced by violence, including the ways our actions support such a civilization. Instead, my prayer is for us to believe that Jesus’ vision of a civilization based on love expressed as forgiveness is available—at least in part—to us now. It is our calling to work toward such a civilization in the places we live. 

Tim Harvey is pastor of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va.



THE CASE FOR GUN REFORM

by Tom Mauser

My son Daniel was one of the students killed in the mass shooting at Columbine High School on April 20, 1999. Since then, I have been a fierce advocate for gun reform.

I lament that many Americans seem unwilling to talk about the issue of gun violence, unless it's to others who hold the same opinions. While it may seem too volatile an issue, I believe it can be discussed in a civil way if we turn down the rhetoric and rely more on facts and reality.

Concern for gun violence in America is certainly not new for the Brethren. Annual Conference approved a statement on violence and the use of firearms in 1978. Renewed calls were made in 1999 and 2010, followed in 2018 by a Mission and Ministry Board statement "Lukewarm no more: A call for repentance and action on gun violence." I am greatly impressed by how the Church of the Brethren was so far ahead of the curve in responding strongly to America's epidemic of gun violence.

Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., has made gun violence prevention a key emphasis area. Pastor Gail Erisman Valeta and I are the congregation's representatives to Colorado Faith Communities United to End Gun Violence, an organization of more than 45 churches, synagogues, and mosques.

Churches can play an important role in providing a safe place to have a discussion on this issue. One project that did this was a video entitled *Inside the Gun Debate*,

produced by Lifetree Café, a faith group that gathers people for conversations about life and faith in a casual setting. The video featured Michael Lang, a concealed weapons instructor, and me presenting our differing viewpoints.

We need to have more discussions between reasonable people from both sides of the issue. Polls have shown that a majority of Americans are in the middle. They support the right to bear arms, but they also recognize the need to have restrictions. Though most of my speeches are to groups where I am preaching to the choir, I would like to spend more effort reaching people in the middle, including responsible gun owners.

To make progress, it is important for people on both sides to acknowledge the concerns of the other and find common ground, while also focusing on facts. For example,

Pursuing change Atlantic Northeast District held a series of four "Crossroads and Connections Workshops" in September with leadership from Bryan Miller, executive director of Heeding God's Call to End Gun Violence, based in Pennsylvania. The organization got its start following a Philadelphia meeting of the historic peace churches, including the Church of the Brethren. The workshops educated participants about gun violence and discussed ways to mobilize people and faith institutions to pursue changes in gun laws and culture.

“ it is important for people on both sides to acknowledge the concerns of the other and find common ground, while also focusing on facts. ”

some gun owners complain about the time it takes to complete a background check to purchase a firearm. That needs to be acknowledged, but all citizens endure metal detector delays at airports, court rooms, and other places. They don't like it, but they are willing to sacrifice their time because they realize it's for the collective security of everyone. That is a very Christian position.

When I speak to audiences, I start with my opponents' arguments. I know they're hearing from the gun lobby all the time. I have to respond to that. I want to arm the audience, so to speak, to be able to respond without feeling intimidated.

Here are some common claims and cliches of the gun lobby, and the way I respond to them.

■ **The claim: Gun control simply doesn't work. Chicago has strict gun laws yet a high gun death rate.**

My reply: Chicago has a terrible gun violence problem, but many of the guns used there come in from states with weak gun laws. New Orleans, Memphis, and Saint Louis have gun homicide rates as bad or worse than Chicago—and they are in states with weak gun laws. Many of our gun laws come from the state level. The fact is that states with strong gun laws, like Massachusetts, California, and Hawaii, have the lowest gun death rates, while those with weak gun laws, like Alabama, Missouri, and Louisiana, have among the highest.

■ **The claim: Criminals don't follow gun laws and don't go through background checks.**

My reply: Sure, by definition criminals ignore many laws. But it's simply not true that they don't go through background checks. In 2021, over 14,000 people failed a background check in Colorado, based on offenses like homicide, spouse abuse, and rape. Isn't it better that we deny their gun purchases?

■ **The claim: Criminals will be able to get a gun somewhere else anyhow.**

My reply: If our laws are going to make it easy for them, sure they will. So are we going to make it difficult or easy? Are we going to surrender and just be fatalistic and discouraged, or are we going to be people of faith who tackle a problem in order to save lives?

■ **The claim: The problem is mental health.**

My reply: Numerous published studies demonstrate that only a small percentage of shootings are committed by people with a diagnosed mental illness. Some people think

that a person crazy enough to shoot others is mentally ill. But “crazy,” “angry,” and “disgruntled” are not mental health diagnoses. They are behaviors.

People with mental health issues are being scapegoated by those who want to shift the subject away from guns. The Ten Commandments tell us not to bear false witness, yet that's what's happening here, adding to the stigmatization surrounding mental illness.

■ **The claim: Gun reform advocates are trying to keep law-abiding citizens from protecting themselves. They are trying to confiscate their firearms, leaving only criminals with them.**


My reply: The reality is that gun sales are up significantly, despite the gun laws that are in place. People do have a right to protect themselves, and what actual laws prevent people from doing that? All this talk of confiscation is irresponsible. It's spoken simply to get gun owners very angry. The 14th Amendment protects people from the government seizing property without due process. Besides, let's have a reality check: How in the world would the government be able to seize 400 million firearms?

■ **The claim: Guns don't kill people—people kill people.”**

My reply: There are two common elements in every shooting—at least one person and at least one gun. We are by far the most heavily armed industrialized nation, and it's no coincidence that we have the highest per capita gun death rate by far.

■ **The claim: The only way to stop a bad guy with a gun is a good guy with a gun.**

My reply: It's easy to think, “I can take out a mass shooter if I see him,” but the reality is that many gun carriers freeze when faced with a real-life situation. Or they miss and make matters worse. Or they forget that there could be deadly crossfire from other gun carriers, or that the police won't know who the good guy with a gun is, since we don't wear a good guy label.

The reality is that today's good guy can easily become tomorrow's bad guy. The reality is that very few shootings are stopped by a good guy with a gun. The best way to stop a bad guy is not to let him get a gun in the first place. 

Tom Mauser is the father of Columbine victim Daniel Mauser, spokesman for Colorado Ceasefire, and author of *Walking in Daniel's Shoes*. He is a member of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo.

Some thoughts on harvest

by Bobbi Dykema

I think of myself as more of a cook than a gardener. But I love to use fresh herbs, and since the house we've been living in has a nice-sized garden plot, I've been growing my own: oregano, parsley, tarragon, chives, dill, mint, lemon balm, sage, rosemary, cilantro.

With the help of my dear seed-saving sister in Christ, Leah, over the past couple of years I've experimented with rapini, fava beans, komatsuna spinach mustard, sorrel, zinnias, catnip, Vermont cranberry beans, lemon cucumbers, red samurai carrots, sunflowers, milkweed, and five kinds of tomatoes.

The lemon cucumbers have been off the chain this year. Just three plants came up and grew to maturity, but between them they've produced probably five dozen cucumbers; and I've followed recipes or concocted my own for at least two dozen different cucumber salads.


The abundance is astounding. After not being in the garden for just three days, there were seven ready-to-harvest cucumbers on the vine one day, and six the next. Which got me thinking about the Gardener, the One who created every living thing that grows upon our earth.

In the parable of the sower, the figure casting the seed is not like most of us who plant and tend. We carefully start many of our seeds indoors, tenderly nurturing them, or else follow the directions on the seed packets and lovingly place them in the ground the right way, at the right time, the right distance apart.

The sower of the parable simply casts seeds far and wide! Some fall on the path, some on rocky ground, some in the weeds and thorns . . . and just some on the good ground. Often we read this as a story about receptivity to the gospel. But what if it's a story about how God blesses in abundance?

Some of my gardening friends have shared a proverb on social media: "If nothing is eating your plants, then your garden isn't part of the ecosystem." Even though I've got plenty of tomatoes and cucumbers (and can easily get more at the local farmers' market), I resent finding any that have already been sampled by slugs or chipmunks.

But God doesn't think that way. Of course the seeds that fell on the path were eaten by birds—because if God is the Sower, God cares no less for the birds' need for food than for ours. So maybe I should start thinking of my cucumbers and tomatoes as having the Chipmunk Seal of Approval.

I wonder what would happen if we thought about our ministries this way, instead of in terms of what would bring in new faces. What if we thought of ourselves as the Sower, casting our seeds wherever and to whomever they might be needed—choosing our ministries based on what serves real needs in the community, regardless of whether it brings in new members? Jesus never promised numerical growth, but he did promise abundant life. Let's live it! Cast those seeds! 

Bobbi Dykema is pastor of First Church of the Brethren in Springfield, Ill.

Turn your waiting room into a classroom

by Leah Hileman

Jess Sowards from *Roots and Refuge Farm* says, “Turn your waiting room into a classroom.” I love this concept. After planning the garden, gathering the seeds, amending the soil, building out the beds, and preparing the containers, it is time to plant and wait. When the first seeds or seedlings go in the ground in the spring, I am trusting and believing that two things are going to happen: I’m going to be disciplined about weed and pest management, and God is going to send rain and sunlight in proper proportion.

The problem is that only one of those two things are reliable. God keeps his end of the bargain always; sometimes I don’t.

This year I was caught off guard by an invasion of Peruvian Daisies, an invasive weed. I left for Annual Conference and they were four inches high; I returned from Omaha and they were a foot high. I got busy at work and slacked off on the garden. Grasshoppers nabbed my peanuts. A vine borer took out my Table Queen Acorn Squash. A pumpkin vine grew up my sunflowers and dragged them all flat. Bugs lopped off my corn tassels before they were pollinated.


When I planted the garden, I was enthusiastic about the beauty and function, the hope of abundance, and the pride of hard work, but by mid-August I was harvesting sad-looking, small, cat-faced tomatoes. I thought to myself, “I should have pulled the weeds earlier. I should have watered the containers more frequently. I should have re-fertilized mid-season. I should have sprayed BT on this or that plant.”

Time to turn my waiting room into a classroom.

When we turn our waiting room into a classroom, we are acknowledging that God is always in the business of growing us, preparing the soil of our own hearts, the fruitfulness of our lives. The Holy Spirit is always behind the scenes producing fruit within us in keeping with our repentance and developing our edifying gifts. There are always weeds to be pulled, limbs to be pruned, and spiritual soil to be amended. I am, in a way, a plant in God’s garden, being grown and groomed to bear much fruit. God is diligent to grow his people.

Now I look at my kitchen table, my refrigerator, the pantry. I see with fresh eyes what was really happening. All the while I was focusing on my failures—living in discouragement and losing motivation—I was missing the abundance that God in faithfulness was providing all season.

I have enough dill, cilantro, and fennel seeds now to plant 20 gardens. I’m enjoying freshly canned super-hot salsa with my UFO, Fatalii, Red Savina, and Lemon Drop hot peppers. I made three huge batches of delicious quick pickles. I recently picked my first Yellow Doll watermelon—so tasty!

Despite my worst efforts, this garden simply wants to grow. A harvest does come. I turned my waiting room into a classroom and saw the Lord growing both me and my garden. 

Leah J. Hileman is a songwriter (www.leahjsongs.com) and hosts a gardening channel (www.youtube.com/LeahsLeaves). She is an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren.



Building community through books

Abraham Harley Cassel



by Brian Nixon

“Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body” (Ecclesiastes 12:12, NIV).

Today book publishing continues at an astounding rate, roughly four million volumes each year combining self-published and traditional publishing. Google Books claims there have been roughly 129,864,880 books published since the invention of Gutenberg’s printing press in 1440. But Google Books does little to enumerate self-published books or those published after 2010, when the study was done. Lots of uncounted books float around the physical world and cyberworld. In other words, there’s “no end” of books.

Solomon’s second claim is also factual: excessive study and reading can weary the body. According to several analyses, disproportionate book reading can lead to poor eyesight, neck issues, back pain, and mental stress.

In spite of these issues, I am a self-professed bibliophile, a collector and lover of books. I have fond memories of my mother reading the *Chronicles of Narnia* (and many other books) to my siblings and me as young children. Frequent trips to the public library were akin to religious duties.

And though books and education have not always been held in high esteem in Brethren circles, some challenged the prevailing attitudes. One such person was Abraham Harley Cassel, born to a Brethren family in 1820. Cassel’s parents frowned upon books and modern learning, considering them “worldly.”

An essay written by Donald Durnbaugh (taken from Cassel’s son’s recollections) describes the tension between father and son over books. Father Cassel stated, “I tried to bring you up according to my conscientious convictions, but I see I can’t, as you will learn in spite of all my opposition. Therefore learn, and if it leads you to evil, the fault is not mine.”

Abraham’s marriage to a woman of Quaker descent, Elizabeth Rhodes, didn’t help repair the family relationship.

Father Cassel warned Elizabeth that she was marrying a “book fool.”

Abraham eventually took over his family’s farm so he could spend more time reading and collecting books. Durnbaugh recounts Cassel saying, “I loved innocence and ease of mind to read and study above everything else. And no calling appeared so well adapted—so independent and free as farming. For, with the setting sun, my days’ work was generally done, and then, without a thought or care, could to my much-loved books repair.”

Cassel became a celebrated collector of books; his library was possibly the second largest in America. Cassel’s collection included a *Sauer-German Bible* and other early American editions, a treasure trove of books.

A biography by Gerald C. Studer about colonial educator Christopher Dock (c. 1698-1771) reveals a glimpse of Cassel’s reputation. A German immigrant, Dock worked as a farmer, poet, and teacher, including of Brethren leader and printer, Christopher Sauer Jr. When the governor of Pennsylvania, Samuel W. Pennypacker, compiled the state’s history, he told a story of a printer accidentally damaging a page from Dock’s *School Management*, a booklet about teaching printed by Sauer. When they could not locate another copy, Pennypacker reached out to Cassel.

Studer recounts the incident:

Finally, in desperation, they wrote to A.H. Cassel, of Harleysville, Pennsylvania, stating, their plight and seeking his help. Mr. Cassel is said to have, without hesitation, removed the needed leave from his own copy and sent it to them by mail. It was scrupulously cared for and speedily returned. Pennypacker exclaims [over] “the confiding simplicity of a book lover whose willingly runs such a risk of making his own copy imperfect.”

The passage shows Cassel’s kindness, but also his concern



“ In short, books can draw people close, giving rise to respect, empathy, and acceptance. ”

in helping to create more books.

Cassel's collecting continued throughout his life. He wrote, “[A]fter I had a little more money at [my] command I began to import rare and valuable books from every part of the civilized world, until I had many books and papers from Europe, Asia, and Africa; also from China, Japan and Hindostan. . . . [Then] I turned my attention towards early documents and rare colonial history, early printing, etc. until I was possessed of an almost enviable collection.”

Durnbaugh conveys that Cassel's collecting resulted in “fifty thousand books, pamphlets, and documents, larger than many public and college libraries at that time.”

But here's where Solomon's insight comes into play. According to Durnbaugh, Cassel's “study was so intense that his eyesight gradually failed, until he became completely blind.”

I love Cassel for his book collecting and reading. And contrary to his father's advice, I don't think study always leads to sacrilege. Though there are many positive aspects to consider, here's one to ponder: books have a way of bringing people together.

Researchers at Boise State University, in a paper entitled “Multicultural Literature that Brings People Together,” concluded, “Students of all cultures will benefit from multicultural literature in the classroom for numerous reasons: it provides an opportunity for all children to see themselves in literature, fosters development and positive self-esteem, prevents people from feeling isolated, and it cultivates respect, empathy, and acceptance of all people.”

In short, books can draw people close, giving rise to respect, empathy, and acceptance.

And books help not only kids, but also adults, discover what others believe and feel. According to a 2013 *Guardian* article, research has “proved that reading literary fiction enhances the ability to detect and understand other people's emotions, a crucial skill in navigating complex social rela-

tionships.” In other words, books can create community, helping individuals understand, sympathize, and provide insight into our human condition.


To become creators of community, I suggest starting a book club, a means to gather and reflect. Here's an acronym to help you READ:

R—reach out. Find people interested in similar topics and genres. The internet, church, community centers, and your neighborhood are starting places.

E—encourage. Once you've found a core group, encourage them to meet regularly. Choose a book together and determine the day, time, and criteria of your meeting. Be kind, showing civility in your interactions.

A—assess and analyze. As you read the book, discuss the salient points, analyzing them in light of your group's dynamic. If you choose, consult a resource like *How to Read a Book*, by Mortimer Adler, to help guide the process. Or use book club tips from the *lovelibraries* website.

D—delight. Delight in the sheer joy of reading with other people, finding common ground and points of reference that help generate what I call the three “E's” of reading: empathy, enlightenment, and encouragement.

I don't know if Cassel would agree with my points, but I think he just might. As Scottish pastor and philosopher Francis Hutcheson reminds us, “Wisdom denotes the pursuing of the best end by the best means.” If we pursue the best book by the best means—regular reading with self and others—we get a step closer to developing the wisdom of Solomon. 

Brian Nixon is a writer, artist, musician, educator, and minister in Albuquerque, N.M., and a former licensed minister in the Church of the Brethren.

Wisdom in the church

Acts 19; Ephesians 1:15-23

by Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey

News of the Ephesians' faithfulness has made its way to Paul, and has likewise drawn Paul's praise. The Ephesians have given every indication that the faith that had been planted in them has taken root and continues to grow. For this reason, Paul is full of thanksgiving. However, Paul also wants the Ephesians to understand that their faith is not just of their own effort; it is God's blessing made manifest in them. And so, their faithfulness is credited to God's great power.

While the faith of the Ephesians is worthy of praise, Paul also hopes that through the power of intercessory prayer their relationship with God will only deepen. As they mature in faith, Paul prays for them to receive a spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that they can more fully live into the inheritance they have received in Christ. Such confidence in their future inheritance will enable them to discern what Christ is calling them to do and be in the here and now.

Spirit of wisdom and revelation

A common theme in Pauline writing discusses "this age and the age to come" (there's a similar phrase in Ephesians 1:21). Each of these ages has specific characteristics—this age is categorized by sin and death, while the age to come is categorized by redemption and life.

In Jesus, Paul recognizes that these two ages are blending together. The resurrection of Jesus Christ brought a glimpse of the coming age into the current one. Thus, because of Jesus Christ, we live with one foot in this age and one in the age to come. And a spirit of wisdom is required to live in this in-between time.

When I think of someone who is wise, it is not typically someone who is book-smart or can answer obscure trivia. People with these abilities are certainly knowledgeable, but wise people can see the world around them in a different way. That is not to say they are like a wise sage that has obtained a different vantage point by

sitting atop a mountain separated from the brokenness of the world. A truly wise person is aware of a deeper reality than one can see with their eyes, even while they are actively in touch with all that's going on around them.

Therefore, Paul's prayer for the Ephesians is not that they withdraw to the heavenly places just because this will be their inheritance as adopted children of God. Paul wants the Ephesians to discern how to live now in light of their future inheritance. And this will require a "spirit of wisdom and revelation," gifts that come from above (v. 17).

Wise ones learn how to balance living in a world where death and sin still have a hold on us, while at the same time knowing that Christ is seated at God's right hand, having conquered death and sin. Wisdom requires that we see with more than just our physical eyes at times—seeing with spiritual eyes of hope, knowing that the age to come is already working to defeat the broken realities of this one.

“ A truly wise person is aware of a deeper reality than one can see with their eyes, even while they are actively in touch with all that’s going on around them. ”



The saints

Paul uses the word “saints” twice in this section of his letter (vv. 15, 18). So, who are the saints and what does Paul mean by this word? When we hear the word “saints” we often think about the Roman Catholic practice of venerating specific mothers and fathers of the faith who have proven to be exceptionally faithful, but that is not quite what Paul means here.

The Greek word translated as “saints” in the NRSV is *hagios*, which means “holy ones.” This is the same word used in the name Holy Spirit, but in this case it does not refer to a member of the Trinity. Paul is not referring to certain persons who are exceptionally holy (saints) and more worthy of our veneration. All believers are “holy ones,” set apart by their faith in Jesus Christ.

Paul praises the Ephesians for the deep love they have displayed toward the saints, but Paul also makes sure to place the Ephesians among the saints. The Ephesians will receive the same

inheritance as the holy ones they have loved and cared for because of what they share in common, a commitment to and belief in Jesus Christ. While we often think of saints as extraordinary examples, we need not look further than our own congregation to find them. For the church is the body of Christ, and through Christ, the church is filled with holy ones (v. 23).

The church

While we may miss this in our English translation, all the references to “you” in this section of scripture are plural. Paul is not praying that one person will receive wisdom, or that God would reveal something important to one person. The spirit of wisdom and revelation Paul prays for is meant for the community gathered in Christ’s name. It is a relational spirit that first comes from a growing relationship with God, and can only be fully understood in community.


The concept of community has been an important one for Brethren. The use of the German word *Gemeinschaft* marked the importance of communal living for early Brethren. This word is hard to translate with a single English word. For the early Brethren, the word expressed “the intimate sense of unity that exists when people share commitments to live the love of Jesus in community” (Dale Brown, *Another Way of Believing: A Brethren Theology*, p. 35).

This has not only been important to Brethren in theory but also shaped the way we organize ourselves to discern God’s will. The best example of this is Annual Conference, which is the highest authority in the Church

of the Brethren. The delegates are individuals from the various Church of the Brethren congregations, who then come together to form a “deliberative body under the guidance of the Holy Spirit” (www.brethren.org/ac/history). Brethren expect that when we come together to discern the will of God, God will in fact show up to guide us.

While Brethren have placed a high importance on community, we must be careful not to idealize the concept, making it something it cannot be. While we believe that the church is the body of Christ, made up of holy ones, we also accept that it is made up of humans. Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote that the “Christian community is not an ideal, but a divine community.” By this he meant that the Christian community would not be perfect, but it will be holy. Those who come to church expecting perfection will be quickly disappointed. But those who come expecting to encounter the Divine will find Christ in the midst of them (Matthew 18:20).

This is vital theology for Brethren to reclaim, especially as individuals and groups are choosing to leave our denomination because it is imperfect.

Brethren discern the Holy Spirit together, even when diverse interpretations are present, because there is a unity that exists when people share commitments to live the love of Jesus in community. God is made known to us and wisdom is revealed in our togetherness. It may not be ideal, but it is holy. 



Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey is co-pastor with her husband, Tim, of Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Va.

Brethren Academy offers 'Strength for the Journey'

The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership has begun a new continuing education experience called "Strength for the Journey," to bring together small groups or "cohorts" of ministers to share experiences, hone skills, explore ideas, wrestle with common dilemmas, and take on topics that spark new energy for ministry, while earning continuing education credit.

The program will include up to five cohorts each year, beginning in early 2023. Cohorts of five to eight ministers will meet via Zoom, with assistance from a convener. Funds will be available to meet in person at the end of the year.

The three types of cohorts:

Deep Dive Cohorts to engage in conversation about a topic of mutual interest, exploring a book, an area of ministry, or a social concern, and developing skills for worship, preaching, or peacebuilding.

Specialized Ministry Cohorts to gather groups who share one of the ministry specialties in the Church of the Brethren.

Case Study Cohorts to discuss case studies from their own ministry settings.



The National Older Adult Conference team met in Lake Junaluska, N.C., while planning for next year's NOAC. Team members include Glenn Bollinger, Karen Dillon, Bonnie Kline Smeltzer, Jim Martinez, Leonard Matheny, Don Mitchell, Karlene Tyler, and Christy Waltersdorff as coordinator, with Josh Brockway and Stan Dueck as staff.



Fellowship of Brethren Homes holds annual forum

The Fellowship of Brethren Homes held an Annual Forum at West View Healthy Living in Wooster, Ohio, Aug. 10-12 after a two-year hiatus due to COVID-19.

In attendance were representatives of Hillcrest and Casa de Modesto in California; Garden Terrace in Washington; the Cedars in Kansas; Pinecrest in Illinois; Londonderry Village in Pennsylvania; and Good Shepherd, the Brethren Retirement Community, and West View Healthy Living in Ohio.

The keynote on effective storytelling was provided by Courtney Malengo, founder of Spark + Buzz Communications. David Sollenberger, immediate past moderator of Annual Conference, led a discussion about storytelling through video. Lisa McCracken, director of Senior Living Research for Zeigler Investment Bank, presented the report "2022 State of Not-Profit Senior Living and Care."

Anabaptist Bible project launches

Work has begun on a first-ever **Anabaptist Bible**, a project of MennoMedia. An Aug. 26-28 event gathering some 40 "Bible ambassadors" from various Anabaptist communities included Brethren Press publisher Wendy McFadden and Josh Brockway, co-coordinator of Discipleship Ministries for the Church of the Brethren.

The gathering was convened by John Roth, director of

"Anabaptism at 500" for MennoMedia, with representatives of the Mennonite Church USA, Mennonite Church Canada, Brethren in Christ, Evana, Lancaster Mennonite Conference, Bruderhof, and the Church of the Brethren.

The project is recruiting 500 Bible study groups from the Anabaptist community in North America to study portions of scripture and share their insights.



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EYN workshop educates on sexual exploitation

Ekklesiyar Yan'owa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) partnered with Mission 21 and others to create a workshop on "Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse, and Harassment." The initial workshop was held July 18-22 with 24 participants from various departments of EYN, facilitated by Mission 21 country coordinator Yakubu Joseph.

The topic was very new to most of the participants, who were left with zeal to create awareness of gender-based violence, starting from the family level. Certain church structures, such as church sub-groups and IDP camps, were identified as venues to conduct additional workshops to reach a larger audience.



Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) Unit 331 held orientation at Camp Wilbur Stover in New Meadows, Idaho, Aug. 9-17. The 10 volunteers included 5 from EIRENE, a partner organization based in Germany: (front row, from left) Martha Hummer of Annville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren is placed with Brethren Disaster Ministries in Waverly, Tenn.; Chloe Soliday of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., is placed at Brethren Community Ministries, Harrisburg, Pa.; Lena Lippert of Altena, Germany, is placed at Abode Services in Fremont, Calif.; (middle row) Moritz Hinner of Winnigen, Germany, is placed at Highland Park Elementary School in Roanoke, Va.; Billy Harness of North Liberty, Ind., and North Liberty Church of the Brethren is placed at SnowCap in Fairview, Ore.; Benjamin Hoffmann of Pfullendorf, Germany, is placed at Ferncliff in Little Rock, Ark.; Virginia Rendler of North Manchester, Ind., and Manchester Church of the Brethren is placed with Corrymeela in Ballycastle, Northern Ireland; Lucas Kohler Caravaca of Berlin, Germany, is placed at SnowCap; Franka Evers of Bochum, Germany, is placed at Abode Services; Grace Elliott of Fort Littleton, Pa., is placed at the Brethren Nursery School at Gisenyi Church of the Brethren in Rwanda; (back row) Michael Brewer-Berres and Emily Bowdle of the BVS office staff.



Zakariya Musa

Personnel

Scott Holland has been awarded professor emeritus status at Bethany Theological Seminary. He continues to teach in the theopoetics program that he helped develop. He has been the Slabaugh Professor of Theology and Culture at Bethany and spent 23 years directing the seminary's Peace Studies program. He first joined the faculty in 1999 with a focus on public theology. He was instrumental in starting the theopoetics program that began as a five-course certificate program, and then evolved into a full master's degree program in

partnership with Earlham School of Religion.

Barry LeNoir will depart June 30 as director of Camp Bethel in Fincastle, Va., a position he began in 2002. He has 38 years of camp staff experience. He served on the steering committee of the Church of the Brethren's Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) 2004-2010, receiving the OMA Camp Staff Award in 2011

Precious Earley of Atlanta, Ga., started Sept. 26 as communications director for Eder Financial. She has more than 17 years of experience in marketing and com-

munications and holds a bachelor's degree in telecommunications from Ball State University and a master's in integrated marketing communications from the P.I. Reed School of Journalism at West Virginia University.

Bayo Tella was appointed provost of Kulp Theological Seminary of Ekklesiyar Yan'owa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) on Aug. 1, after serving as deputy provost and then acting provost. He began teaching at the seminary in 2016 and was dean of Student Affairs 2016-2017. He is an

ordained minister who has served several pastorates and various district positions across EYN. Tella's predecessor, Dauda A. Gava, has completed his two-term tenure.

Kate Doyle Betts has been named president and chief executive officer of SERRV International. She has held senior leadership roles in marketing, including 22 years with Williams-Sonoma. A fair-trade organization founded by the Church of the Brethren 72 years ago, SERRV continues to have warehouse facilities at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

NYC REFLECTION

My favorite Jesus story

Anna Schweitzer

think the most important thing about Jesus was his love. He reached out to everyone and anyone, making it a point to be there for those less fortunate than him. He loved simply everyone he saw, often complete strangers. He showed his love through these wonderful miracles that he performed, setting an example for how we can show love to everyone around us.

One of the best examples of his outpouring, human love—and my favorite story—is the story of Jesus healing the blind man in John 9:1-12. Honestly, what a weird story. Jesus is just walking along, sees a blind man, literally spits in some dirt, rubs it on the man's eyes, and is like, “Go have a bath in the pool over there.” (Talk about COVID protocol disregardance! While Jesus was perfect, he definitely still had bacteria in his spit!)

For me one of the most special and differentiating aspects of this story is that he *doesn't* take recognition for this

miracle. The crowd can't find him afterwards, even as they're asking around for him. John obviously found this to be an important aspect of the story, since he recorded it. It still holds the same importance today—demonstrating the love of Jesus in a different light.

His love is unexpected, unconventional, even a little gross, I guess, but primarily it is a human kind of love. Jesus came down to earth and masked his divinity to become human and take on flesh. He wanted to feel human emotions and represent to us a perfect human. So what better example than Jesus to show us how to love in a uniquely human way? To love others not because we want praise for it or because it makes us feel good. To love others even when we're in a bad mood or even when we feel like we've already loved enough. To love other humans regardless of how we feel about them or how much we think they deserve it, but simply because they walk this earth with us.

That is what Jesus did. He loved the people around him, simply because he could. He wanted to love them all, and touch all of their lives. He cared so deeply about them that he even performed miracles. What an awe-inspiring way to love someone! If only we could perform miracles, right?


But we can, in a way. We can perform our own sort of miracles by showing others that we love them. It may not be physically healing them, like in this instance, but who knows what a smile, a prayer, a hug, or a donation of time can mean to someone? What if that one “miracle” was what saved

somebody or encouraged them to start their journey with Jesus?

I, and I'm sure you as well, have seen the cruelty and the hate in this world. Between the senseless killing of others, the destruction of the world around us, and the all-around tension that exists between people—whether interpersonal or international—it may be hard to see how our love toward others can make much of an impact. How can one little old person like you or me truly make effectual change in the world?

Jesus demonstrated that it isn't important that we get thanked for what we do for others. The important part is that we do it. We may not know if our smile would make someone feel better...but what if it does?

From this one, simple, kind of weird story, we can see the love of Jesus represented perfectly. We can see the same encompassing, invested, and perfect love that Jesus has for us. We can gain an understanding of how to pass that love on to others. While we can't heal the blind or raise the dead, we can perform our own sort of miracles on those around us.

Jesus not only performed a miracle and changed this one man's life, he used the story to change *our* lives for the better. So you see, this is why my favorite Jesus story is the one where he heals the blind man without anyone knowing he had done it. 

Anna Schweitzer, a high school senior in Indiana, is from Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren in New Paris, Ohio. This article is excerpted from her speech at National Youth Conference, where she was one of three youth speakers. The assignment was to “Bring Your Own Jesus Story.”



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

Prominent misstatement

In the article “If Only That Were True” (September, p. 20), Gimbiya Kettering considers the 19th century Brethren position on slavery. One of her key pieces of evidence is a quote from me. Unfortunately, she misquotes me significantly.

In brief, my statement was that the Brethren were inflexible on slavery and adamantly opposed to it, yet she wrote that I said that 19th century Brethren tolerated enslavers in an atmosphere of “visits, warnings, and forgiveness.” This is incorrect, and it ignores my true position, which is evident in the source she used.

The author relied on a Frank Ramirez *Newsline* report of an insight session I did in 2013.

According to Ramirez, I said that “if 18th and 19th century Brethren were inflexible on anything, it was slavery. They were adamantly opposed to slavery.”

Instead, the author writes that I

described the relationships between white Brethren who owned slaves and those who did not as “visits, warnings, and forgiveness. They were living a Brethren fellowship with high points and low points of human behavior, but mostly it worked pretty good.”

These words come from a general statement I made about the Brethren system, which Ramirez reported as follows:

[Longenecker] noted that the image of a strict, inflexible, unyielding body of Brethren usually pictured from that era is inaccurate. There are records of excommunication to be sure, but the picture that emerges from close study is one of “visits, warnings, and forgiveness. They were a living Brethren fellowship with high points and low points of human behavior, but mostly it worked pretty good.”

Note that the “visits, warnings, and forgiveness” mixed with excommunication (“to be sure”) is a general statement about how the system worked. (Actually, I probably described the system as a “living, breathing fellow-



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ship,” a stock phrase that I often use, but a reporter in this situation will not get everything verbatim, which is understandable.) Also, Ramirez wrote “a living Brethren fellowship,” not “living a Brethren fellowship,” as the author states.

The author made it sound like “forgiveness” was the norm for enslavers and that this practice of tolerating enslavers worked “pretty good.” This is incorrect. What I said about slavery, as reported by Ramirez, was that the Brethren were “inflexible” and “adamantly opposed” to it. I never “described the relationships between white Brethren who owned slaves and those who did not as ‘visits, warnings, and forgiveness.’”

I do not need an apology, but I wanted MESSENGER to print a correc-

tion that matched the prominence of the misstatement. MESSENGER refused.

Steve Longenecker
Harrisonburg, Va.

Truthful and insightful

The contributions by and about people of color in our denomination always hold special interest to me, and I am grateful for the occasional inclusion of such in MESSENGER magazine. I especially appreciated the article by Gimbiya Kettering regarding our anti-slavery position and the Dunker meet- inghouse at Antietam.

In this current climate of revision- ist history and the denial of historical facts, I found her article to be truthful and insightful. My prayer is that we can continue to speak truth to power

and strive to build a foundation that seeks to live into the realities of our past, present, and future for the glory of God.

Thanks for giving space to articles that contribute to these efforts. I am looking forward to seeing more of this kind of journalism from your publica- tion. Keep up the good work!

Belita D. Mitchell
Harrisburg, Pa.

From word to deed

Thank you to Gimbiya Kettering for her article. We pride ourselves on our righteousness, but our attitudes toward people of other races do not always reflect what we profess with our lips. There are numerous Annual Conference statements proclaiming that we are an antiracist church. However, “If only that were true!” Perhaps the problem was stated best in the 1991 Annual Conference report on Brethren and Black Americans: “The longest step is the one that leads from statement to action, from word to deed. Let us begin!”

Bruce Rosenberger
Westerville, Ohio

Historical distortions

The article “If Only That Were True” struck me as one of the most egre- gious historical distortions that has



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STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION	
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ever graced the pages of MESSENGER magazine.

The author writes, “In 1813, 16 years after our first statement about slavery.” The first Annual Meeting decision on slavery actually occurred in 1782, 15 years earlier than the 1897 statement cited.

The author refers to “stronger language” in the 1813 statement that “might be attributed to the meeting being held in a Northern state.” A plethora of strong Brethren decisions against slavery were adopted between 1782 and 1864. Some of those were adopted in northern and some in southern states. All told, the strength of such statements seems little correlated with the location of Annual Meeting.

Brethren reached decisions at early Annual Meetings by unanimous consent. It is for this reason that they often said a decision was reached unanimously. It was a completely different process than today. Unanimous consent as a criterion for reaching decisions was abandoned during the 1850s and '60s.

The author says, “Clearly, the antebellum Dunkers were not of one mind about slavery. To call us an antislavery church denies the reality that nine times slavery comes up for debate in the recorded minutes.” This is incredibly misleading. The church was expanding rapidly both geographically and numerically during the time in question. Among the practical questions:

Given our united witness against slavery, what do we do when a member is married to a non-member who owns slaves? (In many cases, women joined the church but their husbands didn't, and Brethren church decisions were not binding for non-members even though non-members were welcome at religious services.)

What about the non-member children of Brethren? (They too could own slaves.)

What about members whose parents died and left slaves to them—how soon should they manumit them and under what circumstances?

What about Brethren purchasing slaves explicitly in order to free them—how long could they keep them in servitude to recoup some of the

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cost of purchasing their freedom?

If someone applied for baptism, would they have to free their slaves before baptism or simply agree to free their slaves within a certain period of time?

What about young enslaved persons who might be preyed upon (and re-enslaved by others) if they were simply turned loose?

How should the Brethren deal with members—even ministers—who violated their unanimous decisions? (Even with unanimously passed decisions, there were always violators, many of whom were dealt with “according to Matthew 18” and, if they didn’t eventually conform, were denied communion).

In a word, all manner of practical questions arose and had to be responded to, which is why there were

so many Annual Meeting decisions on the topic.

The author states that the replica of the Dunker meetinghouse “was rebuilt in the 1920s—the same time the statues of Confederate generals were being erected around the nation with a story that recast traitors as heroes.” This not only constitutes implicit critique by chronological association, but it is completely erroneous. The meetinghouse was actually rebuilt during the early 1960s, an era of civil rights advancement.

It is good that you describe the author as a “storyteller.” The alleged “fairytale” that she bashes is much more grounded in the historical record than the inaccurate fairytale, posing as history, that she herself constructs.

The author suggests that the

Brethren antislavery history, which was pretty amazing for white people before and during the Civil War, is just a lie. By her standard, our entire peace heritage is also a farce because there were moments of dissent and some who did not embrace it, and because Annual Meeting weighed in on it multiple times.

Carl Bowman
Grottoes, Va.

A much-needed corrective

One of the joys in receiving *MESSINGER* is that it brings to the fore new perspectives. Gimbiya Kettering’s article does this through looking deeper into a simple narrative that we in the church have used to footnote our own righteousness. She rightly reminds us that we have mythologized our narrative about being an antislavery church, and that our history is messier and more complicated than we’d like to think.

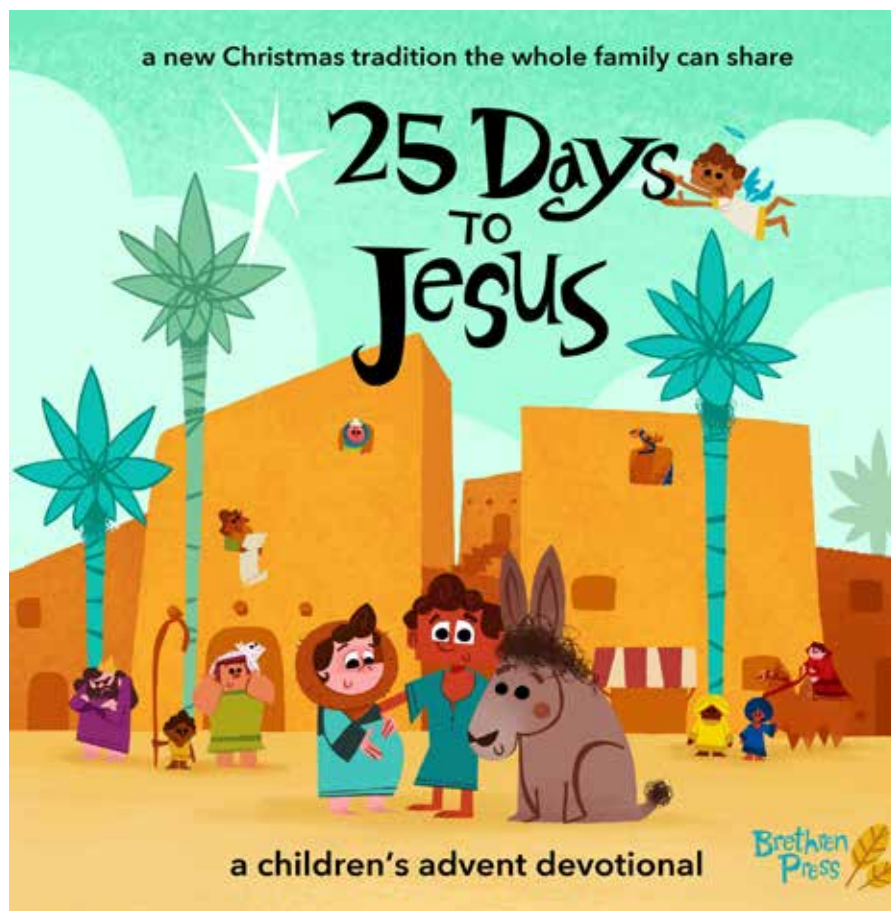
She also challenges us to consider that by and large the audience for our denominational statements and what we say about those statements do not take into account the multicultural nature of our church. We speak as if the church was and is a monolith. We need to hear and confess that what might be “pretty good” for some (or for those in power, or the majority culture in the pews) is not good for all.

I commend the editorial staff for their courage in bringing to us all a much-needed corrective, a view of our history from a sister in Christ who is a person of color. It made me reexamine my assumptions and calls me to confession. I hope it does that for others and for our church.

Debbie Eisenbise
Kalamazoo, Mich.

A fuller picture

Thank you, Jeff Bach (July/August, p.



4) and especially Gimbiya Kettering (September, p. 20), for your recent articles concerning slave ownership among 18th and 19th century Dunkers. You have helped provide a fuller picture of the truth.

I was aware that Brethren had shied away from active participation in the abolition movement, but due to a relatively superficial reading Annual Meeting minutes had assumed “the peculiar institution” was forbidden

among our membership. Furthermore, it seemed few enslavers would have sought to join a plain, largely German speaking, pacifist sect. I stand corrected. Further research on the topic could help us understand the prevalence of the practice among our forebears.

Some months ago, I wrote a review of *The 1619 Project* for our local ecumenical organization’s newsletter. I noted that too often African

American voices are trivialized or treated as a mere add-on to “mainstream history.” I characterized *The 1619 Project* as telling “the rest of the story.” It helps complete the national epic. Perhaps the Church of the Brethren needs a 1719 Project, telling a more complete truth about our movement since arrival in North America.

Tom Wagner
Whitehall, Mich.

TURNINGPOINTS

Centenarians

Adkins, Ellen, 102, New Oxford, Pa., Sept. 6

New members

Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.: Julia Madrid, Maddox Madrid, Tammy Main
Chambersburg, Pa.: Mark Faust, Ruth Faust, Susan Heckman, Daphney Martin, David Matthews, Jan Matthews
Fairview, Cordova, Md.: Charlie Mac Donald, Phil Mac Donald, Bruce Marvel, Danny Mc Cracken, Donna Milby
Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.: Amanda Ahalt, Caroline Ahalt, Layla Ahalt, Jack Cornell, Shepherd Flook, Connor Grimm, Jamison Grossnickle, Jackson Hanser, Mollie Hanser, Andrew Leatherman, Allison Rumpf, Brock Skeen
Hagerstown, Md.: Alice Edmonds, Eddie Edmonds
Pipe Creek, Peru, Ind.: Max Moore, Morgan

Moore, Jamie Oliver, Matthew Oliver, Alyssa Vernengo

Wedding anniversaries

Bates, Jim and Kay, Lafayette, Ind., 55
Bunch, John and Zemora, Muncie, Ind., 65
Fake, Harry and Elizabeth Liskey, Palmyra, Pa., 72
Gibble, H. Lamar and Nancy, Saint Charles, Ill., 70
Hess, Bob and Judi, Lancaster, Pa., 50
Kettering, Daniel and Donna, Polk, Ohio, 55
Koziel, Robert and Sandy, Waynesboro, Pa., 55
Matz, Charles and Sally, Lititz, Pa., 60
Meadows, Dex and Susan, Duncansville, Pa., 50
Meck, Jeff and Joy, Palmyra, Pa., 60
Ozanich, William and Rose, Uniontown,

Pa., 55
Polzin, Frank and Candy, Merrill, Mich., 50
Rehn, Frank and Ila Jane, Johnstown, Pa., 72
Ward, Mike and JoLynn, Mount Morris, Ill., 50

Deaths

Burd, Frances L. Couch, 97, Uniontown, Pa., March 19
Calloway, Verna Crouse, 91, Queen Anne, Md., Sept. 5
Clever, Billy Ray, 76, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 19
Corle, Ruth E. McKowan, 86, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 27
Grant, Marjorie Lynn Myers, 74, Staunton, Va., Aug. 29
Kesler, Betty L. Detrick, 95, Lima, Ohio, Aug. 26
Krol, Isabelle Duez, 92, Mount Morris, Ill., Aug. 23
Martin, James Arthur, 89,

Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 30
Myers, Ella J. Lambert, 85, Fostoria, Ohio, Aug. 5
Robeson, Joseph Albert, Jr., 81, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Aug. 23
Schlegel, Helen Koch, 100, Harleysville, Pa., Sept. 5
Schnierla, Michael D., 76, Freeport, Ill., July 29
Singh, Alfred, 86, Freeport, Ill., Aug. 26
Singleton, Joyce E. Snoke, 86, Pekin, Ill., July 23
Snyder, Glenn A., 92, Jeannette, Pa., Sept. 8
Swope, Jay Lloyd, 87, Palmyra, Pa., Aug. 20
Thompson, James Arthur, 80, Dixon, Ill., Sept. 9
Wagoner, Richard Ray, 90, Perry, Iowa, March 2
Walker, Charles Lee, 91, Bunker Hill, W.Va., May 14
Wehrley, Peggy J. Rife, 88, Troy, Ohio, Sept. 3

Wenger, J. Calvin, 88, Manheim, Pa., Aug. 24
Youngblood, Clark R., 75, Peoria, Ariz., Sept. 4
Yunker, LaVerne R., 89, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 25

Ordained

Mendenhall, Ronda, N. Ind. Dist. (Agape, Fort Wayne, Ind.), Aug. 14

Licensed

Strubel, Thomas, Atl. N.E. Dist. (Ephrata, Pa.), July 24

Placements

Cook, Deborah, from associate pastor to pastor, Plymouth, Ind., July 24
Knight, Meghan, pastor, Denton, Md., July 19
Pence, Nadine, interim associate pastor, La Verne, Calif., July 1
Reed, Robert, pastor, Raven Run, Saxton, Pa., July 25

Beyond the familiar

On special occasions, my mother makes **Five Cup Salad**, setting it out in the same bowl her mother always used. That bowl has served decades of miniature marshmallows, canned mandarin orange segments, crushed pineapple, flaked coconut, and sour cream. When it comes to celebrations, most of us tend to gravitate toward the familiar and traditional, whether that means Five Cup Salad, jollof



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rice, diri kole, or bacalao.

This very human inclination toward the familiar extends to hospitality. We invite others to share our home, our family, and our traditions. We nestle into comfort and then clear a little space for others. The COVID-19 pandemic showed many of us how much we treasure sharing our celebrations with family members and friends.

Hospitality in the Bible radically differs from this. The word “hospitality” occurs a handful of times in the New Testament, including Titus 1:8, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Timothy 3:2, Romans 12:13, and here:

“Be hospitable to one another without complaining” (1 Peter 4:9).

The Greek word in each instance is a version of *philoxenos*, from *philos* and *xenos*. You can likely think of words with similar origins: Philadelphia, the city of brotherly love. Philosophy, the love of wisdom. Xenophobia, fear or hatred of foreigners.

While we might think of hospitality as a friendly invitation to a church potluck, the challenging original meaning is closer to “love of foreigners.” *Xenos* can also be (and often is) translated “strangers,” but it carries a sense not simply of “someone like me that I haven’t yet met” but rather “someone very different from me”: someone from another city or country, someone who speaks a different language, someone with different ideals or values, someone who makes choices that are hard for me to understand.

This kind of hospitality challenges us, rather than simply to dish up comfort foods, to step outside of our comfort zone, to venture into the awkward, even scary world of interacting with people who don’t share a common framework for life.


Jesus reinforces this idea by saying, at a dinner party: “When you give a luncheon or a dinner, do not invite your friends or your brothers or your relatives or rich neighbors. . . . But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind” (Luke 14:12-13).

At first glance, it seems that Jesus might consider his followers the hosts, painstakingly preparing and sitting down to eat with people outside of their usual circles. What does this mean two thousand years later? The poverty rate in the US varies by state from 7 to 19 percent. Adults with disabilities comprise 26 percent of the population; 13.7 percent have mobility issues, and 4.6 percent are blind or have serious difficulty seeing. There are plenty of people to bring Jesus’ words to life. What actions and attitudes could expand accessibility and inclusion?

Exploring the Greek words can fuel our imaginations further. The poor, *ptóchos*, literally means one who crouches and cowers, as in begging—but who else might be crouching or cowering, in body or spirit? Who is attacked or belittled by society?

The ancient word for blind, *tuphlos*, comes from “to raise a smoke” or “darkened by smoke.” What burns today? Who suffers harm and cannot see a way of escape?

Then again, what if we are not the hosts of Jesus’ feast at all? Throughout the Bible, all the way to the marriage supper in Revelation, *God* is the one giving the feast. That makes us the crouching and cowering, the movement-impaired, those unable to see past the smoke—and not despised, pitied, or tolerated but loved.

This year, where and how will the dinner be held? Who will be invited—and who will be considered hosts? What will be on the table next to the Five Cup Salad? The Bible challenges us to reach beyond the familiar and traditional, exploring new ways to welcome, all without complaint. 

“ While we might think of hospitality as a friendly invitation to a church potluck, the challenging original meaning is closer to ‘love of foreigners.’ ”



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Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.

—1 John 3:18 (NIV)

Bringing Families Home for Christmas

This Christmas Miss Sonya will welcome family to her own home for the very first time.

A lifelong renter, the house where Miss Sonya lived was destroyed by the 2019 tornadoes near Dayton, Ohio, leaving her homeless for 10 months. After BDM volunteers completed repairs on a house near her old neighborhood, she qualified to become a first-time homeowner through the *Tornado Survivor Pathway to Homeownership Program* of the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group.

Welcome home, Miss Sonya!

Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding volunteers share Christ's love through their service in disaster impacted neighborhoods to help welcome families home.

Support bringing families home through your gifts and alternative Christmas presents to the Emergency Disaster Fund.

Emergency Disaster Fund
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online: www.brethren.org/bdm/edf



Winner of the National VOAD 2022 Innovative Program of the Year Award

Photos top to bottom: Helen Wolf, courtesy of BDM, Helen Wolf, courtesy of Terry Kukuk.



Completed home



Before repairs



Volunteers at work



Miss Sonya (left) at her House Blessing

"If you look out my window right there, that's my backyard!"



BRETHREN Disaster Ministries

For more information contact BDM at bdm@brethren.org or 800-451-4407