

MESSENGER

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

JULY/AUGUST 2022 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

SOLID GROUND GLOBAL MISSION

*"My dear friends, we always have good reason to thank God for you,
because your faith in God and your love for each other
keep growing all the time."*

~2 Thessalonians 1:3, CEV



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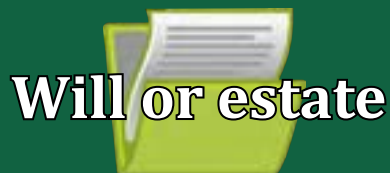
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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Nevin Dulabaum

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Web editor: Jan Fischer Bachman At-large editor: Walt Wiltschek Design: The Concept Mill

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Cover photo by David Sollenberger

Coming up: Photo coverage of National Youth Conference will appear in the September issue.
Watch for reporting from Annual Conference in October.

Describing the life of faith

We're pleased to announce that MESSENGER has received five awards from the Associated Church Press for publishing in 2021. ACP is an association committed to excellence in journalism "as a means to describe, reflect, and support the life of faith and the Christian community."

In one category, the judges recognized the extra creativity required to cover a virtual event: "With denominations having to pivot away from business-as-usual to trying to

create and maintain virtual community, MESSENGER found ways to capture both the factual business of the Annual Conference and the extraordinary effort to capture the feel of the Annual Conference. Well done!"



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

The magazine also won in the categories of humor, column, and "science writing for the world of faith." The science article, by William Miller, came to us from the Brethren Creation Care Network.

The big surprise was in a category called "Best in Class," where we received an Award of Merit. Given that our enterprise is small and we're staffed by people who work on MESSENGER only part time, it seemed like a stretch to enter for best denominational magazine.

One of the judges commented: "The contents are a good example of what a denominational magazine should cover... Thoughtfully planned. And even more. I enjoyed reading even though I'm not Brethren."

The MESSENGER editors are grateful for the other members of the magazine team: Paul Stocksdale, designer; Diane Stroyeck, subscriptions; and Karen Stocking, finance, production, and advertising. A big shout-out to all our writers (about 120 in 2021!), to photographers and artists, and to advertisers.

We're especially thankful for the thousands of you who subscribe to MESSENGER and read it each month. It is our privilege to publish for all who cherish the Church of the Brethren and its unique witness to the world.

"Award of Excellence" equals first place, "Award of Merit" second place, and "Honorable Mention" third place.

- **Science Writing for the World of Faith**, Award of Merit
William Miller, "Down by the river: Developing a Brethren ecological identity"
- **Convention or Meeting Coverage**, Award of Merit
Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, editor, "Annual Conference goes virtual"
- **Column**, Award of Excellence
Wendy McFadden, "From the publisher"
- **Humor**, Honorable Mention
Walt Wiltschek, writer, and Paul Stocksdale, designer, "Brethren Mascots"
- **Best in Class for Denominational or Other Special Interest Magazine**, Award of Merit

HOW TO REACH US

MESSENGER

1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

Subscriptions:

Diane Stroyeck
messengersubscriptions@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 327
Fax: 847-742-1407

Advertising:

Karen Stocking
messengerads@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 308
Fax: 847-742-1407

Editorial:

messenger@brethren.org
Phone: 800-323-8039 ext. 326
Fax: 847-742-1407

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“The light of the righteous shines brightly, but the lamp of the wicked is snuffed out.”

—Proverbs 13:9, NIV

“The Internet is the stained glass picture of the 21st century.” —author Diana Butler Bass

“We must shine with hope, stained glass windows that shape light into icons, glow like lanterns borne before a procession. Who can bear hope back into the world but us?” —author/activist Marge Piercy

“People are like stained glass windows. They sparkle and shine when the sun is out, but when the darkness sets in, their true beauty is revealed only if there is a light from within.”

—psychiatrist Elisabeth Kübler-Ross

“Some days seem to fit together like a stained glass window. A hundred little pieces of different color and mood that, when combined, create a complete picture.” —author Maggie Stiefvater

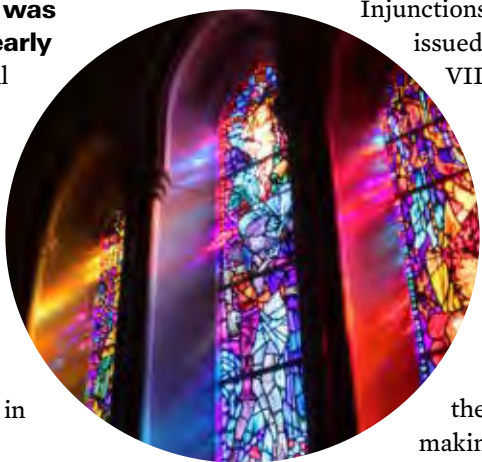
LOOKING THROUGH THE GLASS

Stained glass was installed in early churches as a visual

way to tell stories from the Bible, as many churchgoers were illiterate. The oldest stained glass fragments in Europe date to the late 7th century. The ancient Egyptians used decorative glass in other forms several millennia earlier.

- Theophilus, a 12th-century German monk who was also an artist and metalworker, carefully described the process of making stained glass in his book *On Diverse Arts*.

- Many stained glass windows in England were destroyed during the 16th-century English Revolution, when the 1547



Injunctions Against Images were issued under King Henry VIII.

- Traditionally, metallic oxide powders are added to the molten glass to create vivid colors, such as manganese for purple, copper oxide/iron for green, and cobalt for blue.
- Ohio has been called the “center of stained glass making” in the US, with more than 100 stained glass studios.
- The oldest continually operating stained glass studio in North America is Robert McCausland Ltd. of Toronto, Canada. It has produced two-thirds of all the stained glass in Canada.

Sources: *All Clean Services (UK); Working the Flame; Metropolitan Museum of Art; Encyclopedia Britannica; the Stained Glass Association of America.*

DID YOU KNOW?

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the Church of the Brethren General Brotherhood Board, which in 1968 became the Church of the Brethren General Board, now the Mission and Ministry Board. Annual Conference in 1946 approved the consolidation of the General Mission Board, Board of Christian Education, and other programs into a “unified board” based in Elgin, Ill., and the new organization came into effect the following year.



Standing committee at the 1946 Annual Conference in Wenatchee, Wash.

Zooming across the Plains

Nearly 70 women from across the Western Plains District, as well as a few from Missouri/Arkansas, gathered on Zoom April 1-2 to experience a time of “Coping and Hoping” through a women’s retreat. Coordinators from the First Central (Kansas City, Kan.) and Olathe (Kan.) congregations moved forward with an online approach, offering modalities and strategies for women to connect with the divine in the midst of navigating challenging times.

“In our planning, we desired to address the physical, mental, spiritual, and relational toll this pandemic has taken on all of us,” planning team member Barbra Davis said. “When selecting leaders, we asked for tangible ways to present new coping tools, methods, and skills.”

First Central pastor Sonja Griffith

framed the experience of participating in mini-workshops through the lens of Esther, referring to chapter 4 in an opening Bible study. She followed the study with opening the mic to participants to share parts of their stories from the past two years. Workshop leaders included Connie Burkholder, Sherilyn Hines, Judy Hollandsworth, Shana Leck, Gail Erisman Valeta, Leslie Frye, Vickie Samland, Marie Froman, and Joanna Davidson Smith.

To enhance fellowship, groups gathered in person at Antelope Park (Lincoln, Neb.), McPherson, and Wichita (Kan.) First for the Zoom sessions. An extended lunch period allowed time for social gatherings on Zoom and in person. Attendees donated more than \$800 to Children’s Disaster Services. —Shana Leck



Together again: A group of clergy from Illinois/Wisconsin District gathered in late April in Rockford, Ill., for a spring continuing education retreat, one of the first in-person district events held since the start of the pandemic. Recent Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday, second from left, served as the keynote leader on the theme “Kingdom-Building: An Evangelism Workshop.” The district’s ministry leadership development team sponsored the event.



Chapel plaque connects Brethren to slavery

A National Historic Landmark plaque was dedicated on June 11 at Tolson’s Chapel in Sharpsburg, Md., near Antietam National Battlefield. The building is significant to the national history of the US, but it also has an important and little-known connection for Brethren.

The church, built by freed people in 1866, served as a Freedmen’s Bureau school for Black children starting in 1868. One of the trustees, Hilary Watson, was enslaved by Brethren farmer John Otto until 1864. Nancy Camel, a freed woman and member of Manor Church of the Brethren in nearby Boonsboro, donated a pulpit Bible.

The Friends of Tolson Chapel, a local history group, has worked since 2006 to restore the church and document its history. Hilary Watson and his wife, Christina, are buried in the cemetery behind the church, which has been closed since 1998.

Learn more at www.tolsonschapel.org.
—Jeff Bach

Celebrating 175 years

Beaver Creek Church of the Brethren (Hagerstown, Md.) held a 175th anniversary celebration June 11-12. The weekend event, with the theme “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” included live music from local groups, horse and buggy rides, children’s activities, crafts, heritage demonstrations, a carry-in meal, an all-church picture, and a worship service with leadership from former pastors.

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.



McPherson College

Major gift 'bets big' on McPherson's future

California philanthropists **Melanie and Richard Lundquist** shocked the McPherson (Kan.) College community during the school's commencement ceremony in May, announcing their \$25 million gift to the college for the Building Community Campaign—the largest gift in the college's 135-year history. It is also the largest gift ever to a small, private liberal arts college in Kansas and among the largest to any college in Kansas. The previous largest gift to McPherson was \$10 million.

The couple's relationship with McPherson began in 2012, when Melanie donated tool sets to the school's unique automotive restoration program in honor of Richard's birthday. Since then, the Lundquists have become regular supporters of the college. In 2019, during a McPherson event at their home, they announced the first-ever \$1 million gift to the automotive restoration program. In November 2020, McPherson conferred honorary doctorates on the Lundquists to recognize their work in driving systemic change in K-12 public education, health care delivery, and innovation, as well as the environment.

"McPherson College is a special place that embraces the love of humanity," said Melanie Lundquist, while announcing her and her husband's first major philanthropic gift outside of California. "After a decade of knowing McPherson College, your president, and your provost, we know our \$25 million is the right big bet."

McPherson College has seen tremendous growth, with a 300 percent increase in applications and 40 percent increase in enrollment since 2009.

"We are deeply grateful to Richard and Melanie for their incredible generosity to McPherson College. This gift will help put our Community by Design strategic plan on a new trajectory ensuring the new campus commons is built and strengthening the college's academic programs as well as support the student debt project, which enables students to graduate debt-free," said McPherson College president Michael Schneider.

Bridgewater receives accolades

Nearly two-dozen undergraduate academic programs at Bridgewater (Va.) College earned high rankings at the state level from PLEXUSS, a global higher education database for prospective college students. In addition to its academic program honors, PLEXUSS ranked Bridgewater among the top liberal arts colleges in Virginia.

Bridgewater's undergraduate media studies program ranked third in Virginia and in the top 100 media studies programs nationally. The college offers both a communication, technology, and culture major and a digital media arts major and launched its Master of Arts in Digital Media Strategy (MDMS) graduate program in 2019.

Bridgewater notched four other academic programs in the top 10 across the Commonwealth including biochemistry ranking fifth and environmental science ranking eighth. Both health and exercise science and health and physical education ranked seventh in Virginia.



University of La Verne

University of La Verne celebrates commencement full of culture

More than 160 University of La Verne (Calif.) students from diverse cultures celebrated the completion of their degrees with friends and family May 20-21 during three cultural graduation ceremonies where students wore sashes representing their cultural upbringings and identities.

The annual celebrations acknowledged the achievements of the class of 2022 and showcased the accomplishments of individuals within a cultural context. This year's ceremonies included the Multicultural Graduation Celebration, the Latinx Cultural Graduation Celebration, and the Black Cultural Graduation Celebration. These celebrations supplemented the main commencement ceremonies, which took place May 27-28.

Daniel Loera, director of multicultural affairs, said each multicultural graduation celebration aims to recognize family and friends as key components to their graduates' academic success.



A GLOBAL OUTLOOK

A conversation with the Global Mission office



Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li began last spring as co-executive directors of Global Mission for the Church of the Brethren after spending nearly a decade in China. MESSENGER checked in recently to see how their vision for the global Brethren movement had taken shape now that they had been on the job for more than a year.

■ What excites you about mission connections in the Church of the Brethren right now?

ERIC MILLER: The global Church of the Brethren is very exciting because it's growing. You read things about how the US denomination is under 100,000 members and things are declining and people leaving for various reasons, but then you look at the church overseas and it's growing. There are more members in Nigeria than the rest of world combined, and there's lots of growth in the rest of Africa and Latin America, too.

People there are excited about church and coming to the Church of the Brethren. They could have connected to other denominations or other churches, so what is it about Brethren? We often don't feel like we have something to say to get excited about. But they've chosen the Church of the Brethren. I think there's something there we might want to learn more about. What is it about us? It's exciting talking to people around the world about their enthusiasm for

Eric Miller takes a selfie during a recent visit to the Dominican Republic.

“People there are excited about church and coming to the Church of the Brethren. They could have connected to other denominations or other churches, so what is it about Brethren?”

the church and not just focusing on the US conflicts and issues.

In Rwanda, for example, the church there is not very big, but boy there's a lot happening. They're already building a church headquarters and training pastors in seminary. I feel like they're starting to lay good foundations there. Uganda is also quite new, and the Democratic Republic of Congo. I feel like people are working very hard and planting new churches and reaching out. And the Haitian church is always encouraging in their faithfulness in the face of challenges—how they continue to move forward and be good stewards of the resources they have.

❏ Do you see anything uniquely Brethren or Anabaptist about our work in this area?

EM: Probably the big thing that strikes me in the conversations about what the Church of the Brethren does that's maybe different than a lot of organizations around the world is the service aspect. Many groups do evangelism, but we also help people become sustainable. Agriculture programs help people have their own income. In Haiti we've had the clean water projects. We help people be better off and have income to support themselves.

I think another aspect that has come up which is important is that a lot of people who do missionary work go out as missionaries from the US to preach the gospel around the world, which is good, but one of the things

we do in this is to partner *with* the global churches. So when people come to Jesus they have a church to teach them and one that will hopefully be there for their children and grandchildren. We try to connect them to that community. We're not just taking the gospel to them and running away—something people in these countries have talked about. People come and have revival meetings and teach about Jesus and then they leave.

But the Church of the Brethren is there with them and building their communities. Then when things happen like the earthquake in Haiti there's a church in the earthquake zone, and we go and help them within that community. Those relationships are really important. We're brothers and sisters in Christ, and we are walking together as the body of Christ.

The peace position also comes up, particularly in places that have been torn by conflict like in Africa. In Rwanda, Uganda, etc., for them that's very important.

❏ As you look to the future, how do you see our international connections and the relationships between the various groups evolving?

EM: Annual Conference passed a new paper a few years back about global mission (“Vision for a Global Church of the Brethren,” 2018)—the various churches are really independent. Figuring out how we relate to these independent church bodies and how those groups will come together is a



Eric Miller and Ruoxia Li, with their daughter.

challenge. It's happening in conversation with them. How do they want to connect, and what do they want to do?

A lot of them are eager to work together to share the gospel in other countries. That's one thing that will probably happen because they consider it to be very important. The churches in Latin America just sort of naturally want to go to other countries where they have connections. People have left the Dominican Republic for other countries, and they want to go to those places. Or in Venezuela, a lot of them are going to Colombia, and they have already started a church in Colombia.

I hope one thing that this group will also do is reclaim and share the value of the Brethren and that heritage, and I hope they will re-share that back to the US, because I think a lot of times in the



US we don't recognize that value. We sort of look at other big community churches growing, and we wish we were like that. And I think from these groups you see a little bit that the Church of the Brethren has its own heritage and its own gospel values. We can reclaim and share that, and not because we want to be more

"Brethren" but because we want to be better Christians. I hope we can find ways to do that.

I think by sharing across those groups, too, there's a lot they can do to help strengthen each other. In each country the cultures and systems and government are very different, but there's an awful lot we

share in terms of thinking about issues—like how to manage finances, how to deal with conflict in the church, how to evangelize, how to support neighbors of the church and be Jesus in the neighborhood, and pastoral ethics is a big issue. We do have global churches dealing with difficult

ON SOLID GROUND

A visit to emerging churches in Rwanda and Uganda

by David Sollenberger



David Sollenberger

One of the benefits of serving as moderator of the Church of the Brethren—and don't get too comfortable; my calling has proven that just about anyone could be called to be moderator one day—is that the office affords you the choice of which Global Mission partner to visit during your term. I've kept track of our 11 partner denominations and already have visited some of them, but I was intrigued by what I learned about the emerging Church of the Brethren in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

So, I decided to see what all the excitement was about—along with my wife, Mary; several Church of the Brethren leaders from the US; Caleb Sylvanus Dakwak, pastor of the Abuja congregation of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria); and Athanasus Ungang, mission worker in South Sudan.

I now have a hunch that the enthusiasm and joyful worship experiences that we were shown was not just because someone had traveled several thousand miles to offer words of encouragement. What we found were thriving, authentic Church of the Brethren congregations, just a few years in the making but already on solid Anabaptist Pietist grounding of faithfulness to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We visited four congregations in Rwanda and nine in Uganda, often for only a few hours. But members managed to meet us there, sometimes waiting for hours in their church buildings. Most of the churches are rustic, primitive structures. Many had no walls or concrete floors or metal roofs. The ministries of the churches are clearly

things, too. It's not just that the US church has all the answers, but we all have challenges and conflicts and can learn and share with each other. It takes time to come up with good structures and practices, and we can help each other with those things.

continued on page 10



David Sollenberger

ahead of their church structures. It was very apparent that providing schools for children in their neighborhoods and caring for widows and orphans are more important than having a comfortable place to worship.

In Rwanda, the church is led by pastor Etienne Nsanzimana, who works at helping both pastors and laity understand biblical concepts from a Church of the Brethren perspective. In Uganda, Bwambale Sedrack (who incidentally discovered the Church of the Brethren online and became enamored by our peace position, emphasis on the New Testament, and simple living) directs the church's efforts, which involve providing for pastoral leadership and starting new congregations.


At each church visit, deacons (both men and women) were recognized and introduced. Thanks to contributions from churches in Southern Pennsylvania and Mid-Atlantic Districts, Bibles were presented to members of the churches.

It's an incredible experience to see people with such

energy and enthusiasm for the Lord share it so willingly. But the most enthusiasm was often reserved for our brother from Nigeria, pastor Dakwak. His words, coming from a country that for nearly 100 years has modeled our New Testament teaching of peace, inspired these new Brethren who have endured horrific violence, trauma from war, and the desire for reconciliation. At every stop, the African Brethren could see proof that Christianity is not a "white man's religion," as some of their neighbors have alleged. And the African church leaders all stressed the need for resources to train pastors in Church of the Brethren faith practices.

I concluded my remarks at each church with the promise that we in America would be praying for the churches in Rwanda and Uganda, along with their fellow new Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi—places where church leaders also have become enamored by our theology and are planting churches in the name of the Church of the Brethren. At each stop, we were assured that they also would keep US Brethren in prayer during our Annual Conference in Omaha in July.

Our common prayer was that both the US church and the emerging church in the Great Lakes region of Africa can live into our calling as the church of Jesus Christ, and grow in faithfulness and devotion to our Lord and Savior. We in the US have more than 300 years of practice. Our brothers and sisters in the Great Lakes region of Africa have just begun the journey. But my first-hand observation is that they're off to a great start.

Please continue to remember to pray for all of our Global Mission partners around the world, and start to think about what mission partner you would want to visit, were you called to be moderator. Any one of them would provide a wealth of inspiration. 

David Sollenberger is moderator of the 2022 Annual Conference.



David Sollenberger



What else would it be good for the church to know?

EM: There are other churches connected to the Church of the Brethren that we're having conversations with beyond those that are officially part of the Church of the Brethren communion, like Honduras and Mexico. They have been around awhile, and we're bringing those in a little more.

We've had some conversations in Ecuador, too, where the Church of the Brethren had a presence for a long time but left. There are still people there who have feelings and connections for the Church of the Brethren. Overall, whether in China or Nigeria or Ecuador or wherever, people really appreciate the Church of the Brethren in these places. Decades later, people remember. That's a really

important story. What people remember is very positive. They remember a missionary who gave them a can of peaches or being treated in a hospital or going to schools. Sometimes children remember stories that were told.

What we're doing has a long impact. Sometimes we think we failed, but in reality the seeds that were planted are still bearing fruit. God has used the

NOTES FROM RWANDA

Chris Elliott, a farmer and pastor from Pennsylvania, and his daughter Grace served in Rwanda from January to May. Chris helped with farming and also visited other churches and projects in Rwanda and nearby countries. Grace taught in the church's nursery school.

THE SLOW LANE

The expression here for something tedious is “*buhoro buhoro*,” meaning “slow by slow.” Our American/Western mentality pushes us to be dissatisfied if things don't happen quickly and on time. Not an easy lesson, but one that Grace and I are studying every day.

One example is husking and shelling corn, known here as maize. When it is harvested, there is still moisture in the kernel. In the US it is shelled in the field by a combine, then hauled to the farm or the elevator to be dried before long-term storage. Here in Rwanda, it is harvested with the husks still on. Last

week we husked three heaping pickup loads. A few strips of husk are left on to tie a few ears together, then hung over the rafters or a drying rack to let dry. Once dry, it is shelled by hand for final drying in the sun on a tarp, then sacked for storage.

As an American, and a farmer at that, this takes entirely too long. What is taking days could be done in minutes (or hours, at least). Yet I have enjoyed this process immensely. In the US, I do my job with my machine. You do your job with your machine and there is little interaction. We go to the drive-in window to pick up our lunch; we do our banking through the app on our smartphones; we order things online to have them placed in our mailbox or dropped on the porch. The human interface is minimal, if at all. Here, there are 6, 8, 10 people sitting together husking and shelling. The conversational chatter would never happen if machines were noisily clanging.

All of our gadgets and time-saving devices have not made our relationships stronger or better. —Chris Elliott

♦ ♦ ♦

A CLOUD OF WITNESSES


Late last year, a young woman whom I will call “Amina” came to faith in Christ. She was baptized on Christmas Day and is now a member of the Gisenyi Church of the Brethren.

Along with her two sons, Amina is faithfully attending and growing in her faith. Once Amina professed faith in Jesus, her husband abandoned her and the boys. Thankfully, her mother and stepfather have taken them in.

Just recently, Amina gave birth to a beautiful baby girl at the local women's clinic/birthing center. Since Mama Timo (her mother) doesn't drive, I took her to the clinic for us to bring Amina and the baby home.



Chris Elliott

Church of the Brethren in ways we sometimes barely realize, and the work we're doing now will be remembered for generations to come. What should we be doing now, and what can we be doing? There's a lot to think about. 

Learn more about Global Mission at www.brethren.org or contact mission@brethren.org.

Chris Elliott



We met her in a room with three other new mothers, clinic staff, and numerous family members. Amina's two sons and an aunt were there, as well. I love this sense of community! We loaded everyone, along with the bedding and new baby supplies, into the Land Cruiser for the bumpy ride to her parents' house.

We walked the path from the car to the house, passing neighbors' houses and gardens, warmly greeted by everyone along the way. It is a nice house in a growing "suburb" of Gisenyi, not far from the church. Mama Timo happily carried the new baby as we entered the house and proceeded to Amina's bedroom. I was asked to offer a prayer of blessing for the child and family. It was a rather emotional moment, and I managed to choke out a few words to the Heavenly Father before Mama Timo, Grace, and I went back to the car.

At mealtime, I asked Papa Timo about the birthing center's charge for delivering a baby. He apparently thought that I wanted to help with the bill, as he assured me it was all taken care of (I'm pretty sure that he had paid it himself). I told him that I was simply nosy. Our jaws dropped open when he said 15,000 Rwandan francs (\$15). His and Mama Timo's jaws dropped open when I said that in the US it would probably cost \$15,000. —Chris Elliott



Chris Elliott

RESTING UNDER THE SHADOW

"He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty." —Psalm 91:1 (KJV)

What does it mean to abide under the shadow of the Almighty? Approximately 20 kilometers from our dwelling in Rwanda lies the active volcano Nyiragongo. There is potential for a massive natural disaster when it chooses to strike. Last year, an eruption occurred. Thirty-two people lost their lives, and 1,000 homes were destroyed.

That knowledge doesn't cause anyone to lose sleep, to the best of my knowledge, but there is a healthy respect as we live in Nyiragongo's shadow.

Likewise, I have been learning to simply abide and rest under the shadow of the Almighty.

Abiding in the secret place of the Most High has spoken into my life through teaching English at the nursery school. There have been days that I felt like having a meltdown as my students do! The overwhelming stress from teaching and the frustrations of cross-cultural communication are a challenge.

I am thankful that things have improved. The confidence and assertiveness that I have gained have been invaluable. Through the challenges and struggles, I love my students, and I love being able to hear their little voices respond, "Good morning, teacher!" It warms my heart and gives me the energy to keep going.

When living in a cultural context that is not your own, the mountains and valleys of life are felt so much more acutely. The mountain tops are absolutely beautiful, and the valleys are terrible.

I am so thankful that I am alive to feel that wild roller coaster called life, and that God has brought me home to Rwanda.

Imana ishiemwe! To God be the glory! —Grace Elliott



Redeeming dirt

by Jeff Boshart

USDA NRCS Montana

Listening to the news in this country or talking to friends in other countries, or simply going to the grocery store, it is harder and harder each day not to feel increasing anxiety about the future. My kids are feeling it. My parents are feeling it. I imagine I am not alone. So, what are you doing for self-care these days? What are you doing to nurture your soul?

I've been helped by a book titled *The Well-Gardened Mind: The Restorative Power of Nature*, by Sue Stuart-Smith. She's an English psychotherapist and gardener who takes the reader on a deep dive into the history, biology, and current application of horticultural therapy.

This is not meant to be a religious book, but I find myself stopping again and again to ponder the thought, care, and love for all creation that God has built into its design. I'm also struck by the awesome responsibility that God has given us to be co-creators, and the unique opportunities that gardening

provides to be involved in the process of re-creation.

"Gardening is what happens when human creativity meets nature's creativity: both are necessary, and neither is completely in charge," writes Stuart-Smith. I see this in our flower gardens when the jewel weed and the lupines or the odd squash plant from the compost pop up in unexpected but not unwanted places, or sunflowers sprout up where chipmunks have planted them after raiding our bird feeder. Gardening promotes interdependency and is the opposite of entitlement, says Stuart-Smith.

She writes about how gardening classes for prisoners allow people who have been abused, or who had to fight for everything their entire life, to connect and care for plants. When these people leave prison and are connected to community gardens, the recidivism rate is drastically reduced. In San Quentin prison in California, it was shown that this gardening class actually could save money, as the cost of

holding the class for one year was roughly equal to the cost of keeping one prisoner in the system for the same length of time.

Gardening long has been known to lead to reduction in anxiety and depression, but how? We have in our brains some cells called microglial cells (sometimes called "gardening cells") that work while we sleep, helping our brains' neurons and synapses repair and grow by releasing proteins that act like fertilizer. Low amounts of these proteins are connected to depression, but protein levels can be increased through exercise and social interactions.

Stuart-Smith tells how horticultural therapy can bring healing to veterans dealing with PTSD. They feel safe in a garden surrounded by a fence or a hedge, and that feeling of safety is the first step toward healing. Emotional healing starts at the biochemical level of our brains.

You may have noticed a certain smell when soil becomes wet. This smell is the

“Gardening long has been known to lead to reduction in anxiety and depression, but how?”

result of the activity of a group of bacteria (actinomycetes), and is a chemical called geosmin. This chemical compound helps regulate serotonin and increases the effectiveness of the immune system to promote healing.

Another type of bacterium (*Mycobacterium vaccae*) that is found in compost or manure reduces inflammation and stress when breathed in. Think about what that says about God's character—that we are cared for through the actions of microscopic organisms that, until recently in human history, we didn't even know existed.

Gardening itself may have come from a religious practice among ancient cultures who would leave the first fruits of trees or vegetables on the plants. Where those fruits fell, plants would grow. Some astute observers (likely women, ethnobotanists believe) made the connection


and developed the knowledge to save seeds from season to season. I'm challenged to think of more ways to give offerings of first fruits in my own life. Who knows how God might use those offerings to bless others?

In early Christian thought, gardening was seen as a curse and fit only for peasants and enslaved people, until St. Benedict in the 6th century promoted the revolutionary concept of sanctified manual labor. In the Benedictine order, all monks gardened to show their equality, and gardening tools were treated with the same reverence as other vessels of the altar. They also would place the sick in settings where beauty abounded, surrounded by flowers and singing birds, to go along with good food and healing herbs to nourish all the senses.

Today, some physicians in Europe are starting to prescribe a certain number of hours gardening per week

as part of their treatment for their patients and have shown this to be as effective as 10 weeks of cognitive behavioral therapy. A treatment center in England no longer uses the word "patients" to describe those who seek treatment there—they simply call them gardeners.


If you're not already a gardener, maybe Sue Stuart-Smith's book will convince you that you should consider taking it up as a hobby—for your own healing.

Or maybe you will be persuaded by the words of Isaiah 55:2 (NIV): "Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen to me and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare." 

Jeff Boshart is manager of the Global Food Initiative, a ministry of the Church of the Brethren. He also farms with his wife, Peggy, who sells goods at the local farmer's market.



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Stained glass speaks of God

'Unspoken and unsung mystery'



Left to right: Jones Chapel Church of the Brethren (Martinsville, Va.), New Carlisle (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, Luray (Va.) Church of the Brethren, Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren (New Paris, Ohio), Potsdam (Ohio) Church of the Brethren. (Far left photo by Wendy McFadden; others by Traci Rabenstein.)

Stained glass windows—and other art glass in Church of the Brethren sanctuaries—are testaments to what one pastor has called the “unspoken and unsung mystery of God.”

This is despite the complicated relationship that Brethren may have with stained glass, if we have any. Some congregations never bought into this mainstream Christian tradition, reflecting the Brethren heritage of simplicity.

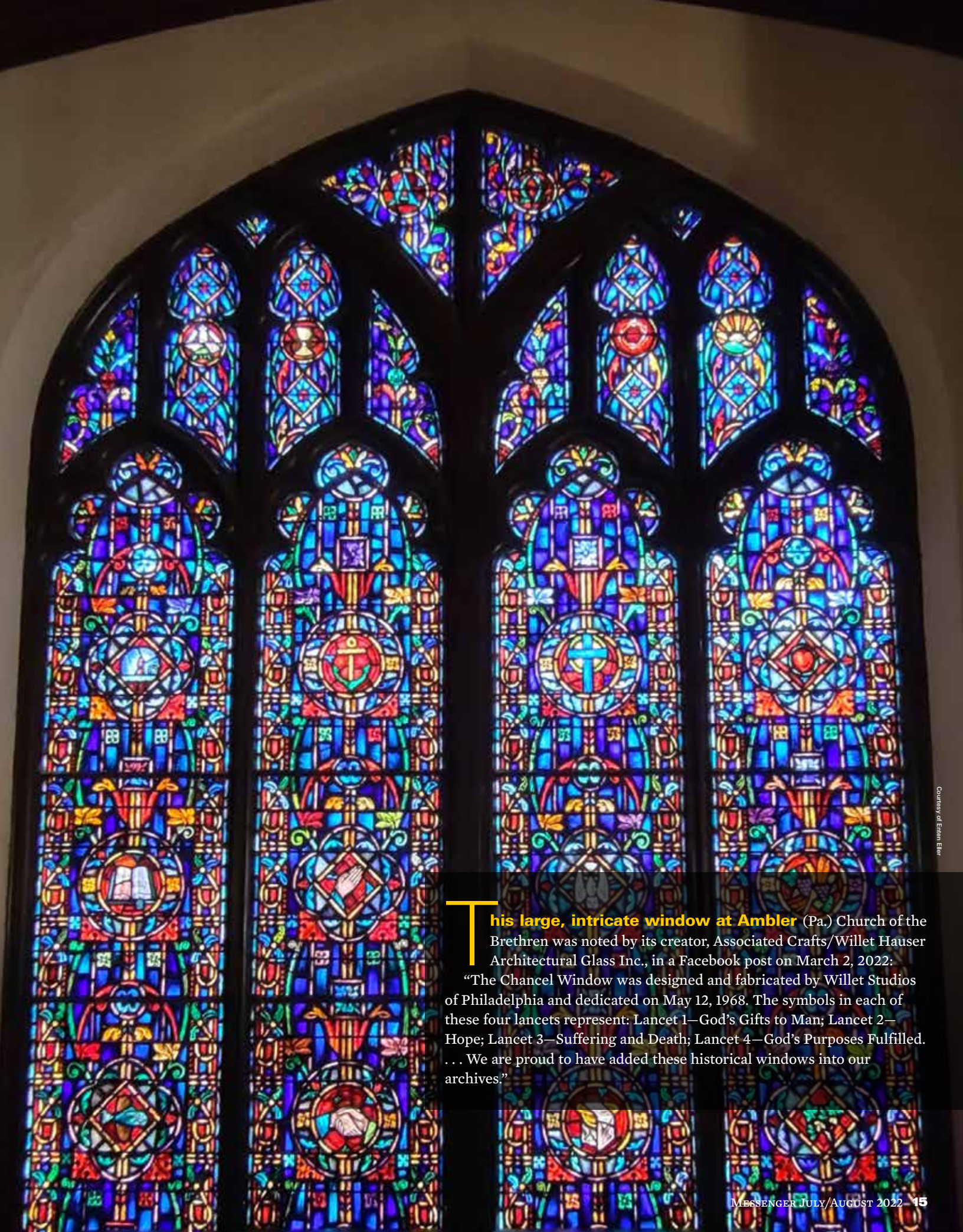
Others, with typical Brethren frugality and admirable recycling, “adopted” and provided new homes for windows from other churches that were closed or demolished.

Some churches, fortunate to have artists among their members, designed or created windows with particular meaning for their own congregations.

And then there are the congregations that purchased stained glass windows (many did this at great expense in the mid-

20th century) and now face the struggle to maintain them, as well as 21st century questions of relevance, diversity, and equity.

However we acquired our sanctuary windows, and whether they are plain or elaborately illustrative, and however we feel about their relevance today—there is something about the way light enters a holy space. The intensity of light passing through jeweled glass sings in silent, bright tones of the ever-new life we have through Jesus Christ. —Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Courtesy of Enten Eller

This large, intricate window at Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was noted by its creator, Associated Crafts/Willet Hauser Architectural Glass Inc., in a Facebook post on March 2, 2022:

“The Chancel Window was designed and fabricated by Willet Studios of Philadelphia and dedicated on May 12, 1968. The symbols in each of these four lancets represent: Lancet 1—God’s Gifts to Man; Lancet 2—Hope; Lancet 3—Suffering and Death; Lancet 4—God’s Purposes Fulfilled. . . . We are proud to have added these historical windows into our archives.”

The chapel windows at the Church of the Brethren General Offices



1 IHS the three letters (iota, eta, sigma) of the Greek spelling of Jesus



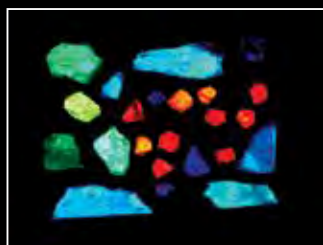
2 Oikoumene the church universal, the boat (church) with masthead (cross of Christ) sailing on a rough sea (the world)



3 Descending dove the gift and guidance of the Holy Spirit



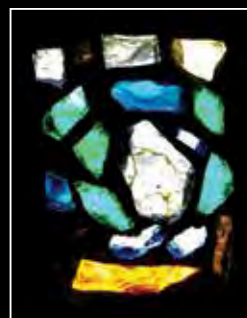
4 Chi Rho the first two letters of the Greek word for Christ



9 Vine and grapes unity with Christ and the fruit of the Christian life



10 Open Bible the Scriptures as the open and continuing word of God



11 Palm wreath victory and triumph and the ultimate reward of the Christian



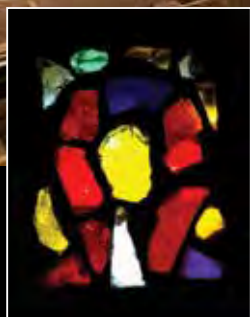
12 Lamp of truth truth, knowledge, learning, wisdom, and the word of God as light on the path of the Christian

The chapel at the Church of the Brethren General Offices is a place of worship for employees and visitors. It symbolizes the spiritual motivation for all the work that takes place in the building and the work of the denomination around the world.

The elliptical lines of the chapel focus on the cross as symbolic of the centrality of Jesus as Lord and Savior. The stone walls of native granite boulders suggest the strength and ageless character of the Christian faith. The open grill above the



5 Alpha the first letter of the Greek alphabet (Alpha) and the last (Omega) signify that God is the beginning and end of all things



6 Omega



7 Chalice (service cup) the concept of practical religion and the Christian ministry to human need



8 Candle
Christ the light of the world



9 Towel and basin obedience and humble service, as expressed in the ordinance of footwashing



10 Broken bread sharing of bread and fellowship in the breaking of bread



11 Greek cross the sacrificial life of Christ and the redemptive power of the gospel

Architect: Frazier, Raftery, Orr, and Fairbanks (Geneva, Ill.)

Stained glass: Michaudel Stained Glass Studio (Chicago)

Completed in 1959

Wide photo by Nevin Dulabaum. Design from a brochure produced by Debbie Noffsinger and Wendy McFadden.

chancel suggests openness to God.

Through the small jeweled windows enter shafts of light in an array of rich colors. Designs of Christian symbols appear in about two-thirds of the windows. The other designs are abstract. The

windows are of faceted slab glass set in cement.

The design and furnishings embody the simplicity of early Brethren meetinghouses in the eastern United States, which the architects visited for inspiration.



Clara Brumbaugh-Covford

Windows made for a chapel at Bethany Seminary's campus at West Van Buren Street in Chicago survived two subsequent moves by the school, and are now displayed in the Bethany building in Richmond, Ind. At center is an illustration of one of the beatitudes, flanked by images from the history of the Church of the Brethren.

In a report to Annual Conference in 1945, seminary president Rufus Bowman outlined the desire for "a simple but beautiful and worshipful chapel standing in the center of the campus as a call to prayer." Conference approved a denomination-wide fundraising campaign that raised enough to build the chapel, completed by 1952 for a total cost of

\$174,291.81 including memorial windows and landscaping.

Just five years later, in 1957, the seminary announced that for a variety of reasons Bethany needed to move. Portions of the new chapel would be preserved and brought to the school's next location in Oak Brook, Ill., including the memorial windows.

This window at Gettysburg (Pa.) Church of the Brethren is an etched, leaded window, not stained glass. It shows discipleship. The scripture at the bottom is Ephesians 6:4: "But bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."

A brochure explains, "Children who daily witness their parents living out the example of Christ's teachings are being nurtured in the ways of discipleship. The text holds an exhortation, especially to fathers, not to exasperate your children but take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master."

It is one of nine etched windows in the Gettysburg church that depict Brethren values. The other eight demonstrate anointing, baptism, feetwashing, love feast, communion, stewardship, love of enemy, and the Great Commission. The windows were made by Rudy Glass Company in York, Pa.

I have heard people say that these windows are a little-known treasure in the Church of the Brethren.

—Mary Kay Turner.



Traci Robinson

The stained glass windows at Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., were installed in 1997 by Higgins and Associates, who provided both the artist and installation. The pastor at the time, Ed Woodard, wrote the following descriptions of the meanings of the windows:

The rainbow—The symbol of God’s covenant with all creation, that the Creator intends good and not destruction for the world.

Noah’s ark and dove with olive leaf—A reminder that in the midst of our storms, God has provided a refuge and a future hope.

Easter lilies and crown—The crown is a symbol of the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The lilies remind us we are a people forever changed by the resurrection. It gives us hope in the face of death, but especially sets us

free to live fully now.

Descending dove and seashell—We recall that upon baptism we are dying to the old life and being resurrected to the new as we invite the Holy Spirit to take control of our lives.

Musical horns—Celebration and worship is our privilege because we have found that God is truly good.

Musical note of praise and note of mystery—Music speaks, where words fail, of the wonders of our Creator. The upper note is not found on any musical score. It signifies the unspoken and unsung mystery of God.

Bible, cross, and dove—Holy Scripture is God’s love letter to us, revealing that Jesus Christ has suffered and died for us on the cross that we might be reconciled to God and to each other. Through the cross we are

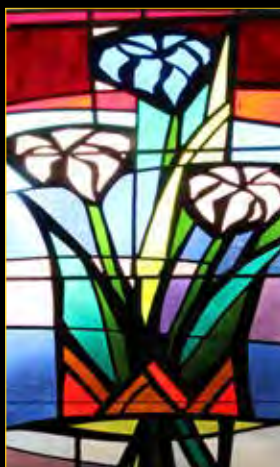
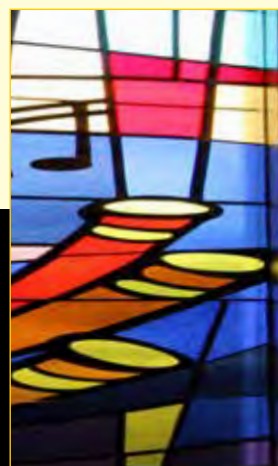
invited into God’s “peace” and to become God’s peacemakers.

Pitcher of oil—In anointing we are reminded that God’s intention for our lives is healing in spirit, body, and mind.

Dove, wheat, cup, and grapes—Whenever we gather for communion or love feast, we are reminded that Christ is with us.

Alexander Mack Seal—This is the seal of the founder of the Church of the Brethren. The cross is a reminder of Jesus Christ and the call to follow in His Way. The heart reminds us we are to give ourselves totally from the heart in devotion and commitment to Christ. The vine and fruit remind us that if we abide in Christ, we will bear God’s fruits.

Basin and towel—We are forever called to do as Jesus did to serve one another. —Carol Elmore



Courtesy of Carol Elmore and Oak Grove Church of the Brethren



The memory of Martin Luther King Jr. is held in many places by streets, libraries, and schools named in his honor, as well as plaques and statues. At First Church of the Brethren in Chicago, Ill., he is remembered in stained glass, appearing at the bottom right of this large window in the church sanctuary.

“Where is Martin Luther King Jr. in your neighborhood? . . . We often think of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., in the context of his work in the South—Selma, Montgomery, Atlanta. But in the mid-1960s, Martin Luther King Jr. worked for racial justice and equality in Chicago. Many historians have confirmed his insight, that the racism and resistance he encountered in Chicago was worse than what he encountered in the South. During that time, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference had offices at First Church of the Brethren in Chicago and King preached from our pulpit. Before the end of the decade, he would be assassinated in Memphis and the work he began continued. . . . In many ways, is still continuing.” —*From a blogpost by Gimbiya Kettering in 2018, when she served as director of Intercultural Ministries*

When the present sanctuary (of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren in Elgin, Ill.) was built in 1952-53, stained glass windows were ordered from a firm in Lynchburg, Va. They were designed by Forrest Groff, church architect on the staff of the General Brotherhood Board, and Vance Shepherd, his assistant, both members of the congregation. They chose a coordinated pattern of both muted and bright colors with images of significance to Brethren. Shepherd remembers, “The symbols in the windows were drawn full-sized and colored before being sent to the stained glass company.” —*The Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren Centennial Encyclopedia (1999)*



Nevin Dulinbaum

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

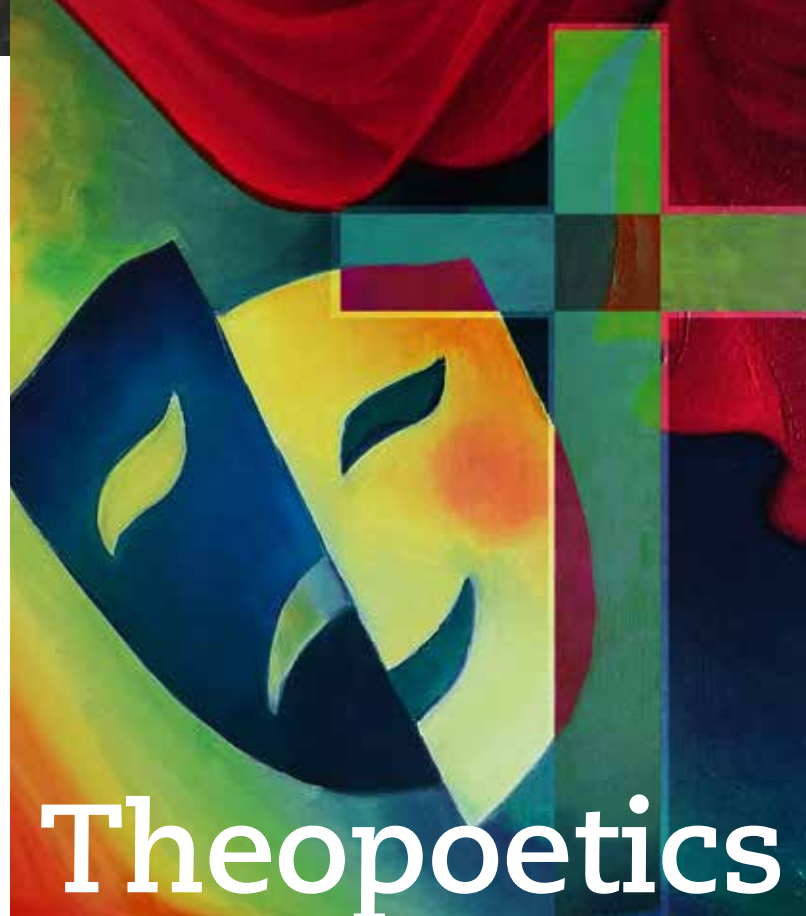


The beautiful stained glass windows of this building [the Quinter-Miller Auditorium at Camp Alexander Mack in Milford, Ind.] have two interesting stories behind them. During the Depression a certain church in Fort Wayne had been out of use for some time. The owner wanted the building wrecked so he could use the space for a parking lot. John Worthman, a contractor from Fort Wayne, was hired to remove this building for which he was paid \$500 cash plus the possession of the materials from the church building. Mr. Worthman very graciously gave the stained glass windows and some of the limestone from the church to

Camp Mack for the Quinter-Miller Auditorium. Men of the Fort Wayne congregation hauled this material to the camp. The two huge windows of the ends of the auditorium and the smaller windows on the lower level all around the auditorium are from this old Fort Wayne church—their original cost estimated at approximately \$9,000. The stained glass windows of the upper level of the building were given by W. E. West (Mount Morris, Ill.). They had been salvaged from the old chapel of Mount Morris College when it was closed in 1932 to merge with Manchester College.” —*From The Story of Camp Mack by L. W. Schultz*

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford





Theopoetics

and the power of public performance

by Carol Davis

Jesus and his disciples, exhausted from a long day of healing and ministering, stopped at a house for some food and rest. They didn't get it. Crowds packed into the house seeking this man who could drive out demons.

Concerned for his sanity, Jesus' family members came to get him. Teachers of the law accused him of being possessed by Beelzebul. "By the prince of demons, he is driving out

demons." This escalated quickly into a very sticky situation for Jesus. How could he possibly respond to such a diverse crowd?

He told them a story. A parable. "How can Satan drive out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is divided, he cannot stand, but his end has come" (Mark 3:23-26). In

present day, this is where Jesus would have let the microphone drop.

Arguably, no one has used the power of live performance better than Jesus. And perhaps no one left a better example of how to illuminate relevant spiritual truths that unify rather than divide. By offering public performances of theopoetic art forms, we can be like Jesus. The good news is that we may already be doing so without realizing the potential impact public performance can make.

What is theopoetics?

It is not merely poetry about God, as a literal rendering of the term might suggest. Reaching back to the ancient Greek *poiesis*, which means "to make" or "to artfully construct," those drawn to this genre of writing emphasize the inventive, intuitive, and imaginative possibilities of representing both humanity and divinity in their writing—remembering that "God is the poet of the world," as several theologians have proclaimed. It is a call to manifest the artful spirit of the Creator as those created in that divine image seek to write about God, world, self, and others. —Scott Holland, April 2017 MESSENGER

Why theopoetic performance?

We are stories! We are gloriously diverse in our ethnicities, our gender identities, our ideologies, our talents, our politics, our beliefs, and our faith journeys. Wherever two or more of us are gathered, a myriad of conflicting opinions arise . . . about *everything*. How can we possibly respond to such a diverse crowd? We can follow Jesus's public

performance example and make it relevant to today by using theo-poetics.

Theopoetics provides an artistic “safe harbor” to share, to contemplate, and to consider other points of view.

Theopoetics offers metaphorical illumination to difficult theological topics, divisive social justice issues, and possible answers to the eternal questions of *why am I here; what is my purpose; what happens after I die?* Purposeful public performance of theo-poetics opens doors to thought-provoking conversations based on what’s been seen, heard, or displayed. Or can send us home to further consider what we just experienced.

Historically, the relationship of church and theater has been a rocky one. Sometimes the church approved and sanctioned performances, like the mystery and cycle plays of the Middle Ages. At other times, the church banned all forms of theater and labeled those who participated in them as sinful.

However, today all aspects of theater and theo-poetics—music, poetry, storytelling, dance, skits, parodies, plays, mime, visual art—may be found in most churches throughout the world. With today’s technology, we now have unlimited access to these existing resources as well as original performance pieces created by members of our own inner circles.

Creating and implementing

Public performance may occur and offer great opportunity whenever and wherever a group gathers. Theo-poetics easily reaches beyond church walls. Recently in my class “Theatre, Theology, and the Power of Public Performance,” at Bethany Theological Seminary, I asked students to identify the potential locations theo-poetics might be performed. The list included street corners, workshops, shopping malls, online meeting platforms, traditional stages, or the front steps of City Hall. Just as Jesus frequently performed in homes, at riverbanks, on mountain tops, and at death beds, the options are limitless.

As long as the theo-poetical pieces shed new light on relevant topics for further thought and discussion, performances may be highly dramatic, or absurdist, or hilarious. One student, Phil Matarese, has a delightful sense of humor. Below is a small section of his short play, “Isaiah Uncovered,” based on Isaiah 20. He plans to use this piece just before a sermon to bring the congregation together.

Isaiah: [Runs onto the stage. Pastor should look startled. Isaiah waves his arms and raises his voice] Hold it! What’s all that you’re reading?

Pastor: The Bible, Isaiah Chapter 20. Why are you interrupting my sermon?

Isaiah: I’m Isaiah! And I believe you just said that I walked naked and barefoot for three years!

Pastor: Yes, that’s what the scripture says.

Isaiah: [Stammers] Well ... that can’t be right ... I wouldn’t do that. I have standards! One has to draw the line somewhere.

Pastor: [Holds up Bible in frustration] Do you want to read it?

Isaiah: [Shakes head] Tell God I’m not doing it. This very improper.

Pastor: Go tell God yourself. I’m just a vision. You’re seeing the future. Except for this conversation, which isn’t real. It is only in your head.

Isaiah: [Points to own head. Shocked and appalled] Why are you in my head. [Pause] This is very unusual.

Pastor: You’re a prophet, aren’t you? This is kind of your thing.

Isaiah: [Thoughtful] I suppose you’re right. What is the purpose of all this anyway?

Pastor: [Shrugs] I guess God’s getting ready to ask you to do this, getting you used to the idea.

How to create performances that make an impact

- Find gifted writers to compose the pieces.
- Avoid *bending* a piece to a particular point of view.
- If using existing resources, obtain permission and give credit.
- Match people’s gifts to participation.
- Determine the best time and place for the inclusion of the piece.
- Review best theatrical staging practices so that viewing and hearing are at optimal levels.
- Rehearse!
- Proceed with inspired passion.

Isaiah: [Sighs] Alright, let’s get this over with.

Pastor: [Picks up Bible and closes it, puts it under arm] Good luck pal. You’re going to need it.

Theopoetics can be a way to broach current social issues. For example, performances can highlight climate change topics to foster thought, discussion, or even action. Two wonderful examples may be found in the April edition of MESSENGER—Gimbiya Kettering’s “The Parable of the Compost” and Ingrid Roger’s poem “Our Call to Creation Care.” Imagine the impact strong works such as these can make when embedded into a worship service. For Black History Month, consider a reader’s theater performance in which Paul’s letters from prison are interspersed with Martin Luther King Jr.’s “Letter from Birmingham Jail.”

Many people suffer from mental exhaustion or stress from the events of recent years. A Bethany student, Lark, wrote a short play featuring a young woman placed in a facility following a

mental breakdown. We experience her anguish and confusion as she expresses her emotions to an unseen and silent therapist.

For other inspiration, reread the thousands of stories in the Bible and create relevant metaphorical performance pieces around them—not reenactments or pageants, but allegorical or extension pieces that suggest spiritual glimpses of the *what if?* the *if only?* or the *what now?*

A public performance piece requires a few specific elements. First, determine the issue or topic to be addressed and its connection to the divine or the spiritual. Next, consider the audience you hope to reach, the setting in which the piece will be presented, who will write the original piece or research an existing work. Then, decide who will perform it, what properties, stage objects, or technology might be needed, and the amount of rehearsal time needed to

achieve a polished performance. Finally, if you plan an after-performance discussion, create a few discussion questions in advance and determine who leads the discussion.


The performance can be extremely simple or lavishly elaborate. Those involved in the process will benefit as much as the people attending.

Theopoetics for all

A bonus effect of public performance lies in educational research. Studies show that each of us prefers a specific learning style (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic) for retention and understanding. Public performance blends all three learning styles. This means that all enjoy the performance using their most dominant learning style, which is also supplemented by the other two.

Jesus used this technique. Recall the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus stood high

where all could see him gesturing and hear his voice flowing out to the thousands below. And then he made it even more memorable by providing bread and fish.

The performance arts provide a pathway toward compassion, understanding, illumination, conversation, and potential action. In his play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare reminds us that “all the world’s a stage, and all the men and women merely players.” Jesus tells his disciples, “Go into all the world and preach the good news to the whole creation” (Mark 16:15). With theopoetics and public performance readily available to us, we all have the opportunity to go. 

Carol Davis, a retired college administrator, earned a master of arts in Theopoetics and Writing from Bethany Theological Seminary, where she is now an adjunct instructor. She is artistic director of the Spoon River College Community Chorus performing arts organization and has served as music director at Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren for over 35 years.

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A new city

Revelation 21:10-21

by David Radcliff

I have to admit that the first analogy that came to mind when reading this chapter was the Emerald City in *The Wizard of Oz*. Both are fantasy lands of a sort, although the one was shown to be but an illusion, while the other (the holy city descending from heaven) is an inspired vision of what awaits the believer in the life to come.

This must have been quite a revelation for John, to be transported to this future dwelling of God, the Lamb, and the chosen. While the building blocks of the holy city are fabulous enough themselves, with all the gold, jasper, topaz, and such, the symbolism of the numbers is rich as well, pointing as they do beyond themselves in sequences of perfection.

Even more fabulous is the lack of a need for a temple; the Lord God and the Lamb are here!

A bonus: This passage is a quick tutorial on the origins of the oft-used expression “the pearly gates” (see v. 21).

Is everyone welcome?

This picture of a future time of splendor for people of all nations and all situations in life is a powerful source of inspiration for those mired in the troubles and imperfections of the present time. As such, it can serve as a respite from current struggles, since we are assured that in the by-and-by things will be better (as we’ll see in a moment, this can also be used to distract the suffering from their present situation).

Our text today may be helpful to the down-and-outer in another way: The gates of the city point in each of the cardinal directions, signifying an openness to all, and later we are told that “the nations” and even “the kings of the earth” (v. 24) will be invited, meaning anyone from anywhere whose name is in the book of life is welcome here.

In his quite revealing book on Revelation, *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible*, Brethren theologian Vernard Eller suggested that the presence of kings and nations, whom John has previously derided (chapter 13), demon-

strates that these must have been given a second chance postmortem. Their baptism by fire in the lake of fire made them into something wholly different, now worthy of being on the roll that’s called up yonder.

And since the city gates are never closed (v. 25), they could enter. From where? The lake of fire, Eller says, making the case for universalism—that is, the eventual redemption of all people. (Some early Brethren, including Alexander Mack, believed that there would be punishment for some in the afterlife, but that a loving God would not make this last for eternity.)

The future is now

This picture of a welcoming-to-all, beautiful-beyond-imagination world would be particularly helpful to people struggling against various forms of oppression in the here and now, as they can see in scripture that there is a glorious, God-ordained future when everyone has equal standing. This vision of the future could help people



“How is this vision of the shimmering city of God and its “gates are always open” approach helpful to us?”

Looking back, looking ahead

In launching their movement, the early Brethren looked back to the primitive church to shape their beliefs and practices. They felt the early Christians were pristine, in the sense that they were closest to Jesus and thus would have had the best understanding of how Christianity should express itself. The group was especially committed to casting off traditional religious observances to align themselves more closely with the early church and with Jesus' own teachings.

In today's scripture, we have another example of “the way things should be” on the other end of the historical timeline—the beauty and inclusivity of the holy city of God. Here, too, the direct presence of God and the Lamb gives credence to the values on display, as did proximity to Jesus for the primitive church.

How is this vision of the shimmering city of God and its “gates are always open” approach helpful to us?

- It foreshadows the marvelous future that awaits us, reminding us that life on earth is not all there is. Especially those who have struggled in this life can know that respite is in their future.

- It is a model for our living here, challenging us to raise our vision of what God's intentions are for human life. In this way it reminds us of Jesus' prayer in Matthew 6:10: “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven” (KJV). We see what heaven is like in these verses. How close are we to approximating this in our world today?

- The open gates, which seem to welcome those we might not have imagined gaining access, is a helpful reminder of the pitfalls of a hell-and-damnation gospel. On the other hand, as people or institutions in our own times bring pain and grief on people or

God's creation, they need to be held to account for their behaviors, as the heavenly city reveals that God clearly seeks beauty and harmony.


There goes the neighborhood

My dad taught *A Guide for Biblical Studies* to his Sunday school class at Blue Ridge Church of the Brethren for the last 50 years of his life, until passing away in January 2016. He was a staunch Brethren who saw in our denomination the truest expression of Christianity, whether it was related to service, peace-making, the ordinances, or social justice.

In his final months on this earth, however, we might say he had a revelation. Many of us in the family had come to visit him at the hospital following a treatment of some kind. Once he awoke from the procedure, he proclaimed: “I visited heaven, and guess what? There weren't just Brethren there!” Rather than chagrined, he seemed elated by what had been revealed to him.

A few weeks later he joined the Baptists, Catholics, and others in those eternal habitations, no doubt wise-cracking to them about whether God had likewise burst their bubble by letting them know ahead of time that even Brethren had been invited to pass the pearly gates.

John's vision of the culmination of history—marked by God tenting among the people and by the people themselves

no longer being subject to pain, tears, and death—is a powerful image of the next life that awaits those who have persevered in this life. As such, it can both sustain us in times of trial and inspire us to aspire for a world more like that in the here and now. Why should the peoples of the world have to wait for what we know God wants for them? 

David Radcliff, an ordained Church of the Brethren minister, is director of New Community Project, a nonprofit organization working at care for creation and peace through justice.

envision a better present world, empowering them to act now to make this a reality.

This reminds us of enslaved people in our own history. We know that this vision of a sumptuous and well-appointed afterlife was used by slave-owners to pacify African Americans during the pre-emancipation era. However, the enslaved readily interchanged “heaven and hell” for “freedom and slavery” in their interpretation of Christianity, using their faith as a springboard to push for “heaven on earth,” full rights as citizens in the present day.

Later on, Black leaders would have none of the ploy to use visions of future glory to divert attention from an inglorious present. John Lewis once said of Martin Luther King Jr.: “He was not concerned about the streets of heaven and the pearly gates.... He was more concerned about the streets of Montgomery and the way that Black people and poor people were being treated in Montgomery.”



BBT is now Eder Financial

Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT), which has been serving Church of the Brethren employees

and organizations for up to eight decades, is now known as Eder Financial. The name Eder is taken from the Eder River in Schwarzenau, Germany, where the Brethren movement began in 1708.

On May 4, the State of Illinois officially changed the corporate name to Eder Financial Inc. This was a transition “to accommodate one of BBT’s strategic goals—to adopt new names to better serve its members and clients,” said a release from Eder Financial.

At the same time, the following names also were changed: the Brethren Foundation Inc. became Eder Deferred Gifts

Inc., and Brethren Foundation Funds became Eder Organizational Investing Inc.

“These new identities reflect BBT’s heritage and will resonate with Church of the Brethren members while being attractive to others outside the denomination who are of like mind and who want to use Eder’s services,” the release said.

The organization’s established services and programs are not changing, including retirement services, insurance services, deferred gifts management, organizational investing opportunities, an online investment platform, benevolent grants for pastors and other church employees in financial difficulties, and educational workshops.

“The difference is that Eder Financial will now begin serving members and clients of like mind that are outside the Church of the Brethren,” the release said, quoting president Nevin Dulabaum: “With changing demographics and affinity within the Church of the Brethren, a move to serve Anabaptist organizations and others of like mind will allow Eder Financial to fulfill its commitments to its members for decades to come.”

The name change is the last of five strategic goals to be launched in recent months, including first to change operations to be in a growth rather than maintenance mode, second to open up marketing and promotional efforts in a new way, third to create the right staff positions and hire the right people for those positions, and fourth to become a work-from-home organization allowing the hiring of staff from across the country. Eder Financial continues to have a small suite of offices at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill.



Eder Financial

BOLD. BALANCED. TRUSTED.

EDF grants aid Ukraine refugees

Brethren Disaster Ministries directed grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to relief for displaced Ukrainians and to a National Youth Conference (NYC) service project making school kits.

A grant of \$50,000 was given to the International Orthodox Christian

Charities, a US-based NGO, for its work to support Ukrainians displaced in neighboring countries, host families and institutions providing humanitarian assistance for refugees, and protection for women and children.

A grant of \$37,500 helps fund a project to collect Church World

Service school kits at NYC. Brethren Disaster Ministries and the Brethren Disaster Relief Auction in Pennsylvania are partnering in the project to assemble at least 3,000 kits. The auction has contributed \$20,000. NYC participants will bring additional donations.



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Conference announces preacher change

A change in the preacher schedule for the 2022 Annual Conference taking place July 10-14, in Omaha, Neb., has been announced. Previously announced preacher Eric Bishop had to cancel. The Program and Arrangements Committee invited Anna Lisa Gross to preach on Tuesday evening, July 12.

Gross will preach on "The Joy of Little Deaths," with the scripture texts from Psalm 147:1 and Luke 15:11-32. She is an ordained minister who is co-interim district executive for South/Central Indiana District and has been serving as a part-time pastor at Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Northern Indiana District.

Find the full schedule of preachers for the Conference at www.brethren.org/ac2022/worship.



Shipment sends relief for Ukraine

This shipment has been in the works for quite a while but *finally* is on its way," reported Loretta Wolf, director of Material Resources. She and her staff work out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md., to collect, warehouse, and ship relief goods for a number of ecumenical and humanitarian partner organizations.

In May, Material Resources worked on a Lutheran World Relief shipment to respond to the Ukraine situation. Wolf said, "We loaded five trailers with donated items to fly from Dulles Airport to Poland and to Ukraine."

The shipment consisted of approximately 9,600 quilts, 4,160 school kits, 18,500 personal care kits, 4,080 baby care kits, and 21,330 pounds of soap.

Bethany graduates the class of 2022

Bethany Theological Seminary honored the graduates from the class of 2022 during commencement on May 7. This year's class included 7 master of divinity graduates, 8 graduating with master of arts degrees, and 17 earning graduate certificates.

Master of divinity:

Amos Dan Doka (Wazo, Nigeria)
Sharon Ruth Flaten (Bridgewater, Va.)
Eric M. Kauffman (Mifflinburg, Pa.)
Jennifer Kay Jensen (McPherson, Kan.)
Scott Patrick Linton (Frederick, Md.)
Matthew Paul Rittle (Arlington, Va.)
Julia Anne Wheeler (Pomona, Calif.)

Master of arts:

Angela Lynn Adams (Malden, Ill.)
Kayla Rae Collins (Richmond, Ind.)
Lark Lundberg (Rockford, Ill.)

Zachary Thomas Mays
(Saint Petersburg, Fla.)
Nolan Ryan McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)

Master of arts in theopoetics and writing:

Alexander Randy McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)
Audriana Nicole Svay
(North Manchester, Ind.)

Master of arts in spiritual and social transformation:

Susuyu Ayuba Lassa (Jos, Nigeria)

Certificate in theopoetics and theological imagination:

Kayla Rae Collins (Richmond, Ind.)
Tina Marie Fisher (Gainesville, Va.)
Lark Lundberg (Rockford, Ill.)
Zachary Thomas Mays
(Saint Petersburg, Fla.)
Matthew Paul Rittle (Arlington, Va.)

Ingrid Rogers (Menlo Park, Calif.)

Certificate in just peace and conflict transformation:

Alexander Randy McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)
Jamie Elaine McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)

Certificate in intercultural biblical interpretation:

Scott Patrick Linton (Frederick, Md.)

Certificate in biblical peacemaking:

Sunday Aimu (Jos, Nigeria)
Musa Anto Dauda (Jos, Nigeria)
Titus Zira Fate (Jos, Nigeria)
Rosa John (Jos, Nigeria)
Katherine Usen (Jos, Nigeria)
Eugenia Lazarus Zoakah (Jos, Nigeria)

Certificate in theology and science:

Jamie Elaine McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)
Jonathan David Zinnel (Middleton, Wis.)

A shout-out

I always look forward to receiving and reading MESSENGER; however, I just have to give a special shout-out for the May 2022 issue—it literally gave me goosebumps! You had me at the “No War!” cover, and then I sped to the compelling article “What Is a Christ-like Response to Overwhelming Military Might?”

Actually, the goosebumps came when I continued to check out the wide variety of “gotta read!” articles throughout the entire magazine, touching upon so many crucial aspects of how we aspire and strive to continue the work of Jesus. I’m looking forward to putting a copy of this issue into the hands of each person in our upcoming church membership class.

Kudos and many thanks to all for the collective efforts and talents that put this jam-packed—and inspiring, challenging, and thought-provoking—issue together!

Linda Williams
San Diego, Calif.

Special offer for new advertisers

Do you own your own business? Are you an independent rep/consultant? Are you looking to grow your business? MESSENGER is offering 50 percent off our advertising rates for new advertisers for the rest of the year. Learn more at brethren.org/messenger/advertise. Email messengerads@brethren.org with any questions.

CLASSIFIEDS

Online Worship: Living Stream Church of the Brethren has been a consistent online presence for 9 years. Join us for worship from wherever you are! **We meet ONLINE every Sunday** at 5:00 pm Pacific / 8:00 pm Eastern. Each worship is recorded if you want to view it later. Our congregation has no building or walls but includes participants throughout the US and from several other countries. Find out more or see previous services at www.LivingStreamCoB.org or email contact@LivingStreamCoB.org.

Lively May issue

Thanks for the lively May issue of MESSENGER. It featured another great introductory column from publisher Wendy McFadden.

I also appreciated Robert Johansen’s article on Ukraine, where he wonders if there could have been a better way to preserve their country and their independence, without the horror of this war. Johansen points to Austria as a country that stayed neutral and independent.

Glen Stassen in his book *Just Peacemaking* tells a great story of how that happened. After World War II, Austria was divided in a similar way to Germany, with the Red Army in control of the eastern half, and the Allies in control of the west. At a cabinet meeting, when this came up, a cabinet member suggested offering the removal of all our military from the west if Russia would leave the east. The suggestion was ridiculed by Secretary of State Dulles, but President Eisenhower told him to try it out by putting it in an upcoming speech. “We are no worse off if they ignore the idea. On the other hand, if they accept the offer Austria will be free.”

The speech led to the negotiations that allowed Austria to live without occupation as a neutral country. Stassen’s father was a member of Eisenhower’s cabinet and told his son this story.

My parents were Adlai Stevenson supporters because, as my mother told me, “We could never vote for a military man.” But I can’t help wishing someone like Eisenhower, not Clinton, had been president when we made the decision to aggressively move NATO to Russian borders after the end of the USSR.

Keep up the good work! It seems to

me things are really cooking at MESSENGER now that the Covenant Brethren have separated themselves.

Craig Enberg
Portland, Ore.

Congratulations to all and sundry. Thank you for this thoughtful and pointed ministry in extraordinary times.

Frank Ramirez
Nappanee, Ind.

Awards

Several readers responded to the news of MESSENGER's awards from the Associated Church Press (see "From the Publisher"). Readers who have provided their email addresses received the news in a MESSENGER email. To receive these emails, please send your email address to messenger@brethren.org.

Congratulations to Wendy McFadden for the Award of Excellence! It is nice to have my own reactions confirmed. I have really appreciated her words in each issue of MESSENGER and how well they reflect just who the Church of the Brethren tries to be. Thank you for keeping that in front of us.

Betty Ann Cherry
Huntingdon, Pa.

I really appreciated receiving the great news regarding the award that MESSENGER received on coverage of the '21 Annual Conference. All of us involved with the time and preparations, as well the actual activity in Elgin, will never forget that experience, and it is really wonderful to see the communication team get such well-deserved recognition for your many talents in sharing the event with the larger church. God's blessings on your continued valuable roles with the ministry of the Church of the Brethren.

Larry Glick
Rockingham, Va.

TURNINGPOINTS

Centenarians

Beitzel, Leora, 101, Oakland, Md., Feb. 13

New members

Columbia City, Ind.: Rachel Fowler

First, Roaring Spring, Pa.: Tammy Dell, Elizabeth Thomas

Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.: Phyllis Leininger, Margaret Weybright

Papago Buttes, Scottsdale, Ariz.: Sandie Christianson, Diana Murray, James Payton, Joanna Payton

Union Center, Nappanee, Ind.: Phil Bohannon, Vanessa Bohannon

Elkhart, Ind., 60
Thomas, Robert and Janice, Copemish, Mich., 55
Tompos, Dave and Peggy, Nappanee, Ind., 50
Yoder, David and Donna, Goshen, Ind., 50

Deaths

Amspacher, Jewel Elizabeth Sweatman, 96, Hanover, Pa., May 3
Baker, Betty L., 81, New Enterprise, Pa., April 21
Ball, Arden K., 87, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 8
Boll, Paul H., 88, Palmyra, Pa., April 29
Bowman, Lloyd Andrew, 98, McFarland, Calif., Feb. 19
Brendle, Robert William, 89, Somerset, Pa., May 1
Brown, Dortha Ellen Bungard, 98, Ligonier, Pa., April 20
Chappell, Norman, Sr., 91, Telford, Pa., April 26
Crossen, Tamara K., 62, Ashland, Ohio, May 3
Dahlhamer, Robert Nelson, 85, Hagerstown, Md., April 27
Davenport, Rosemary, 64,

Peoria, Ill., April 13
Deal, Thomas, 83, Modesto, Calif., May 9
Doutrich, Orpha L. Hibshman, 87, Myerstown, Pa., April 19
Hochstetler, Ruth Haines, 80, Nappanee, Ind., Feb. 4
Holder, Gloria Ann Cable, 73, Hollsopple, Pa., April 2
Hutton, Peggy Mitchell, 87, Charlottesville, Va., April 26
Kauffman, Georgia K. Wakefield, 74, Lewistown, Pa., March 14
Kuipers, Mary Jean Hornstra, 83, Onkama, Mich., Feb. 8
Loving, Marie Schwaiger, 95, Garden City, Kan., April 20
McCauley-Simmons, Barbara Rexrode, 90, Charlottesville, Va., April 24
Mishler, Marlin R., 88, Davidsville, Pa., April 25
Naylor, Gladys Shank, 104, McPherson, Kan., May 16
Norris, Philip E., 92, Lititz, Pa., May 2
Pollard, Rose, 80, Bremen, Ind., May 1
Reed, Paul Edward, 96,

Bremen, Ind., April 15
Thomas, Ruth Irene Buffington, 95, Westminster, Md., May 12
Wimer, Deborah Sue Comer, 61, Harrisonburg, Va., May 10
Wishon, Opal Allene Kingston, 88, Garden City, Kan., March 30
Wooters, Dennis Mark, Sr., 62, Preston, Md., April 24

Ordained

Edwards, Robin, W. Marva Dist. (Georges Creek, Lonaconing, Md.), April 24
Harris, Amber, Virgina Dist. (Peace Covenant, Durham, N.C.), April 24
Hodges, Carlton, Virgina Dist. (Red Hill, Roanoke, Va.), May 15
Izquierdo, Carolina, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Un Nuevo Renacer Fellowship, Mountville, Pa.), April 10

Commissioned

Casselman, Gerald, N. Ind. Dist. (Shepherd's Heart Fellowship, Osceola, Ind.), May 15

Licensed

Kennedy, Rodney, Mo. & Ark. Dist. (Spring Branch, Warsaw, Mo.), April 24
Verhulst, Diana, Ill. & Wis. Dist. (Franklin Grove, Ill.), April 10

Placements

Casselman, Gerald, pastor, Shepherd's Heart Fellowship, Osceola, Ind., March 15
Kennedy, Rodney, pastor, Spring Branch, Warsaw, Mo., April 24
Moss, Joseph, interim pastor, Dranesville, Herndon, Va., May 1
Reed, John, Sr., interim pastor, Pleasant View, Fayetteville, W.Va., May 1
Shaffer, Daniel, from pastor, Morrellville, Johnstown, Pa., to pastor, Rummel, Windber, Pa., Jan. 1
Stein, Robert, associate pastor, Uniontown, Pa., March 13
Woodard, Edward, interim pastor, Smith Mountain Lake, Wirtz, Va., May 1

Wedding anniversaries

Dye, John and Linda, Nappanee, Ind., 50
Gibble, H. Lamar and Nancy H., Saint Charles, Ill., 70
Grossnickle, Richard and Mary Sue, Woodsboro, Md., 65
Hanes, Glenn, Sr. and Doretha, Knoxville, Md., 71
Lanning, Jerry and Carol, Bremen, Ind., 55
Mishler, Tom and Nancy, Nappanee, Ind., 55
Sailor, Flawn and Nancy,

Antiracism work is loving our neighbor

It's time for the Church of the Brethren to take on a major challenge, one we can all get behind. I'm proposing loving our neighbors through concentrated antiracism work. It's not a new cause; Brethren have faced the issue many times before—in the 19th century anti-slavery movement, during the civil rights era of the 1960s, and more recently with various Brethren groups offering webinars, statements, training sessions, and book studies.



FLETCHER FARRAR

The work is not done. In some ways it's hardly begun. It is work full of joy in experiencing diversity, advocating equity, and including all of God's people in the promise of freedom. "For freedom Christ has set us free" (Galatians 5:1). Not just to seek freedom for ourselves, but to free others as well.

Congregations can take the lead, then help each other with what works and what doesn't. The larger church can provide guidance for getting started, along with communication and connection. There is not just one right way. One predominantly white congregation may start with a study, while mine likes to meet new people first. Often when issues become people and relationships, fears fade away.

We all know there is joy in loving with faith, and crossing racial and ethnic barriers brings a special joy. The effort may be awkward at first, but we can learn as we go. If we follow Jesus, we may avoid the culture wars that now plague our public discourse.

Antiracism is not about getting more people of color to join predominantly white congregations. Many have tried that without success. The effort is more about informing ourselves and our prayers, while acting and advocating, so we can become better antiracists, better champions of justice, more effective lovers of others. It's about identifying


barriers to equity and inclusion, then doing our part to eliminate unfairness where we find it. We will become allies to others more experienced in this struggle, and make new friends along the way.

This work is not just a suggestion, but a commandment for which we may give our life's devotion. Jesus in John 15: "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last. . ."

This kind of love for our neighbor is not as difficult as some may think. When Jesus asked us to "take my yoke upon you, and learn from me," he also promised, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

But it's not that easy either. If Christians aren't willing to explore ideas that may be new to them—like how racism is built into societal structures—they may not get very far. This concept follows Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places."

Congregations that are predominantly white can make this work easier by finding experienced friends who are willing to walk with us. The Springfield Coalition on Dismantling Racism follows a model that partners people of color with white people. The work is not so much to teach white people but to oppose structural and systemic racism. So we're allies accountable to each other.

The main thing is to start the journey and don't quit. Jesus didn't insist that his disciples learn everything about humility and servant leadership before witnessing to the world. Jesus washed feet. Then he asked his followers to do the same. 

Fletcher Farrar, a member of First Church of the Brethren, Springfield, Ill., is on the leadership team of the Springfield Coalition on Dismantling Racism. He is publisher of *Illinois Times*, the weekly newspaper in Springfield, and a former editor of *MESSENGER*.

“The main thing is to start the journey and don't quit.”

Ukraine Humanitarian Crisis Response

Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.

—Hebrews 13:2 NIV



The Church of the Brethren supports partners caring for some of the most vulnerable and underserved people, displaced and in need, who remain in Ukraine or are refugees in neighboring countries.

Current partners: Church World Service, International Orthodox Christian Charities, L'Arche International, Lutheran World Relief, and Child Life Disaster Response



Emergency assistance in Moldova, Poland, Romania, and Ukraine is providing

- Food, Shelter, Hygiene supplies, Medical assistance
- Training for caregivers of traumatized and injured children
- Protection from violence and trafficking for women and children
- Specialized care for those with disabilities
- Support for host families

Gifts to the Emergency Disaster Fund have already brought hospitality, love, hope, and dignity to Ukrainian families and their hosts. THANK YOU!

The need is still great – won't you join us?

Give to the Emergency Disaster Fund
1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60123
www.brethren.org/give-ukraine-crisis



Photos courtesy of Church World Service, Diaconia, Integra by Jana Čavojská and L'Arche.

For more information go to www.brethren.org/ukraine-crisis or contact BDM at bdm@brethren.org or 800-451-4407



Average monthly cost

Restaurants	\$232
Subscriptions	\$123
Cable	\$116
Cell phone	\$114
Pets	\$111
Coffee to go	\$92

Shine Sunday School
materials for a child

\$5

*Grow disciples.
Invest wisely.*

SHINE
LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

Sunday school that lights the way

shinecurriculum.com