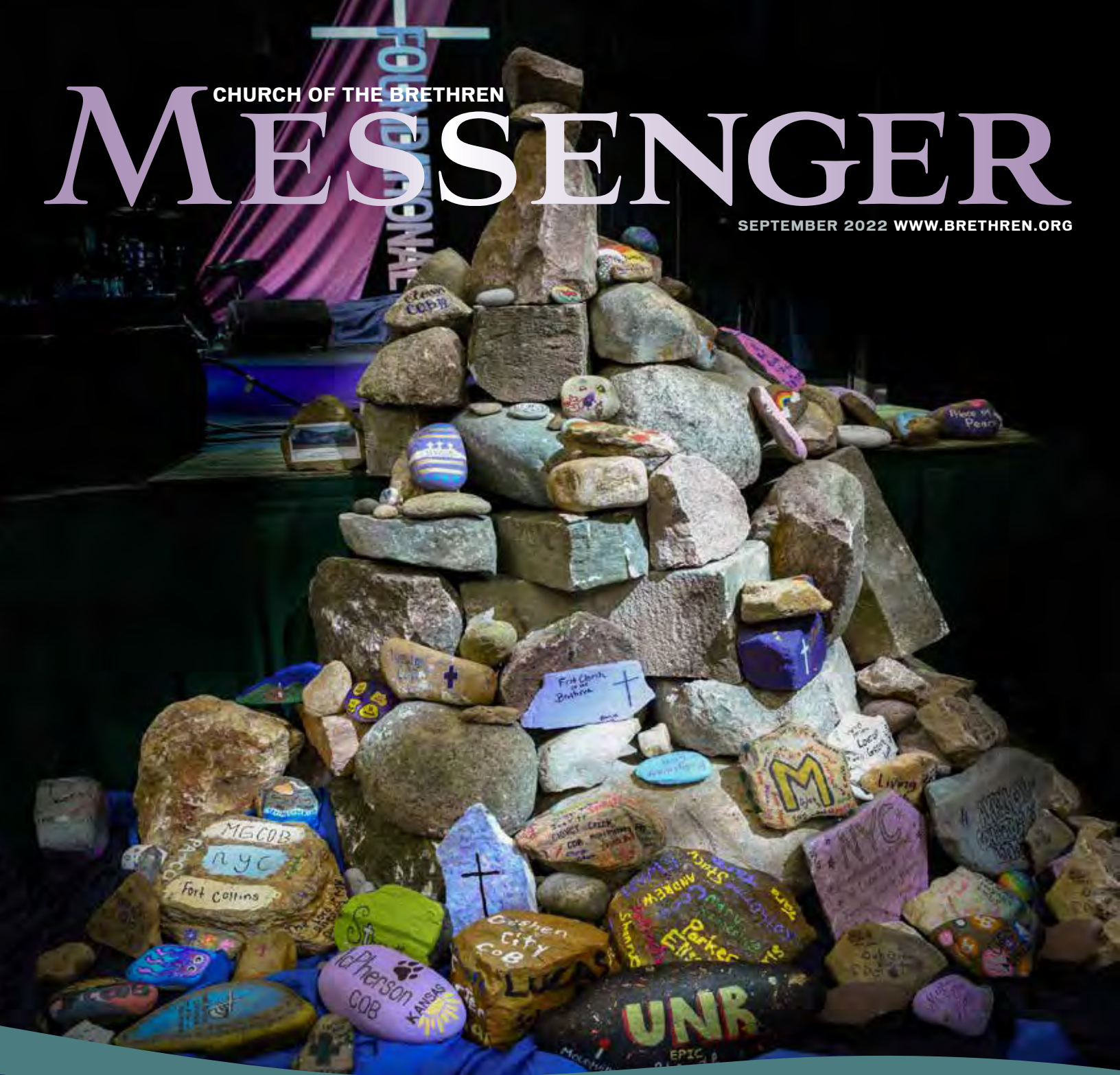


CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

SEPTEMBER 2022 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



FOUNDATIONAL NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2022

Suggested date: September 18

Praising the Lord everywhere

“Everywhere—from east to west—
praise the name of the Lord.”
~Psalm 113:3

Venezuela



Photos by David Sollenberger and Joel Peña

Uganda



Mission
Offering

The **Mission Offering** highlights our passion in the Church of the Brethren to praise the Lord everywhere with our sisters and brothers around the world.

www.brethren.org/missionoffering



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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Cover photo by Glenn Riegel

Coming up

Coverage of Annual Conference will appear in the October issue.



Light: Readers are invited to submit short reflections in prose or poetry or digital copies of art and photography on the idea of light. Written submissions can be as brief as a single paragraph or stanza. The items selected may be used in the January/February 2023 print issue or in MESSENGER Online. Please send your submission to messenger@brethren.org by Oct. 31.

Giving way

On the Isle of Mull, off the west coast of Scotland, most of the roads are “single track.” That is, they’re one-lane roads with periodic passing places—small bump-outs that accommodate a couple of vehicles. When you see a car (or a double-decker bus) headed your way, then you pull into the next passing place. Or, if the wide spot is on the other side of the road, you stop where you are and let the other driver swing around you.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

Drivers are regularly looking ahead to see where the next passing place is and figure out who should give way. If it’s unclear, one car flashes its lights to indicate that it’s waiting and the other is welcome to proceed. To add to the excitement, the roads have no shoulders and sometimes there are stone walls on both sides.

It turns out that this sort of driving feels rather friendly. You pass each other at slow speeds and make eye contact

(after all, your bumpers are just a few inches apart). Both drivers wave, one offering a thank you to the one who gave way and the other lifting a hand to say you’re welcome. There’s lots of cheery waving with all the people who share your road. (This is not at all like driving around Chicago.)

With whom do you share your road? Perhaps the members of your local church, for starters. When participants at National Youth Conference were asked via Instagram what they especially appreciated about their congregations, many mentioned the sense of intergenerational community, of family, and of welcome.

When we travel together week after week, we have the opportunity to see each other. When your well-being and mine depend on slowing down and giving way, we grow in understanding. And when we practice this at church, we demonstrate the love of God to our children and youth—and anyone else who is watching.

Wendy McFadden



Wendy McFadden

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“According to the grace of God given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it. Let each builder choose with care how to build on it.” -1 Corinthians 3:10

A 68-YEAR FOUNDATION

The 2022 National Youth Conference is the 18th NYC held by the Church of the Brethren (The event began in Anderson, Ind., in 1954). In the puzzle below, can you find these past NYC sites and words from current and past NYC themes? Answers can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, forwards or backwards.

- ANDERSON
- JUNALUSKA
- ITHACA
- VALPARAISO
- GLORIETA
- ESTES PARK
- FORT COLLINS
- FOUNDATIONAL
- MOUNTAIN
- EYE
- SEE
- VISION
- JOURNEY
- CHRIST
- POWER
- TIME
- FAITH
- CALL
- COME
- ALIVE
- LOVE
- COURAGE
- COMMITTED
- WORLD
- GOD
- SPIRIT
- BRETHREN

W	S	H	B	R	E	T	H	R	E	N	I	R
O	S	I	A	R	A	P	L	A	V	V	E	K
R	K	W	J	N	H	T	I	A	F	W	O	A
L	F	O	U	N	D	A	T	I	O	N	A	L
D	E	C	N	M	N	E	K	P	R	Y	T	C
P	A	C	A	H	T	I	R	V	T	M	E	J
E	L	T	L	L	Y	O	A	S	C	O	I	O
G	I	S	U	V	L	J	P	P	O	U	R	U
A	V	I	S	I	O	N	S	I	L	N	O	R
R	E	R	K	T	I	M	E	R	L	T	L	N
U	J	H	A	B	S	Y	T	I	I	A	G	E
O	L	C	O	M	E	E	S	T	N	I	O	Y
C	O	M	M	I	T	T	E	D	S	N	D	J

DID YOU KNOW?

Brethren Press is 125 this year!

The Church of the Brethren’s publishing house shifted from a member-run enterprise to denominational ownership in 1897. Originally located in Mount Morris, Ill., it moved to Elgin in 1899 for better transportation access. Today it publishes this magazine along with Christian education materials for children and adults, Advent and Lenten devotional booklets, various book titles including *The Inglenook Cookbook*, a bulletin series, the *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*, a denominational news service, and other items. Learn more at www.brethrenpress.com.



Little Free Library benefits Ukraine, community

In a brainstorming session a few years ago, members of Trotwood (Ohio) Church of the Brethren used large sheets of paper to list ways they could be a blessing to their neighbors.

“The idea of a Little Free Library made it to the wall, and from there into our hearts!” member Paula Bowser said, speaking at a dedication for the library box during the Sunday morning church service June 12.

That afternoon, after heavy downpours that threatened more rain, the sun came out just in time to shine brightly over a festive ribbon-cutting grand opening, complete with hot dog roast, children’s story time, and other activities.

“Our Little Free Library doesn’t just belong to us, it belongs to the whole community,” library steward Peggy

Reiff Miller said. “With its ‘Take a book—Share a book’ theme, our hope is that this Little Free Library will bring a little more joy, a little more connection, and a lot of love of reading to our community.” The library is a small box on a stand located on the front lawn of the church.

The grand opening celebration also featured a fundraiser to provide Ukrainian books for Ukrainian refugee children and orphans through a project of the Ukrainian Book Institute.

“Far away from home, with little to call their own, books in their own language will provide these children a moment of peace and connection to their homeland,” Miller said. Generous donors far surpassed the committee’s hope for a couple hundred dollars, with more than \$1,000 raised for the project.

The Trotwood Church’s library was the 141,024th to register worldwide with the Little Free Library organization. To learn more about the organization go to www.littlefreelibrary.org.



Judy Gainey



Judy Gainey

Congregations support Brethren Ukraine efforts

At a church board meeting at the beginning of April, a suggestion was made that **Free Spring Church of the Brethren** (Mifflintown, Pa.) contribute money to help those in Ukraine. The board voted unanimously to donate \$15,000 to Ukraine through Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM).

Since that time, congregation members have been making individual contributions through a weekly offering for the cause. By the following month, those offerings had already totaled an additional \$6,120. Future offerings will continue to be forwarded to BDM. “We’re thankful that the district and our General Board are also supporting this effort and we pray that the funds will be directed to be of the most effective use,” a statement from the church said.

In Virginia, meanwhile, **Harrisonburg First Church of the Brethren** planned a Fourth of July celebration and fundraiser to benefit Ukrainian children. The event, hosted by the congregation’s Praize Kids team, featured a bounce house, games, and a book and toy giveaway. Praize Kids also sold lemonade and cookies while accepting additional donations for the project. Funds are being sent to Brethren Disaster Ministries.

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.



State College church celebrates a centennial

The *Daily Collegian*, a publication of students at Penn State University, recognized the 100th anniversary of University Baptist and Brethren Church in State College, Pa., in a June 1 article titled “Hospitality part of ‘DNA.’” The theme for the centennial celebration is “A Welcoming Community Woven Together in Faith, Love, and Service.”

Reporter Danny Gotwals interviewed pastor Bonnie Kline Smeltzer and members of the church’s centennial committee. His article reviewed the history of the congregation, which was started by the American Baptist Churches USA in 1922 and moved into its current building in 1928.

The joint affiliation with the Church of the Brethren dates back to 1968, when a Brethren group “decided to look for an existing church to join that had similar values and principles, which is when they joined University Baptist Church. The church changed its name to University Baptist and Brethren in 1978.”

“Smeltzer said both denominations share an anti-hierarchical sentiment and a shared phrase, ‘the priesthood of all believers.’ ‘Everyone is a minister. We all

have a calling from God,’ Smeltzer said.”

Smeltzer also noted that many members of the congregation are neither Baptist nor Brethren, but they share common values. “This is a group of people who believe that you can’t have faith without putting it into action,” Smeltzer said.

Roaring Spring enjoys home-grown leadership

Roaring Spring (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren has discovered that “home grown” can be a solution to the need for ministerial leadership.

Pastor Dave Crumrine was ordained earlier this year, just past his 65th birthday. He grew up the son of a Brethren minister who served various congregations across Ohio and Pennsylvania. He put down roots in the area when he married his wife, Dawn, in 1980. Since then the two have been active members, serving in the church, raising three children, and participating in the community in many ways including through Crumrine’s first career in education. He was a teacher, three-sport coach, and then high school principal.

When a search for a new pastor failed to secure a candidate, the congregation turned their support and encouragement to Crumrine, who had been the adult Bible school teacher and pulpit fill go-to. At a point in his life when many retire, he was ready to answer the call to ministry.

—Janie Myers

Churches come together to help youth attend NYC

Un Nuevo Renacer, a Spanish-speaking church in Atlantic Northeast District, has a significant number of young people who are a part of their fellowship. Thirteen of those youth and three advisors were hoping to attend the Church of the Brethren National Youth Conference held in Colorado in July.

But covering the expenses of traveling to and attending this event was a problem. This is a young church with young families who have limited financial resources. The youth worked together to raise some money with a bake sale at Mountville (Pa.) church and were able to raise \$600. But the expenses for 16 people to travel to Fort Collins, Colo., were much greater than the money they were able to raise.

Other congregations in the district, however, stepped up to provide necessary financial resources needed to allow all the 16 participants to register and to purchase airfare for NYC. Mountville Church of the Brethren, which shares its building with Un Nuevo Renacer, provided some financial support as well as love and care for this youth group. In addition, both Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren agreed to help financially. —from Atlantic Northeast District newsletter

University of La Verne



A fruitful history: The University of La Verne (Calif.) announced that a new mural, titled “Our Citrus Roots,” was completed on the side of Mainiero Hall on May 6. “The mural commemorates the citrus history in La Verne and features the letter ‘L’ that appears in the foothills above La Verne, blazed by students at what was then called La Verne College in 1919 or so,” said the release. “The mural was completed by southern California mural artist Art Mortimer and funded by the former president of the Citrus Roots Foundation, Richard Barker. Barker has also donated a sizable collection on citrus history in California to Wilson Library’s Archives and Special Collections.”

NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE 2022

FOUNDATIONAL

July 23-28 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo.



“Even though I am not with you, I keep thinking about you. I am glad to know that you are living as you should and your faith in Christ is strong. You have accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord. Now keep on following him. **Plant your roots in Christ and let him be the foundation for your life.** Be strong in your faith, just as you were taught. And be grateful” *(Colossians 2:5-7, CEV).*



What do you most appreciate about your church? “Intergenerational connections” “The community! And

Glenn Riegel



“Rocks that represent the land you came from and the people who have sent you here with their blessing.”

—The Youth Cabinet inviting participants to bring rocks from their home congregations to add to the worship center. In advance of that invitation, the CSU land acknowledgment statement was played as a video. With a Hopi song in the background, it acknowledged that the campus hosting NYC is on the traditional lands of the Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Ute nations. The worshipful moment gave emphasis to the sacred and holy nature of this place and time for youth to share and strengthen their faith.



Glenn Riegel



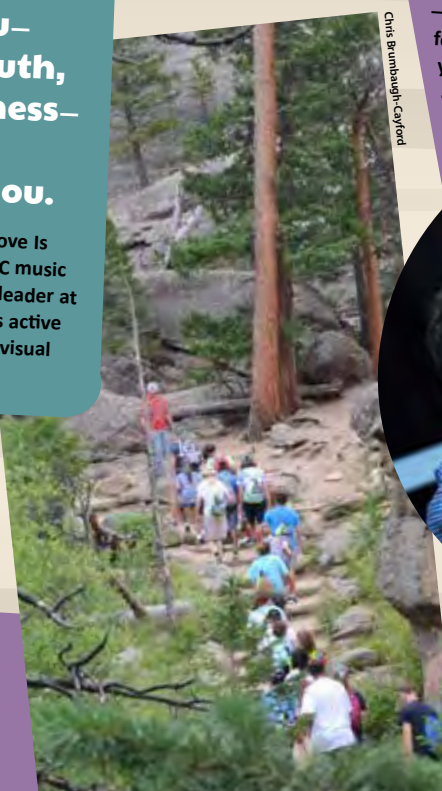
Glenn Riegel

The National Youth Cabinet, from left: Haley Daubert, Ben Tatum, Luke Schweitzer, Bella Torres, NYC coordinator Erika Clary, adult advisor Jason Haldeman, Geo Romero, and Elise Gage. Not shown: adult advisor Michaela Alphonse.

**God, your love is foundational.
We turn our eyes to you—
Our ally for justice and truth,
A beacon of righteousness—
We live our lives for you.
We lift up our lives to you.**

—The chorus of the NYC 2022 theme song, “Your Love Is Foundational,” written by Jacob Crouse. He was NYC music coordinator and director of the NYC band. A music leader at Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren, he is active with the Dunker Punks podcast, and works in audiovisual engineering for the American College of Cardiology.

Chris Burnham/Coyford



**“God knows you.
God is with you.
God leads you.”**

—Saturday evening preacher Rodger Nishioka summarizing the three foundational understandings in Psalm 139, which begins, “O Lord, you have searched me and known me” (NRSVue). Nishioka is senior associate pastor and director of adult faith formation at Village Presbyterian Church in Kansas. He previously taught at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, and has been national coordinator for Youth and Young Adult Ministries for the Presbyterian Church.



Glenn Riegel

the commitment to the Lord **“The pastor**

“The diversity and never feeling like an outsider

FOUNDATIONAL

“Why are you looking for the Living One in a cemetery? **He is not here, but raised up**” (Luke 24:5b, *The Message*).



Glenn Riegel

“With all the divisions going on in our society, what should be our common foundation in Jesus? ... How important it is to make the living and resurrected Jesus our foundation.”

—Sunday morning preacher Drew G.I. Hart, of First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa., encouraging youth “to be attentive to the living presence of Christ in the world.” He is a public theologian, professor, and director of “Thriving Together: Congregations for Racial Justice” at Messiah University. His books, *Trouble I’ve Seen: Changing the Way the Church Views Racism* and *Who Will Be a Witness? Igniting Activism for God’s Justice, Love, and Deliverance*, have been used widely by Church of the Brethren congregations and members as study guides for working on racial healing.



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

Each NYCer was part of a small group that met every full day of the conference.



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

“Welcoming to anyone no matter what” “Small but mighty” “Authenticity” “Their generous and kind hearts” “Community service”



“The church cannot live out God’s call to love without you, without all of you ... unless you play a central role in your church.”

—Tim McElwee, Annual Conference moderator, inviting youth to come to his workshops and share with him how they want the church to be. “Do you want a church where all of your friends feel welcomed for who they are, without judgment?” he asked. “Then you cannot remain silent. You have to speak up.”

“The mountain top is not a permanent dwelling place. . . . Jesus led those disciples back down the valley . . . where a ministry of mercy was needed desperately.”

—Sunday evening preacher Dava Hensley, preaching on the story of Jesus’ transfiguration in Matthew 17. She is pastor of First Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., and has served on the denomination’s Mission and Ministry Board, the New Church Development Committee of Virilina District, and the Northwest Faith Partnership of churches working together in the northwest neighborhood of Roanoke.



Glenn Riegel

By the numbers

580 youth

224 adult advisors

97 NYC staff including denominational staff and volunteers

154 congregations represented



Donna Parcel

“How the congregation loves Jesus, each other, and the people in our community

Communion bread making at one of the workshops.

FOUNDATIONAL

“Then he poured water into a basin and **began to wash the disciples’ feet** and to wipe them with the towel that was tied around him” *(John 13:5, NRSVue).*

Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



Glenn Riegel

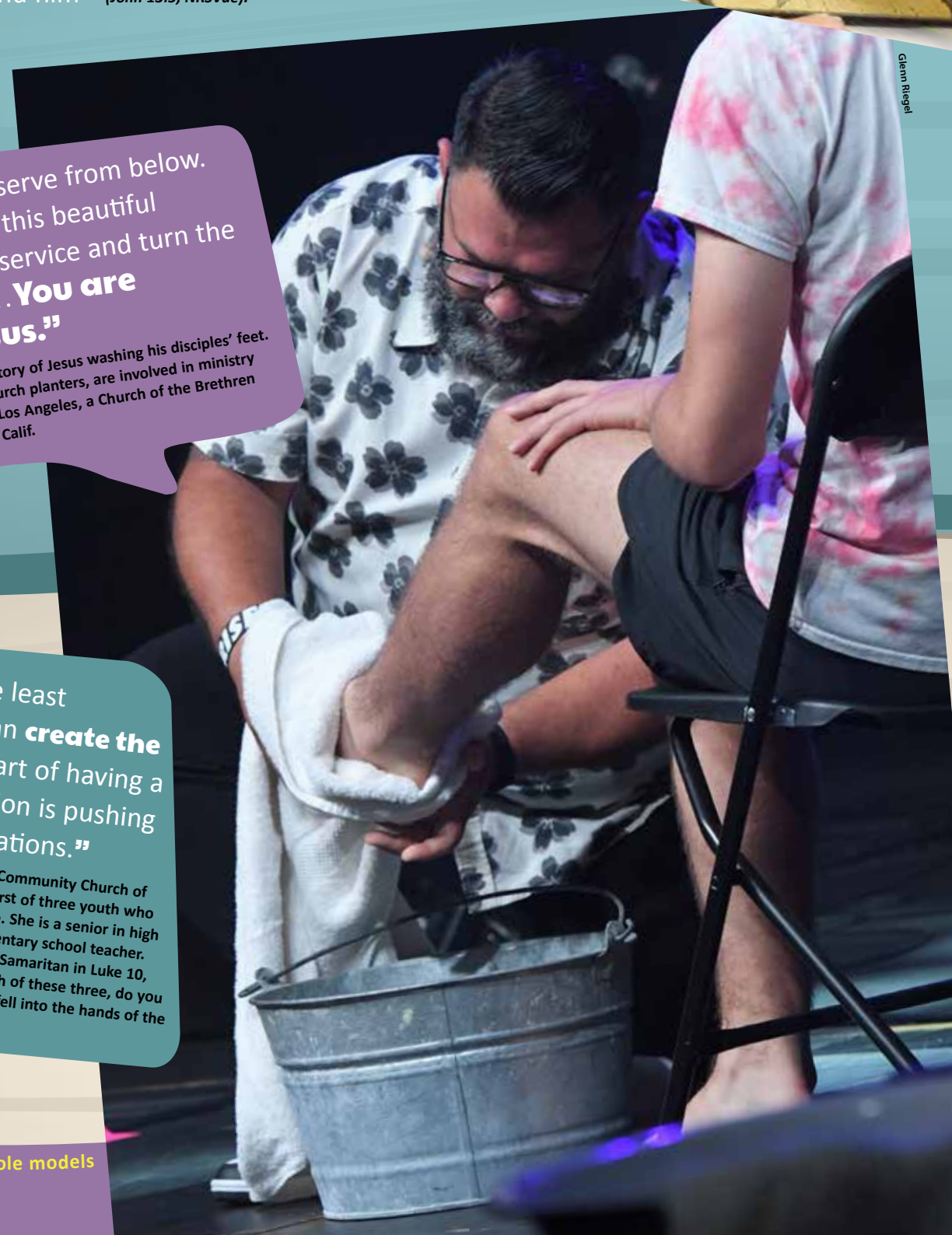
“Jesus is asking us to serve from below. He’s calling us to take this beautiful demonstration of his service and turn the world right side up.... **You are Generation Jesus.**”

—Jody Romero preaching on the story of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet. He and his wife, Vanessa, both church planters, are involved in ministry with youth, and lead Restoration Los Angeles, a Church of the Brethren congregation in East Los Angeles, Calif.

“The ones who are least expected to help can **create the most impact**.... Part of having a strong faith foundation is pushing past society’s expectations.”

—Kara Bidgood Enders of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa., the first of three youth who spoke at the Monday morning service. She is a senior in high school and hopes to become an elementary school teacher. She spoke on the parable of the Good Samaritan in Luke 10, commenting on Jesus’ question: “Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” (Luke 10:36, NRSVue).

“Feels like family” “The role models





**“As I healed and recovered
... Jesus was with me.”**

—Hannah Smith of Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren, speaking on the story of Jesus and the disciples out in their fishing boat during a storm, from Mark 4. She related that story to personal storms and the healing power we receive in Christ’s presence. A sophomore at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, she is majoring in sociology and Japanese.

“I have seen the cruelty and hate in this world... It may be hard to see how our love for others may make an impact... The important part is that we do it... Wouldn’t you rather **take the chance that our kindness makes an impact on someone, rather than not try at all?”**

—Anna Schweitzer of Cedar Grove (Ohio) Church of the Brethren, bringing a message inspired by the story of Jesus healing the blind man at the Pool of Siloam, in John 9. She is a senior in high school in Indiana, where she is involved in choir and theater.



Glenn Riegel

**“All the feet around God’s son ...
Ready for the journey...
Here’s the big surprise:
They’re coming down to join
God on their knees.
I bet you’re going to have sore
knees.”**

—From a song created onstage by Ken Medema, responding to the evening’s message. Blind from birth, Medema is a Christian singer and songwriter whose improvisational storytelling through music has inspired many at previous National Youth Conferences, Annual Conference, and National Older Adult Conference.

4 countries represented: Canada, the Dominican Republic, Spain, and the United States
25 states and the District of Columbia represented: Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Maryland, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin



Glenn Riegel



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Coyford

“Encouragement “Youth group “The friendship

NYCers learn knitting at a standing-room-only workshop. Workshops presented a wide variety of information and education as well as opportunities to learn crafts and more.

FOUNDATIONAL



Donna Parcell

“You’re blessed when your commitment to God provokes persecution. The persecution drives you even deeper into God’s kingdom. . . . And know that you are in good company. **My prophets and witnesses have always gotten into this kind of trouble**” (Matthew 5:10 and 12, *The Message*).

Level Up!

“The Sermon on the Mount summarized in two words: Level up. . . . **Many of us have yet to tap into our full potential, but Jesus is calling us to level up. . . . Let’s put in the hard work and level up. Let’s level up!**”

—Sibling team Chelsea Goss Skillen and Tyler Goss, comparing Jesus’ call to discipleship to the way characters in video games and superhero movies develop or “level up” into their full potential. Skillen begins in October as director of Brethren Volunteer Service. Goss is assistant director of student programs at Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, Va. The two have spoken at many Church of the Brethren conferences including previous NYCs, National Junior High Conference, and Annual Conference.



Glenn Riegel

Where have you seen Christ at NYC this week? “In facing the unknown” “When we are singing together in worship”

Legos were available in the lobby of Moby Arena for expressions of prayer before and after worship.



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

“We are blessed, not by the good things that happen but the opportunities. . . . It’s an opportunity to allow God to take the lead, an opportunity to let God have more space . . . to let God shine through us. When we are out of alignment with the world’s expectations, that’s when we are blessed. . . . Being blessed is also a choice, a choice to look toward Jesus.”

—Naomi Kraenbring speaking on the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. A 2019 graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary, she is an adjunct professor of religious studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and a doctoral student at the Carter School for Peace and Conflict Resolution at George Mason University.

Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



The NYC Band, from left: Kyle Remnant, David Steele, Jacob Crouse, and Jackson Teetor.

Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford



Jan Fischer Bachman



444 diapers assembled out of old T-shirts, in a service project for Diapers for Haiti
3,102 school kits assembled, with sponsorship from Brethren Disaster Ministries. The kits will be distributed through Church World Service and the Material Resources program at the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

“The music and the kindness “Through the people “In my youth group

FOUNDATIONAL

“Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food or thirsty and gave you something to drink? And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you or naked and gave you clothing? And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?” *(Matthew 25:37b-38, NRSVue).*

“This is an invitation to see . . . and do what we can to restore dignity and hope. . . . That’s the distinction between the sheep and the goats . . . one saw and the other didn’t. . . . We’re asked to love all people . . . and in doing so, we love Jesus.”

—Osheta Moore bringing the Wednesday morning message on Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25. Moore is a peacemaker, pastor, speaker, and author. She serves two congregations in St. Paul, Minn., alongside her husband—as an adjunct at Woodland Hills Church and pastor of community life at Roots Covenant Church. Her most recent book is *Dear White Peacemakers*, a “love letter” to white Christians on their anti-racism, peacemaking journey.



Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

Glenn Riegel

“The thunderstorm **“Hearing everyone sing this JESUS light of mine**



“I want you to carry this cloth with you today...

If you see strings hanging off, think about where your own life feels like it may be unraveling. If you begin to see creases and folds in the fabric, think about where you might be bending over backwards to please others while neglecting your own well-being. If the fabric rips or tears, consider your own insecurities that can tear you apart from the inside, the areas in life you wish you were better. . . . Remember that Jesus is among the scraps, healer of all brokenness.”

—Audri Svay, NYC theopoet in residence, preparing the congregation for the Wednesday evening anointing service. It is a tradition to offer anointing on the last evening of National Youth Conference. Svay is a pastor at Eel River Church of the Brethren in Silver Lake, Ind.

Glenn Riegel



Glenn Riegel

“Pay attention. Be astonished. Tell about it.”

—Seth Hendricks identifying the three things to learn from the story of Jesus healing the ten lepers in Luke 17. Drawing from the poetry of Mary Oliver, Hendricks likened the lepers’ experience to that of NYCers on a road trip to Colorado and soon returning home. He called them to pay attention to the divine, to allow themselves to be astonished by the divine, and then to go and tell others. Hendricks is pastor of youth ministry and congregational life at Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., and is a singer and songwriter who has composed three NYC theme songs.



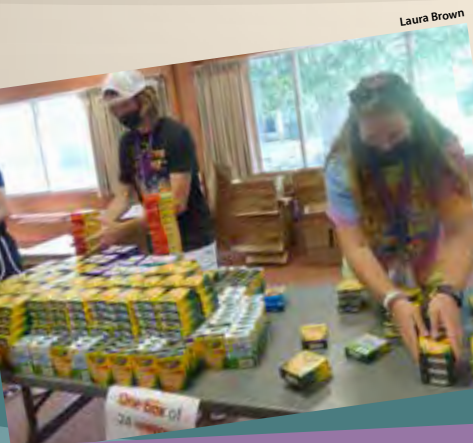
Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford

\$2,521.75 received in an offering for the school kits
\$1,949.56 received in an offering for the NYC scholarship fund

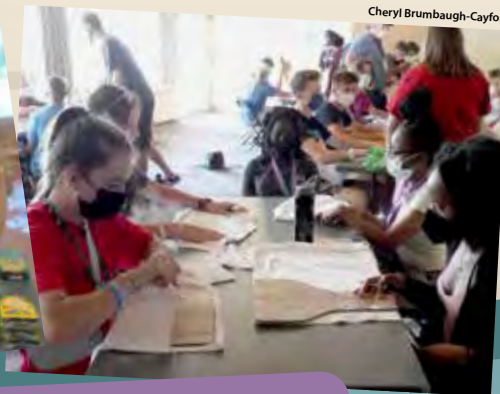
“When people share their ideas in small groups “New friends looking out for each other

FOUNDATIONAL

“Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. Jesus said to them, ‘Children, you have no fish, have you?’ They answered him, ‘No.’ He said to them, **‘Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some’**” (John 21:4-6a, NRSVue).



Laura Brown



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Glenn Riegel

SERVICE PROJECTS: At left, school kits are put together for distribution by Church World Service. At right, youth cut out diapers from donated T-shirts to go to Haiti.



Glenn Riegel

“The point is Jesus at work in the emptiness, and now asking them to go fill the emptiness of others.... Notice the emptiness around you ...and go to meet your neighbors at their point of emptiness, and for heaven’s sake give this world something better to believe in.... **Don’t wait for a better messenger, don’t wait for a better time, don’t wait for a better church, just go!**”

—Jeremy Ashworth, pastor of Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren in Peoria, Ariz., preaching the closing sermon on John 21. This story, which takes place after the resurrection, finds Jesus on the beach, encouraging his disciples to try the other side of the boat when their nets are empty after a long night of fishing. The story culminates with his command: “Feed my sheep.”

Glenn Riegel



“At night volleyball” “When I see it’s cloudy then see rays of sunshine peeking through



Glenn Riegel



Dancing after worship.

Glenn Riegel



Past and present NYC coordinators gathered for a group photo: (back row, from left) Erika Clary, Sarah Neher, Emily LaPrade Van Pelt, Beth Rhodes, Emily Tyler, Cindy Laprade Lattimer, Becky Ullom Naugle, Luke Croushorn; (front row) Elizabeth Struble, Emily Shonk Edwards, Brian Yoder, Wendi Hutchinson Ailor, Shawn Flory Replogle, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Christy Waltersdorff.



Open mic act.

The NYC 2022 press team contributed to this coverage: Glenn Riegel, lead photographer; Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford, young adult photographer; Jan Fischer Bachman, website producer; Russ Otto, media support; Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, news director. Donna Parcell and Laura Brown also contributed photographs.

Go to www.brethren.org/nyc for more coverage of National Youth Conference.

“The Ken Medema concert” “In connections with friends, both old and new” “In the kids chatting with others from different groups”

NYC REFLECTION

Through the storm

by Hannah Smith

“As evening came, Jesus said to his disciples, ‘Let’s cross to the other side of the lake.’ So they took Jesus in the boat and started out, leaving the crowds behind. But soon a fierce storm came up. High waves were breaking into the boat, and it began to fill with water” (Mark 4:35-37, NLT).

Here Jesus calls his disciples out onto the water, away from stable ground. He doesn’t say for the disciples to go on their own. Jesus makes this journey with them—these men, who have learned to put their trust in him—to start the foundation of their new lives, centered around his teachings. The same practice, building off of the foundation of Jesus, is present within our lives.

The story continues: “Jesus was sleeping at the back of the boat with his head on a cushion. The disciples woke him up, shouting, ‘Teacher, don’t you care that we’re going to drown?’ When Jesus woke up, he rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Silence! Be still!’ Suddenly the wind stopped, and there was a great calm. Then he asked them, ‘Why are you afraid? Do you still have no faith?’ The disciples were absolutely terrified. ‘Who is this man?’ they asked each other. ‘Even the wind and waves obey him!’” (Mark 4: 38-41, NLT).

The disciples were terrified, and

rightfully so. Their boat was sinking, and their Savior was sleeping when they needed him most. Instead of remaining calm in the middle of the storm, they screamed at Jesus for not being present with them, for sleeping. Yet, he was there with them the entire time, simply just out of reach. When the foundation of the disciples’ faith began to crumble, Jesus stepped in, calming the sea at once.


At one point or another, we’ve probably all felt as though Jesus was sleeping when we needed him most. I know I’ve felt that way, and it’s like a storm. A major example in my life is my battle with my mental health. I have now gotten to a point in my life that I can share this story with others, and I wish to share it with you.

I’ve struggled with mental health, specifically anxiety and depression, all

through middle school and now into college. There were some rough patches, some bigger waves to overcome in early high school. I finally took it upon myself to go to a therapist my junior year. It wasn’t helping as it should’ve been. When I graduated, I stopped going to therapy as I thought I was better. The waves were calmer. Yet the storm hadn’t arrived.

When I first arrived at college I knew it was getting bad again. I’ll spare you the details, but I developed very negative coping habits that led me down a dark road—a road that almost didn’t have a light at the end. I have scars, both physical and mental, that are a reminder of the storm I faced.

Through this storm, I was able to understand the connection to Jesus calming the storm on the water. Jesus had the disciples go to the other side of the lake, meaning they were meant to go through the storm, not around it, with him alongside them.

As I have healed and recovered, I am able to understand that I wasn’t alone through everything I faced. Jesus was with me. When I finally started to actively seek help, he aided in calming the battle I was facing. 

Hannah Smith, of Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren, is a sophomore at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College, where she is majoring in sociology and Japanese. She was one of three youth speakers at National Youth Conference. The other two speeches will appear in future issues of MESSENGER.



Glenn Regel

The heart of Genesis

Genesis belongs to everyone: Jews, Christians, Muslims, sinners, saints, agnostics, atheists. Whether it's mom and dad taking sides in Esau versus Jacob, jealous sisters, or Joseph's coat of many dreams, or whether we claim, wrestle with, reject, or reframe the narrative, we recognize our family.



FRANK RAMIREZ

I knew Genesis from pictures and preaching long before I could sound out Methuselah. As a child, I was horrified by the carnage after the Flood. I was both mystified and frightened by Abraham's irrational obedience when it came to sacrificing Isaac. Because I was one of eight children, the conflict between Joseph and his brothers made

perfect sense. Now, after 43 years of preaching this book, I'm still wrestling with Genesis.

Cartoonist Liana Finck also grew up with Genesis, in her case while attending Hebrew Day School. In the afterword to her book *Let There Be Light: the Real Story of Her Creation*, she writes, "Giving God a new gender—my own—was my first step toward reclaiming this work of literature for myself."

I cordially dislike the terms "graphic novel" and "comic book," so what do we have here? Pictures and words in a hardcover volume with the correct dimensions for a book.

Finck, whose cartoons frequently appear in the *New Yorker*, insists "we must reshape the larger stories that are handed down to us—family stories, religious and cultural stories, our individual and collective pasts—and tell them in a way that feels honest to us. Stories need to be told and retold in different voices. That is how they breathe."

And that's what Finck has done. God's nap on the seventh day of creation feels well-deserved after she spends so much


creative energy. Six panels of largely white space depicting Cain sitting on a rock, hands on knees and staring at the ground, are interrupted only twice with sparse captions: "There was no road map yet to being a bad man" and "Cain was the first one." Since the biblical begats mention only the men, it is they who give bloody birth to their sons.

Abram is an artist who only late in life experiences an existential crisis when his soul and body are separated. Only then does he realize (with a little help from Lilith) that the art God called him to create is his son Isaac.

Lilith? She's a figure from Jewish legend, not from scripture. She snakes her way through the story and frames the beginning and ending. Her attempt to tell Noah's wife the truth about God's gender fails, but she succeeds in opening Abram's eyes to God's good will.

The Jacob/Esau saga takes place on a future earth where the air is too polluted to breathe, while Joseph's exile is to an underwater kingdom. Leah's identity is radically redefined, and her aching heart is all the more poignant for it.

This may all sound unbiblical, yet time and again Finck slices down to the core of this complex book with its long, multi-layered, multi-authored history, reanimating the wooden figures of sanitized art and story into living mirrors.

Everyone says, "I know God isn't really an old man with a beard sitting up on a cloud 20 miles above the earth," but most of us have been imprinted with the image whether we like it or not. Finck's book turns Genesis inside out so successfully that we are freed to get to the heart of this book for ourselves, without getting entangled with what we think we already know, and I suspect what most of us will find is God's story as well as our own. 

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



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Let There Be Light: The Real Story of Her Creation*. Cartoonist and author: Liana Finck.

Publisher: Random House, 2022.



If only that were true

by Gimbiya Kettering

We all tell ourselves stories as familiar as fairytales. Mine ends with, *Next year, I will go to Antietam for the commemorative service*. It is part of a Brethren fairytale, which starts like all fairytales: *Once upon a time*. Once upon a time, we were united as an antislavery church.


For more than 50 years, we have been retelling this fairytale each September at the Dunker meetinghouse at Antietam. And each time, when I read the Newline reports of the celebration, I am proud of our Brethren history and our brush with the *history* of America.

Even though I know it is not true.

The seed of truth in this story is in the recorded

business of the 1797 Annual Meeting in Blackwater, Va. The first article states: “It was considered good, and also concluded unanimously, that no brother or sister should have negroes as slaves.” Like Rumpelstiltskin, from this roomful of straw we have spun a golden story about our righteousness.

Like all fairytales, to say that we were an antislavery church is a statement that mixes magical thinking, aspirational longing, and truth. Separating out the bits of truth from the chaff of revisionist history is as difficult as finding a needle in a haystack. To claim the truth, unflatteringly complicated, is as difficult as a camel getting through the eye of a needle.



“ Like all fairytales, to say that we were an antislavery church is a statement that mixes magical thinking, aspirational longing, and truth. ”

If fairytales are told to teach lessons, that the virtuous will prosper and the wicked will fall, then this story feels significant when we are struggling to remain united in a nation that is divided. Part of the magic is the word *unanimously*—everyone in agreement. More than 50 years before the Emancipation Proclamation, everyone was in agreement that the Brethren would not, could not, enslave other humans. When we tell ourselves that we were unified as an antislavery church, we can believe that our stances today are proof of our continued righteousness.

If only this were true.

In 1813, 16 years after our first statement about slavery and 48 years before the Civil War, the recorded business of

the Coventry (Pa.) Annual Meeting states:

With regard to the slave trade and slave holding, it was unanimously considered that it is wrong, and that it belongs to the iniquities of Babylon, making merchandise of souls of men (Rev 18:13), and that it is carried on by the spirit of the world, and is contrary to the good and Holy Spirit of God, by whom all the faithful souls dedicated to God are ruled and led into all truth and are to come out, according to the counsel of God, of Babylon, not touching the unclean thing, that they be no partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues.

It is at once breathtakingly countercultural and barely the minimum for a religion whose Messiah claims to *come to set the captives free*. It is the chaff. The stronger language might be attributed to the meeting being held in a Northern state, reflecting the regional influence of socioeconomic politics and accessibility for regional delegates—trends that we still see today in how the locations of host cities affect discussions from the floor.

Today, when the same issues come up *again* at Annual Conference, we say, *We are not of one mind*. 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—twice it was discussed whether preachers can defend and justify slavery from the pulpit. Meaning that, even after it was agreed that the pulpit was not the place to promote slavery, Church of the Brethren preachers kept doing just that.

I think of these as *The Loophole Queries*. Knowing how standing committees and sidebar conversations happen, the debate was probably even more vigorous than was written down.

While other American denominations, founded to uphold their members right to kidnap and enslave humans, do the necessary moral reckoning, white Brethren repeat our *happily ever after*: We continue to believe that at least we Brethren did not own slaves.

If only that were true. It is turning our history into a Disney fairytale with catchy tunes and windswept hair.



More about the church at Antietam:

September Mourn: The Dunker Church of Antietam, by Alann D. Schmidt and Terry W. Barkley (available from Brethren Press)

Brethren Voices video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tTRfOOKcXh4>

<https://www.brethren.org/bhla/hiddengems/the-rev-h-austin-cooper-collection-bhla-and-the-dunker-church-of-antietam-battlefield-sharpsburg-md/>

<http://www.nellaware.com/blog/the-story-of-antietams-dunker-church.html>

I, too, grew up believing the Brethren were an antislavery church—and some of us were. However, now when I hear white Brethren talking about our antislavery stance, I am reminded of fairytales in the tradition of the Brothers Grimm, with evil kings and starving children foraging in the forest.

The truth is that some of us owned slaves. And some of us defended and justified slavery because we aspired to be wealthy and hold human beings in forced labor and captivity. Not only were we deeply ambivalent about the issue of slavery, we are a denomination that owned slaves

and now we lie about it.

The 1813 statement made an appalling exception to its antislavery stance: Members could keep children as slaves—boys until the age of 21 and girls until the age of 18.

Slavery includes forced labor, beatings to force the labor, rape, and separation from one's family. If born a few unlucky generations earlier, I could have been enslaved by members of my own denomination until I was a teenager. In most states, freed slaves had to leave and go North, or they would be recaptured and returned to slavery. To remain free one had to flee, leaving everyone familiar and loved. Can any mother with children still enslaved truly be free?

Hearing the sounds of the approaching battle, the Dunkers of Antietam fled. It was not us who set up a makeshift hospital at our meetinghouse. Yet, this is part of our fairytale—proof of our compassion to all people. If only that were true.

More than compassion, our fairytale reveals our blind assumption that there were only two sides—both white. In the Antietam story, there is no compassion for the enslaved. There is no story of any Dunker worship space providing shelter for people fleeing for their freedom. In the violent Jim Crow years that followed Emancipation, we are not listed in the Green Book as a safe place for Black Americans. Even the stories of Black Americans wanting to join the church, drawn to the values of peacemaking and simplicity, end with marginalization, abandonment, and exile.

Central to our faith is that we continue the work of Jesus as his hands and his feet in the world. However, while Jesus *believed* that the captive was to be set free, he did not actually set the captive free. So, we have excused ourselves from the work of the Underground Railroad and Harper's Ferry.

Our antislavery stance was not based on *Enslaved Lives Matter*. It was a concern that white souls mattered too much to stand close to the unredeemable fires of human ownership. For white Dunkers, antislavery was not an affirmation of liberation; it was a fear of damnation. The church (my church and my ancestors) never cared what happened to the enslaved people (my church and my people) and what would have happened to me.

The Dunker meetinghouse, now part of the National Park Service, is not the original. The structure was carried away, brick by brick, by grieving families who wanted a memento of the place where their sons died and the sentimental larceny of tourists who were as enamored with the fairytale of a kindly, peaceful church as we are.


It was further weakened by a lack of maintenance. Finally, a storm, *deus ex machina*, collapsed the building. The building where we recite our fairytale is, fittingly, a

facsimile of the original. It 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.

I would never have been safe at the Antietam Dunker meetinghouse. People of that congregation owned slaves.

In an insight session at the 2013 Annual Conference, Brethren historian Steve Longenecker acknowledged that the Brethren owned slaves. He 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.”

The white Brethren of Antietam, and other congregations that chose to include slave owners in their fellowship, were bystanders to the violence that accompanies all enslavement. We continue in that tradition when we believe that we were—and do not continue to be—part of the system of racialized violence built by slavery.

It would not have *worked pretty good* for me then, and does not now. For me, the fairytale does not have a happily ever after. But still I sometimes believe in the best of what could have been true and say to myself, *Next year, I will go to Antietam.* 

Gimbiya Kettering is a writer and storyteller who has worked for various Church of the Brethren organizations. She lives in Washington, D.C.

ANNUAL MEETING OF 1813.

ARTICLE 1. With regard to the slave trade and slave holding, it was unanimously considered that it is wrong, and that it belongs to the iniquities of Babylon, making merchandise of *souls of men* (Rev. xviii. 13), and that it is carried on by the spirit of this world, and is contrary to the good and holy spirit of God, by whom all the faithful souls dedicated to God are ruled and led into all truth, and are to come out, according to the counsel of God, of Babylon, not touching the unclean thing, that they be not partakers of her sins, and receive not of her plagues. Hence it is unanimously and in union considered, that no member, neither brother nor sister, shall purchase or sell negroes, and keep none for slaves; members should also, with all diligence, restrain their children from it as far as it is possible while they are yet out of the church. Further it was concluded, if there were members having slaves, or persons who wish to be received into the church and have slaves, that they might hold them in a proper way so long as the church near which they live may deem it necessary for the slaves to earn the money they had cost, and then, with the counsel of the church, they are to be set free, with a good suit of clothing; and if there are any who have not bought, but inherited their negroes, they are to be liberated as soon as the church considers it right and proper. And if members have negro children under their care, or even as slaves, they shall bring them up in an orderly manner, teach them also to read, and keep them, if males, to the age of twenty-one years, and if females, to the age of eighteen years, and then, with the counsel of the church, emancipate them, with a good suit of wearing apparel. Further it has been unanimously concluded, that if members having negro slaves, will not set them free, and thus oppose themselves to the order of God and the loving counsel of the old brethren, who are indeed servants and stewards of God, and even the united counsel of the whole yearly meeting, then after sufficient admonition they would have to be held bound (according to the word). We would have to deny such members the breaking of the bread of communion, the holy

kiss, and the brotherly counsel, yet according to the word of the apostle Paul, to admonish them as brethren or sisters.

ART. 2. Further, it has been considered in union concerning electioneering, viz., giving votes for officers or men for the assembly or Congress, in order to elect them to their several offices. Inasmuch as the appearance of the times into which we have come are grievous (it was the time of the war with England), and inasmuch as party spirit has risen so high in the kingdom of this world that men, and even the heads of government are among themselves at variance, therefore it has been viewed in union, that it would be much better if no votes were given in at elections for such officers (by the brethren); for so long as there is such division of parties, we make ourselves suspicious and unpropitious on the one side, on whatever side we may vote. Thereby every one that desires to be defenseless (or non-resistant) may readily see what might be best (for him to do). Moreover, is (not only) our land and (but also) almost all empires engaged in war (in Europe especially); hence it was considered to be best to give in no vote, else we might, perhaps, assist in electing such that would afterward oppress us with war. To pray diligently for our government we believe to be our duty, and to call upon the Lord we think will be most acceptable.

ART. 3. “It has been also again requested of, and counseled by the old brethren, that the great (annual) meeting should be continued in the order as it has been heretofore declared and laid down by the old brethren, viz.: that the ministers and overseers of the churches, every one in his own district and church, should in good time lay it before the church, how some should be willing to go to the big (annual) meeting, and that the church should assist them, if possible, that some may be able to go, so that from all parts, and if it could be from all churches, some may come to that meeting; and those that will come should endeavor to arrive on Thursday evening so near to the place of meeting as to be able to be at the place Friday morning at nine o'clock, that the business may go on without hindrance.”

More than enough

Genesis 25:19-34

by Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey

On a recent hike around a beautiful lake in northern Virginia, I was surprised to find that, instead of enjoying the fall leaves or the sun glimmering on the water, my toddler daughter was enthralled by the mushrooms along the path. To be sure, there were a lot of them in a variety of colors and sizes. But given the more dramatic aspects of nature, I could not believe that mushrooms were exciting her the most. She could see something beautiful that I could not see. She was not confined to my expectations of what was worthy of attention.

In ancient Semitic cultures, the eldest son was favored to receive the family wealth and name. This was called their

birthright. It was meant not only to indicate who would receive the family wealth but also to determine who would be the head of the extended family once the current patriarch was dead.

This was the custom of the time of Esau and Jacob but, as we have already seen, God does not always abide by human customs when choosing who will carry out God's plan for salvation. In fact, God, who sees people in a different light than we do, may act in direct opposition to our assumptions. Even so, we cannot assume that God's choosing of specific people and families is the same as God condoning and approving of certain human actions and behaviors. God's openness, grace, patience, and love stand out

in stark contrast to the dysfunction and manipulation that will define the family God has chosen.

Family dysfunction

Before Esau and Jacob are even born, we see a glimpse of the rivalry that will define the brothers' relationship and impact future generations. In the womb, the twins fought each other so severely that their mother, Rebekah, cries out to God for answers. God predicts that this is just a foretaste of the power struggle that will result in the younger brother superseding the older.

When it comes time for them to be born, Esau is delivered first, followed closely by Jacob, who has a firm grasp on Esau's heel. The name Jacob is

“ When we believe there isn't enough, we begin competing with one another and grasping for things that we believe will make meaning in our lives. ”

derived from the Hebrew word that sounds like “heel” but also carries with it the connotation of usurping or supplanting another. As they grow, the rivalry between the twins is intensified by their parents picking a favorite twin. Esau becomes a skilled hunter and is loved more by his meat-loving father, while Jacob was much more of a homebody and became his mother's favorite son.

The rivalry moves to a new level when, in a moment of desperation, Esau trades away his birthright to Jacob. After spending the day in the field, Esau is famished and asks for the stew Jacob has cooked. Taking advantage of his brother's situation, Jacob says he will give him food in exchange for Esau's birthright. Esau is convinced he's near death and agrees to the exchange.

The NRSV ends this chapter by saying, “Thus Esau despised his birthright” (Genesis 25:34b), but it might be more accurate to say, “Thus Esau showed indifference to his birthright.” This echoes what he told Jacob earlier: “What use is a birthright to me?” (v. 32). In summary, Esau did not take sufficient care of what had been given to him.

Grasping at a gift

We should not assume that Jacob's actions toward his brother are condoned by God. Just because God chooses Jacob over Esau as the bearer of the divine promise does not mean God approves of everything Jacob does. Jacob did not need Esau's birthright to receive God's covenant blessing.

It was also not necessary for Rebekah and Isaac to choose sides in order for God to work outside the cultural norm of the older brother receiving the inheritance. Scriptural evidence shows that God chooses based on criteria beyond human understanding. Thus, God's favor is a

gift that cannot be earned or obtained through other means.

God's reason for choosing Jacob is unclear. God's reason for not choosing Esau is also unclear. However, scripture is clear that both brothers act in ways that are worthy of praise and worthy of blame. It is not easy to discern who is the good guy and who is the bad guy. For this reason, the emphasis of the story is not on Jacob's moral goodness but on God's grace, God's ability to bring goodness out of less-than-ideal circumstances.

Jacob still must deal with the consequences of his choices. He will continue to get his way by manipulating those around him even when it is not necessary for him to do so. And yet, God will also be able to bring about what was intended despite Jacob's choices. Eugene Roop, former Bethany Theological Seminary president, points to the preservation of God's plan throughout this saga: “But most importantly, the conflict that tears this family apart does not destroy the divine promise that the family carries” (*A Dunker Guide to the Bible*, p. 5).

Scarcity versus abundance


The story of the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau is an example of what happens when we are driven by the competitive nature of scarcity. Rebekah and Isaac feed into this dynamic by choosing to limit the love they give to each son. It is also made worse by a culture that has created a societal system where the eldest son is the one blessed with wealth and status.

We see this in our culture as well, where consumerism drives the false belief that we live in a world with limited resources. Even though it's

true that scarcity does exist in our world, advertisements market specific limited resources so that we feel compelled to buy something before it's gone or before someone else gets it first. Advertisers use phrases like “get it before it's gone” or “limited time only” to convey this idea of scarcity and to stoke desperate actions.

When we believe there isn't enough, we begin competing with one another and grasping for things that we believe will make meaning in our lives. The Brethren, on the other hand, have historically valued simplicity as an alternative to scarcity and competition.

In *The Simple Life*, Bible scholar Vernard Eller wrote that the reason Brethren value simple living is because of our desire to live under God's reign. Thus, we subject all activities and possessions to God's reign, seeking God's kingdom first and letting the rest fall behind or witness to this single loyalty. When we live under the authority of God, we find ourselves living with an attitude of abundance rather than scarcity, for we simply need less to define ourselves. Our relationship with God and with one another, not things, is what defines our identity.

Jacob's name is given to him because of the way he will continue to grasp at the heel of wealth and power. But this will not always be the case for Jacob. He will learn what it means to subject himself to God. Soon Jacob will receive a new name to show a change that has taken place within him. And we will also see that Esau, despite his losing his birthright and being passed over for the covenant blessing, has more than enough. 

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



Freed EYN women include two Chibok schoolgirls

In June, Nigerian troops found two of the former schoolgirls abducted from Chibok by Boko Haram jihadists eight years ago, Mary Dauda and Hauwa Joseph.

Church leaders also celebrated the return of Mary Iliya, who was abducted in 2020 by jihadists from Bolakile. Also recently freed was Rebecca Irmiya.

All of these women are members of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), from congregations located in the church districts of Chibok Balgi, Chibok, and Gulak.

Many other women who have been abducted still cannot be accounted for.

Dauda and Joseph were found by the Nigerian military on June 12 and 14 in two different locations.

Joseph was found along with other civilians on June 12 around Bama after troops dislodged a Boko Haram camp, while Dauda was found later outside Ngoshe village in the Gwoza area near the border with Cameroon.

"I was nine when we were kidnapped from our school in Chibok and I was married off not long ago and had this child," Joseph told reporters at the military headquarters. Her husband and father-in-law were killed in a military raid and she was left to fend for herself and her one-month-old son. "We were abandoned, no one cared to look after us. We were not being fed," she said.

Dauda, who was 18 when she was kidnapped, was married at different times to Boko Haram fighters in the Sambisa forest. "They would starve and beat you if

you refused to pray," Dauda said. She decided to flee and told her husband she was visiting another Chibok girl in the Dutse Mountains near Ngoshe, close to the border with Cameroon. She trekked all night to Ngoshe where she surrendered to troops in the morning.

"All the remaining Chibok girls have been married with children. I left more than 20 of them in Sambisa," she said. "I'm so happy I'm back."

Two more abducted women freed Iliya, who was abducted in 2020, visited the EYN Headquarters in the company of church officials and her uncle. She said that she refused to get married while a captive. As a result, she was starved, and sometimes refused food for some days. She and another woman decided to escape in the night. When they sneaked out, they met hunters. One of them had mercy on the women by agreeing to accompany them to the town of Pulka on June 10, where they met Nigerian soldiers. With the help of the soldiers, they contacted their relatives.

In Sambisa, they saw about 10 of the former Chibok schoolgirls. Some are not willing to escape, she said.

Irmiya said she was taken away by four jihadists with another six girls to Sambisa. "Later they married me to one of them," she said. She was 13 years old when she was abducted.

"I lost two of my children due to lack of medical care in Sambisa," she said. "I am happy to return home and willing to go back to school."

Her father said, "We are happy to see her again. Because we did not expect to see her again. We have been praying for her." —Zakariya Musa, EYN Media



Zakariya Musa / EYN Media

Rebecca Irmiya (at right) was freed with her eight-month-old child, nine years after her abduction from the Gulak area of Adamawa State in northeast Nigeria. At left is the director of the EYN Women's Ministry, Mrs. Hassana Habu.



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Salamatu Billi

EYN president Joel S. Billi was part of a delegation of Nigerian church leaders who took part in an ecumenical visit to Rome in late May. Salamatu Billi posted this photo of her husband shaking hands with the Pope on Facebook, celebrating “a great ecumenical experience.”

Disaster grants focus on Ukraine

Recent grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) have focused on Ukrainian refugees. As of the end of May, more than \$222,000 in donations were earmarked for the Ukraine response.

- \$100,000 supports the Church World Service work with Ukrainian refugees sheltering in Moldova.
- \$25,000 supports the L’Arche International response to Ukrainians with disabilities in Poland, Lithuania, and inside Ukraine.
- \$5,000 supports Child Life Disaster Relief programming for an orphanage in Chernivtsi, Ukraine, which had 27 children as of the time of the grant announcement, more than half newly orphaned from the war.

Other EDF grants:

\$50,000 continues funding for Proyecto Aldea Global hurricane recovery programming following Hurricanes Eta and Iota, which hit Honduras in 2020.

- \$8,000 funds a Brethren Disaster Ministries short-term rebuilding response in western Kentucky beginning this October. Volunteers will respond to the 2021 Kentucky winter storms in partnership with Fuller Center Disaster Rebuilders.

- \$5,000 has gone to Eglise des Freres au Congo to support families displaced by violence.

GFI grants for agriculture

The Global Food Initiative (GFI) made several grants in the first months of 2022:

- \$15,000 supports the Soybean Value Chain Project of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria.
- \$9,900 supports La Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU-the United and Brethren Foundation) in Ecuador, an organization that arose from former Church of the Brethren mission work in the 1950s.
- \$4,500 supports community gardens in Ecuador, one in Llano Grande connected with a church that was founded by the Church of the Brethren and currently is United Methodist, the other a church in San Isidro de Cajas affiliated with the Church of God.
- \$4,956 supports a Dryland Vegetable Production Workshop in Gitega, Burundi, in collaboration with THARS (Trauma Healing and Reconciliation Services).
- \$4,200 supports a community garden in Circle, Alaska, supported by Bill and Penny Gay of Pleasant Dale Church of the Brethren in Decatur, Ind.

- \$2,943.47 supports Lybrook Community Ministries construction of a hoop house at a Navajo Senior Center and Chapter House.
- \$2,917 supports the community garden of Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo.
- \$2,500 supports the community garden of Five Gates Church in Rockford, Ill.
- \$1,350 supports the community garden of Friendship Church of the Brethren in Linthicum, Md.

Brethren Volunteer Service changes

BVS is changing its orientation and placement process, beginning with this year’s summer and fall units.

Volunteers will engage in a process to be pre-placed prior to the start of orientation. Orientation, in turn, will be shortened from three weeks to one week. The monthly stipend will increase from \$100 a month to \$250 a month, increasing to \$300 a month for a second-year volunteer.



Children's Disaster Services

A team of six Children’s Disaster Services volunteers traveled to Uvalde, Texas, to provide specialized assistance to children and families impacted by the school shooting in May. The volunteers were part of a specially trained group responding to critical events that involve the loss of lives, called the Critical Response Childcare Team. The team was honored to be present with the children when President and Dr. Biden visited with families in the center.

National Junior High Conference



June 16 – 18, 2023 ◦ **Juniata College** ◦ **Huntingdon, PA**

National Junior High Conference is for youth who have completed 6-8 grades and their advisors. Worship, sing, laugh, learn, and make friends from all over the country!



Christian Citizenship Seminar

Spring 2023 ◦ **New York City** ◦ **Washington, DC**

Christian Citizenship Seminar provides high school aged students and their advisors the chance to explore the relationship between faith and a particular political issue - and then act on that issue, from a Brethren perspective.

Young Adult Conference



May 5 – 7, 2023 ◦ **Camp Mack** ◦ **Milford, IN**

Young Adult Conference (YAC) offers people ages 18-35 the chance to worship, fellowship, relax, and connect!

Vital insight

There is no Church of the Brethren close by, but we think MESSENGER is a vital source of good writers on current issues, giving insight not available in other places. We read every issue and share when we have opportunities to do so.

Marilyn Helmer
Tescott, Kan.

A great issue

What a great June 2022 issue of MESSENGER! Each issue is important to me, but this one held particular interest. So well done!

It is interesting to read the various views of district executives as they work with congregations in different areas. Of special interest to me was the

map outlining each of the districts as well as those areas where the Church of the Brethren is inactive.

The impact on faith and congregational life by differing perceptions of five generations from 1928 to 2019, brought on in large part by the rapid advancement of technology, was insightful. To have that information presented in this way was so helpful.

My heartfelt gratitude to each of the contributors and writers.

Emily Mumma
Lorida, Fla.

Act on guns

It is time! The time has come for the Church of the Brethren to speak out concerning the rising tide of guns used in executing innocent people.

It is time that the Church of the Brethren admit that citizens of the United States have a right to bear arms. It is time that the Church of the Brethren call for the registering, the issuing of titles for the registered guns, and the training and licensing of the citizens using their registered weapons.

We have to be tested to receive licenses to drive automobiles. Use of a weapon should be licensed the same way. Users of guns could renew their license every four years. They would go through a written test and a field test. The field test could be arranged so the gun user has to decide and act on what to shoot, with targets including people of different ages, races, sexes, and with different clothing. Shooting at human targets, unless the targets appear with a raised weapon, would cause the failure

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of the citizen to be licensed. Special training on gun safety and usage would be required before a new application for a license. This testing and training could be improved by officers in law enforcement.

Donald K. Flint
Flint, Mich.

Prayer for COs

Every week at Union Center Church of the Brethren we have a prayer focus and I typically write a devotional thought and a prayer for the worship leader to read. On Memorial Day weekend the prayer focus was veterans, and the worship leader was a conscientious objector. I wrote a devotional thought based on Denzel Short's article about

being thanked for his service as a CO. Our worship leader simply couldn't get through it, he was so choked up, so I finished for him.

Here's a bit of that devotion: "Let's recognize that service to our country worthy of thanks takes place in many forms, and give thanks for and to those actively involved in peacemaking, those who teach and serve our children, and those who represent our country overseas in other forms of service."

Frank Ramirez
Nappanee, Ind.

Sincere thanks

Thank you so much for always giving us such great information on our denomination and for keeping us in the know! We always look forward to the next issue and

Wendy McFadden's column "From the Publisher." Our sincere thanks for all your hard work and dedication.

Thomas and Pam Jouannet
Myersville, Md.

Way to go

Way to go with the awards from the Associated Press! This is so impressive, with the streamlined staff and creative option thinking.

Gail Erisman Valeta
Denver, Colo.

Congratulations

Congratulations on the many awards MESSENGER received. We all know MESSENGER's value. Nice to know others do, too.

Peggy Reiff Miller
Englewood, Ohio

Amazing

Thanks for another amazing issue. In the May MESSENGER we learned about what other churches are doing, information about Annual Conference, and our moderator. We appreciated learning about Mission and Ministry Board actions as well as a story about a young pastor in a rural church. A favorite article was Robert Johansen's, which gave us insight into the Christian way to respond to and avoid situations like we have in Ukraine. We are fortunate to have such an informative church magazine and want to thank all the people who have a hand in making it possible.

Dean and Reba Beery
North Manchester, Ind.

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We at Brethren Press would like to thank all the volunteers who helped us out at Annual Conference. To all of you who helped with unloading the books, helping customers, and tearing it all down at the end, we are grateful for your generosity. Thanks to each and every one of the Brethren Press bookstore volunteers.

Centenarians

Bever, Frank, 101, North Manchester, Ind., April 21
Burger, Richard, 102, Moravia, Iowa, July 26
Guyer, R. Evelyn, 100, Martinsburg, Pa., June 10
Hostetler, Mary, 100, Friedens, Pa., May 24

New members

Chambersburg, Pa.: Cathy Funk
Dixon, Ill.: Thomas Rich
Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.: Carolyn Morris, Beth Normand
Fairview, Unionville, Iowa: Wyatt Brinegar, Beth Ellis, Jim Ellis, Rose Mason, Zachary Mason, Marvin Morris, Shirley Morris
First, York, Pa.: Jon Patterson, Kristen Pepperman, Deb Rosenzweig, Fred Rosenzweig, Justin Tomevi, Kim Tomevi, Cheryl Weyant, David Witkovsky, Kim Witkovsky, Jason Wolf, Rebecca Wolf
Hagerstown, Md.: Debbie Nycum
Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.: Jen Houser, Zech Houser
Indian Creek, Harleysville, Pa.: Ruth Baker
Middlecreek, Rockwood, Pa.: Kelly Hargrove, Kathy Knoll, James Pryal, Julie Schmuck
Midland, Mich.: Gabriel Nelson
Mount Morris, Ill.: Denise Caldwell, Rodney Caldwell
Virден, Ill.: Shirley Meade, Katrina Spencer, Jason Wells, Peggy Wells
West York, York, Pa.: Benjamin Grove

Wedding anniversaries

Barkey, Wayne and Linda, Wabash, Ind., 55
Beal, Albert and Phyllis, Friedens, Pa., 70
Boyer, Robert and Gloria, Hummelstown, Pa., 50
Carl, Edward and Phyllis, Madisonville, Ky., 55
Carroll, Don and Donita, South Bend, Ind., 50
Collins, Jake and Linda, Vancouver, Wash., 50
Daniels, Felton and Karleen, Modesto, Calif., 60
Eash, Dale and Judy, Goshen, Ind., 60
Gaier, Jim and Kay, North Manchester, Ind., 50
Garrison, Dennis and Cathy, Annville, Pa., 50
Grossnickle, Robert Lee and Betty, Myersville, Md., 65
Grubb, Ray and Della Mae, New Enterprise, Pa., 65
Heck, Jim and Jeanne, Lititz, Pa., 60
Hodson, Michael and Barbara, Troy, Ohio, 60
Hoover, Rodney and Joyce, Martinsburg, Pa., 60
Imhoff, Ken and LouElla, West Salem, Ohio, 70
Kline, Ronald and Suzanne, Elizabethtown, Pa., 65
Laughman, Norman and Darlene, Hanover, Pa., 50
Lybrook, Charlie and Rose Mary, Lafayette, Ind., 60
Martin, John and Audrey, Lancaster, Pa., 60
Mitchell, James and Marilyn, Delaware, Ohio, 55
Mueller, Harold and Romy, Modesto, Calif., 65
Nichols, Wayne and Wilma, Virden, Ill., 60
O'Day, Paul and Barbara, Greenwood, Del., 60
Pace, Winston and Vicky, Udell, Iowa, 50
Pletcher, Virgil and Marcheta, Lake Forest, Calif., 75
Reichert, Fred and Eileen, Auburn, Ill., 66
Sanbloom, Robert and Joan, West Lafayette, Ind., 66
Sheller, Keith and Dorothy, Eldora, Iowa, 50
Shumaker, Paul and Shirley, Ligonier, Pa., 65
Stern, John and Leslie, Midland, Mich., 50
Stinebaugh, Vernon and Angela, Lancaster, Pa., 80
Weisel, Ronald and Esther, Hartville, Ohio, 60

To submit information for Turning Points, go to www.brethren.org/turning-points. Or send information to Diane Stroyeck at dstroyeck@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Information must be complete and less than one year old to be published.

Wenger, Clyde and Shirley, Lancaster, Pa., 67

Deaths

Amberson, Carol Louise Starr, 76, Altoona, Pa., March 2
Bashor, Jerry Lee, 87, Brookville, Ohio, April 22
Bloss, Lois Irene Birk, 91, Uniontown, Ohio, July 11
Bowman, Shirley Darlene Eikenberry, 94, McFarland, Calif., May 19
Browning, Edward Allen, 79, Citrus Springs, Fla., April 28
Cakerice, Howard D., 86, Eldora, Iowa, April 7
Cherry, Scott Earl, 50, Hollidaysburg, Pa., March 6
Clark, Thomas J., 84, Goshen, Ind., May 26
Colkitt, Joanne M., 83, Gettysburg, Pa., May 21
Cripe, Farrell C., 90, Goshen, Ind., May 7
Decker, Pam, 71, Weyers Cave, Va., June 30
Early, Thomas Wayne, 73, Harrisonburg, Va., June 1
Eller, Helen L. Ford, 89, York, Pa., Jan. 15
Eshelman, Helen Louise Imler, 87, New Enterprise, Pa., May 15
Espigh, Jean Yoder, 88, McVeytown, Pa., Feb. 11
Faust, Emerson L., 99, Greensburg, Pa., May 17
Flores, Jack Robert, 70, Elgin, Ill., Dec. 16
Fuller, Linda Kay Barkman, 82, Springfield, Ohio, March 27
Garber, Christine Joy Smith, 87, Harrisonburg, Va., July 1
Guyer, Carl Albert, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 28
Hartman, Dwight D., 75, Duncansville, Pa., May 10
Hartsough, Raymond E., 96, South Bend, Ind., May 28
Hawbaker, Raymond S., 92, Chambersburg, Pa., June 15
Hay, Edith Grace, 99, Bolivar, Pa., June 14
Hayward, Michael Clyde, 79, Des Moines, Iowa, May 22
Heggen, Jon, 74, Elgin, Ill., Nov. 13
Heilman, Ziegler, 95, Elizabethtown, Pa., Feb. 1
Herr, Jean Grubb, 93, Lititz, Pa., July 3
Hickman, Norman Dean, 84, Conrad, Iowa, Jan. 17
Hulke, Elizabeth Jane Kaufman, 96, Longwood, Fla., Sept. 27, 2021
Kauffman, William P., 80, Lewistown, Pa., May 15
Keener, Anna Mae Gantz, 89, Lititz, Pa., June 26
Keeseey, Richard L., 73, Elizabethtown, Pa., Jan. 18
Kirby, Sherry L. Morningstar, 59, Hanover, Pa., June 16
Klinedinst, Annalee Burriss, 85, Canton, Ill., Feb. 20
Landis, Kenneth Lee, 86, Dayton, Ohio, May 6
Leach, Dorothy Mae Musselman, 90, New Enterprise, Pa., Dec. 19
Lefever, Mary Romaine Hertzog, 97, Lititz, Pa., May 28
Lingg, Timothy Leo, Jr., 75, Pleasanton, Calif., June 28
Mason, Randy, 67, Moulton, Iowa, July 6
Mathews, Rita Ann Arnold, 91, Modesto, Calif., June 29
Mauser, Joan Zeller, 80, Myerstown, Pa., June 3
Merkey, Dorothy Foesig, 67, Bernville, Pa., July 5
Miguel, Joseph, 89, Sacramento, Calif., June 19
Moyer, Walton Ziegler, 90, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 27
Nicewonger, Curtin Troger, 92, Kenwood, Pa., June 27
Overly, Richard G., Jr., 75, Canton, Ohio, March 25
Prough, John G. (Jack), 92, McVeytown, Pa., May 25
Reese, Nancy Jean Cunningham, 83, Hagerstown, Md., June 11
Reinhold, Frederic A., 90, Denton, Md., July 6

Shaulis, Harold E., 85, Somerset, Pa., April 22
Shenefelt, Dale E., 87, Ames, Iowa, May 20
Singleton, D. Maxine Tyner, 90, Wabash, Ind., Sept. 8, 2021
Snyder, Gregory Eugene, 71, Hagerstown, Md., June 1
Steiner, Donna Forbes, 84, Lititz, Pa., May 8
Stoltzfus, Karen, 66, Lebanon, Pa., March 14
Stute, Theodore Ernest, 81, Springfield, Ohio, March 4
Swigart, Susie Leona Stains, 79, Derry Township, Pa., May 28
Swinchart, Kelly, 63, Dayton, Ohio, April 23
Trimmer, Shirley A. Heisey, 92, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 19
Wallace, Elinor L. Miller, 87, Girard, Ill., Dec. 18
Wilson, Kenneth Lee, 77, Marshalltown, Iowa, April 8
Ziegler, Judie Jane Bertram, 80, Myerstown, Pa., May 25
Ziegler, Vivian Snyder, 91, Lititz, Pa., Nov. 2

Ordained

Leeds, Erica, Southeastern Dist. (Friendship, North Wilkesboro, N.C.), May 22
McCullough, Jim, W. Plains Dist. (Topeka, Kan.), May 22
Mohler, Christopher, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Brownsville, Knoxville, Md.), May 29
Morales, Arlyn, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Iglesia Berith, Oasis De Esperanza, Lebanon, Pa.), May 29
Tindall, Josh, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Elizabethtown, Pa.), May 29
Wilson, Kristie, Southeastern Dist. (Cedar Grove, Rogersville, Tenn.), May 22

Licensed

Moss, Joseph, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Frederick, Md.), May 29

Service as a way of being

began working at Brethren Disaster Ministries (BDM) in 2015. I did not foresee how that, and becoming more involved in my adoptive denomination, the Church of the Brethren, would provide the opportunity to more clearly understand, embrace, and articulate a way of living that I had practiced for as long as I can remember: service.



SHARON BILLINGS FRANZÉN

Doing something for someone else has always been a part of who I am, including my career choices. After graduate studies in international development, I entered the US Peace Corps in Tanzania and over the next few decades I spent time there, and in other parts of Africa, serving in both paid and volunteer capacities. When asked to explain my motivation, I

would most often say that for me, as a Christian, it was simply the right thing to do.

Without thinking too deeply about it, I considered service to be one of the many things that a person of faith does: worship, sing, praise, study scripture, love, serve. I treated each of these as if they were separate critical pieces of my Christian life, like a list that I mentally tried to manage and was constantly checking.

As I immersed myself in BDM and my Brethren congregation, I realized that I needed to move beyond my functional but compartmentalized faith to embrace a more holistic understanding of Jesus and the type of life he modeled. Jesus didn't just talk about loving or serving; he radiated love and was the perfect example of someone who embodies service. Jesus' words and actions were really manifestations of who he was in his core being. If I wanted a Jesus-shaped life, I needed to shift from "doing" to "being."


I have been inspired in this growth process by the volunteers I meet through Brethren Disaster Ministries—selfless and faithful Christ followers whose entire lives are Jesus-shaped. Time after time, they joyfully leave the comfort of their homes to travel, often at their own expense, to serve people they do not know but already love. They are com-

pelled by God's love flowing through them.

While most people would rather head in the opposite direction of a disaster, Children's Disaster Services volunteers journey toward the devastation and trauma, bringing a sense of calm and safety for the youngest survivors and their families. Rebuilding volunteers use their skills, tools, and hard work to help restore hope and dignity to disaster survivors who are rebuilding their homes and lives. All of these people serve with no expectation of reward or praise. It is impossible to witness who they are without being touched by the love that bursts forth from them.

One such person was Sylvus Flora, a retired minister and district executive, rebuilding volunteer, and project leader trainee. He served 11 times on BDM projects, the last one at the age of 83.

Sylvus didn't speak much in his final days in hospice care, said his daughter, Jan Steil. But when he did, he seemed to think he was at a rebuilding project site and talked about the work that needed to be done. His disaster ministry work was so much a part of who he was that this was what came to him as he lay dying.

I pray for a Jesus-shaped life so that I may follow Sylvus' example and enter God's kingdom with words of service on my lips. 

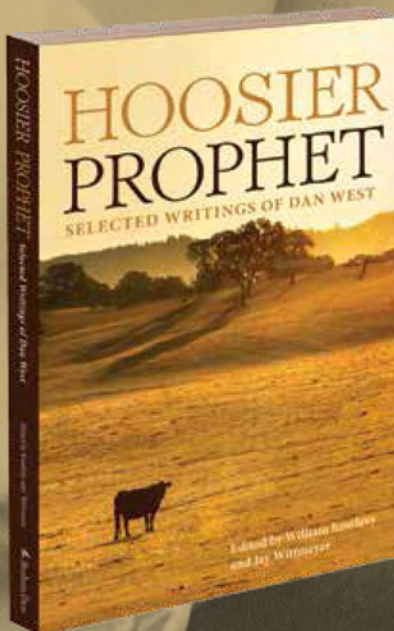
Sharon Billings Franzén is the office manager for Brethren Disaster Ministries and a member of Westminster (Md.) Church of the Brethren

“ If I wanted a Jesus-shaped life, I needed to shift from “doing” to “being.” ”



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