

# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Take me home;  
Brethren roads

One Great  
**HOUR**  
OF SHARING

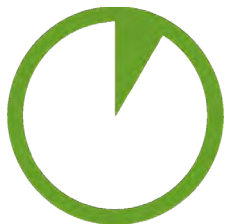
Love remains

Photo by Craig Thompson

Put love into action. Give to One Great Hour of Sharing.

And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love. 1 Cor. 13:13

## 2022 Special Offerings



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Offering

June 5



Mission  
Offering

September 18



Advent  
Offering

December 11

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# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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# Light

**B**eing unpracticed with bird identification, I tend to assume any big birds flying in formation are geese. We have plenty, so that's a reasonable guess. One evening the Canada geese winging their way south were unusually impressive. Their bodies glowed in the setting sun. Why had they never looked that way before? Was it the angle of the light?



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

Just days later I learned that our area is seeing a resurgence of sandhill cranes, and realized that the marvelous sight in the sky was cranes rather than geese. The photos that I could find looked exactly like what I had seen.

Our county naturalist reports that sandhill cranes had stopped breeding here way back in 1890, and were almost non-existent for over a hundred years. But in 2020, there were more than 94,000 in the sandhills east of the Mississippi River. There's even a breeding ground right nearby on—get this—Crane Rd. Two whooping cranes were just spotted there too.

The sure movements of nature's creatures are a spectacular thing, maybe particularly remarkable to me because my own navigation system is so imperfect. My photo of sunrise over the Mississippi throws me off because it looks to me—an Illinoian—like a sunset: Even though I live hours away from the great river, it's hard to reorient my internal GPS for a brief stay on the Iowa side. When I travel up and down the west side of the river, I keep getting north and south mixed up.

Normally the sound of birds migrating south makes me melancholy, since it reminds me that winter is coming. But surely their journey is not a sad thing, but a wondrous reminder of God's mysterious creatures, the turning of the seasons, and our own internal settings.

What would cause us to take flight for a faraway land? For the magi, it was a star, whose celestial light compelled them onward. Does the light of Epiphany draw us to our true destination?

It was both the simple and the wise who followed the star. Whenever we gaze at the darkening sky, we can be reminded of the light that awakens us and takes us to the place where God is revealed. When we are changed by our encounter with the Christ child, we will go home by another way. We will practice another way of living.

*Wendy McFadden*

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**“We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.” –Romans 5:3b-4, NIV**

**“Hope smiles from the threshold of the year to come, whispering, ‘It will be happier.’ ”  
—poet Alfred Lord Tennyson**

**“The very least you can do in your life is figure out what you hope for. And the most you can do is live inside that hope. Not admire it from a distance but live right in it, under its roof.” —author Barbara Kingsolver**

**“We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.” —Martin Luther King Jr.**

**“In a time of destruction, create something.” —author Maxine Hong Kingston**

**“You cannot swim for new horizons until you have courage to lose sight of the shore.”  
—author William Faulkner**

**THE SHADOW KNOWS**

**G**roundhog Day, observed in the US each year on Feb. 2, dates to the 19th century, with roots that go back even further. While meteorological science doesn't back up the groundhogs' "predictions," the day has become a source of fun tradition for many, and a sign of hope for winter-weary folks looking forward to spring. It became especially popular after the 1990s film *Groundhog Day* starring Bill Murray and Andie McDowell. Test yourself with the following Groundhog Day trivia:

1. What town hosts the biggest Groundhog Day celebration each year?
2. What did the groundhog there predict last year?
3. About what percentage of the time does it predict an early spring?
4. In what year did the first "official" Groundhog Day event occur on Gobbler's Knob?
5. Where was most of the 1993 movie *Groundhog Day* actually filmed?
6. In that film, what song greets weatherman Phil Connors on the radio each morning?
7. Feb. 2 became the day for spring predictions in Germany because it was (and is) a holy day on the Christian calendar. What Christian observance is celebrated that day?
8. Which animal originally made predictions for the early spring (or not) in Germany?

**DID YOU KNOW?**

February 2 (2/2/22) and 22 (2/22/22) will be the first time since 11/11/11 that all the digits in the date are the same, a span of 123 months. And appropriately enough, 2/22/22 falls on, yes, a Tuesday. It also marks 290 years since George Washington was born in Virginia.



ANSWERS: 1. Punxsutawney, Pa. (bonus points if you can spell it correctly); 2. Six more weeks of winter; it saw its shadow; 3. Only about 1 in 7 times, or 14 percent—although most research has found its accuracy is less than flipping a coin; 4. 1887; 5. Woodstock, Ill. (about 25 miles from the Church of the Brethren headquarters in Elgin); 6. "I Got You, Babe," by Sonny & Cher; 7. Candlemas, marking the presentation of Jesus at the temple; 8. A badger (and in some cases a hedgehog), although it only forecast four more weeks of winter if it saw its shadow.

# A container of faith

**W**hen **Eglise des Freres Haitiens** in Miami, Fla., decided to ship a container to Haiti to aid Brethren in the Saut Mathurine area affected by an earthquake, the church had no idea how it would play out, how much it would cost, whether there would be enough supplies to fill a 40-foot container, or who in Haiti knew the customs system to help out. But we stepped out in faith and God made it all possible.

The congregation gave money, food,

supplies, and their time to box and load the container, with partners including Peniel Baptist Church and pastor Renaut Pierre Louis, Brethren Disaster Ministries, and many other friends—and God multiplied.

The container came out of customs in Haiti a week after it should have. Then some of the unions in Haiti announced a strike for three days to close the country because of lack of fuel. Romy Telfort, a leader in L'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti (the Church of the



Ilexene Alphonse

*Donations take over the church building at Miami Haitian in Florida, where church members sort and pack aid for Brethren in Saut Mathurine, Haiti.*

Brethren in Haiti), helped find drivers who had fuel and were brave enough to make the drive.

Three large vehicles were filled with supplies from the container. In those first few days, only two made it safely to Saut Mathurine. Two drivers left Port-au-Prince on a Sunday at 8:30 p.m. One made it to Saut Mathurine by Monday afternoon, the other by Wednesday afternoon. For those types of vehicles, it's a maximum of 7 hours of driving—but with the situation in Haiti, it took days. There were roadblocks, rock throwing, and bullets flying, but thanks to God they made it safely to their destination. —Ilexene Alphonse

L'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti



*Relief goods are transferred from the container to one of the vehicles that drove them to their destination in Saut Mathurine.*

## Ivester Piecemakers

**In the spirit of giving**, a small group of women at Ivester Church of the Brethren in Grundy Center, Iowa, reconvened in late August last year to meet regularly to wear their masks and do “piecemaking.”

On the first Sunday in Advent, they displayed their quilts during worship and a prayer of blessing was shared. Fourteen quilts found their way to Des Moines, to be given to newly arriving people from Afghanistan. Twelve found new homes through distribution at House of Compassion in Marshalltown, where residents and immigrants have suffered in recent times, affected by a tornado and a derecho plus all the trials of the pandemic.

It is in such a time as this that our call to service comes to the forefront. —LaDonna Brunk



*Quilts are displayed and blessed during worship.*

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.

## Book studies open up conversation

■ **At York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill.**, several people who attended National Older Adult Conference became interested in Karen González's keynote presentation and decided to study her book, *The God Who Sees: Immigrants, the Bible, and the Journey to Belong*. The book study was facilitated by pastor Christy Waltersdorff and Marty Creager. It led the group to talk about the plight of refugees and immigrants in our world today. Participants want to have further conversation about what the congregation can do to assist people in need, possibly by supporting an immigrant family. —Christy Waltersdorff



York Center book study group

■ **Nineteen people attended the *Who Will Be a Witness?*** study at Cabool (Mo.) Church of the Brethren led by former pastoral couple Roger and Carolyn Schrock. The book is by Drew Hart, a professor at



Members at Cabool meet for a book discussion: (from left) Gordon Johnston, Myron Jackson, Brian Lenihan, Doris Lenihan, Picky Gum, and Mac Gum.

Messiah College and a member at Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren. The church's witness commission planned the event as a successor to one held a couple of years ago to address the scourge of racism in light of Jesus' teachings and ministry. The discussion resulted in substantive and challenging dialogue.

—Sandy Bosserman

## Ridgely worships with neighbors

On a Sunday last September, Ridgely (Md.) Church of the Brethren walked across the street to join the service at Jericho Faith Deliverance Church, with Brethren pastor Ken George giving the sermon. The favor was returned in October when Jericho joined Ridgely in worship, with Phyllis Duckery of the Ridgely congregation providing the sermon.

Although the churches have different styles of worship, they recognize that what's important is who we worship. In that regard, the churches are of one mind. Experiencing one another's worship builds a bridge that connects diversities and helps to foster understanding and a true fellowship in Christ.

The churches hope to repeat this exchange and make it a regular event. —Ken George

## Anniversaries

■ **Columbia City** (Ind.) Church of the Brethren celebrated 60 years of ministry with a special worship service on Oct. 17.

■ **Sangerville** Church of the Brethren in Bridgewater, Va., celebrated the 50th anniversary of its building on Nov. 7.

## In the news

■ **George Etzweiler** of University Baptist and Brethren Church in State College, Pa., at 101 was the oldest runner in the annual Tussey Mountainback 50-mile relay and ultramarathon in October.

■ **Mary Garvey**, pastor of Stonerstown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, was a contestant on the game show *Jeopardy* on Oct. 13.

■ **Dena Ross Jennings**, former board chair of On Earth Peace and a physician and musician, performed in the livestream event "Celebrating Culture and Lights: Diwali at the Kennedy Center" on Nov. 6.

## Dude and youth

The Youth and Young Adult Ministries office has shared kudos for a unique National Youth Conference fundraiser at Brownsville Church of the Brethren in Knoxville, Md., called "Dude and Youth." Each youth worked with a male mentor to bake a cake for a silent auction, raising almost \$2,000.

Send pictures and descriptions of your youth group's NYC fundraisers to [eclary@brethren.org](mailto:eclary@brethren.org) to be featured on NYC social media.

Courtesy of the Youth and Young Adult Ministries





Kathleen Kolovitz, *The Survivors*, 1923

## Lessons from Afghanistan

# WHAT CAN CHRISTIANS LEARN FROM 20 YEARS OF WAR?

by Robert C. Johansen

**O**n Aug. 30, the United States completed its military withdrawal from Afghanistan, ending a war that began in 2001. What have 20 years of fighting taught us? Consider these five lessons important for Christians:

■ **First, in addition to being contrary to the teachings of Jesus, war is not a practical solution for the problem of terrorism.** The fighting killed 240,000 people, drove 6 million from their homes, and cost US taxpayers \$2.3 trillion.

Although many people willing to use terrorist tactics have been killed,

many remain. More have been called forth. Those Afghans who sympathize with one of the terrorists' goals—to remove foreign troops from their region of the world—probably have grown in numbers during the US perpetration of war.

In honing its violence against terrorism, US policies have become more terroristic themselves. By developing attack drones to kill people at any time or place, without any warning, US officials have put many people, including children, under constant threat of immediate destruction. An explosive may hit them at home or on the road, usually before they hear one coming.

If they do hear a drone circling overhead, the sound casts them into fear that this breath might be their last. US drone attacks have killed hundreds of civilians in what amounts to a form of US terrorism, for which there has been no legal process of review or accountability.

■ **Second, war is not an effective way to build a peaceful, democratic society, especially when waged by a great power fighting to change a dissimilar culture.** The US failure in Afghanistan is simply the latest in a long series of similar fighting failures: the French in Vietnam (1946-1954) and



“ The board’s statement about what was likely to happen if the United States pursued war was a prophetic voice crying in the wilderness of violence. ”

Algeria (1954-1962), the United States in Vietnam (1955-1975), the Soviet Union in Afghanistan (1979-1989), the United States in Iraq (2003-2011) and Afghanistan (2001-2021). These long, brutal wars killed many people, yet the militarily superior side lost the war (or misleadingly proclaimed a quick victory, as the United States did in Iraq in 2003, but lost the peace insofar as the US invasion brought years of violence to Iraqi society).

■ **Third, the belief that employing abundant military power will lead to peace, a preferred political outcome, and a better society is difficult to unlearn**, even though historical evidence shows it to be false. After 71 years of fighting in the six cases above, the lesson that the militarily superior side often will not achieve desirable political outcomes of peace or democracy is still not widely accepted because that conclusion contradicts the military-industrial complex’s priorities and the bedrock belief among policymakers that military preparedness is the key to security. Faith in US military dominance overshadows efforts to institutionalize peace based on law, reciprocity among nations, equitable economic relations, good public education, and the strengthening of multilateral, peace-building institutions.

As a result of this unwarranted

faith, critics of US withdrawal from Afghanistan argue that the United States should have stayed longer. Yet there is no evidence that staying longer would have produced a better outcome. The problem in Afghanistan was not that the US stay was too short, but rather that war was the wrong choice.

The withdrawal was chaotic because the United States’ primary approach—1) use violence in a vain effort to impose control, and 2) teach Afghans how to employ violence for the same purpose—did not weave a sufficiently strong Afghan social fabric to enable the military withdrawal to be less self-serving or to help Afghans and US citizens together learn how to live with those with whom one disagrees without killing each other.

■ **Fourth, although many Americans have not learned the lesson that employing superior military power will usually not achieve desirable moral and political outcomes in peacebuilding, the Church of the Brethren General Board 20 years ago correctly anticipated what was about to happen in Afghanistan.**

Being informed by Brethren values and understanding of scripture enabled board members to see through the shadow side of US foreign policy and its temptations to strive for military dominance. Immediately after

the horrible Sept. 11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, the General Board made a statement that is remarkable for its prophetic vision, both in demonstrating faithfulness to Jesus’ teachings and in anticipating what might happen if Jesus’ teachings were rejected.

After expressing genuine concern for those in the United States victimized by these unconscionable attacks, board members said: “We believe that peace and security will not be found through military, economic, and political reprisal.” Such policies “may satisfy the desire for retaliation and the appearance of greater security, but in the long term they can neither change the conditions that give rise to terrorist impulses nor eradicate the threat of terrorist attack.” Of course, the perpetrators of violence against civilians “should be held accountable for their deeds,” they added. “Their apprehension and prosecution should be carried out within the rule of applicable law.”

At the *beginning* of what later turned out to be 20 years of fighting and killing, the board called “for the immediate cessation of military action against the nation of Afghanistan” out of concern over causing further death and destruction and exacerbating the problems of the Afghan people, who were already suffering (“A Resolution on the Events and Aftermath of

September 11, 2001,” October 22, 2001, full text on [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org)).


The board noted scriptural calls to “give greater attention to global inequities. . . . If we want peace, we must recognize and repent of our role in this inequity and truly work for justice in the global community.” In avoiding self-righteous or judgmental finger-pointing at others, the board called Brethren church members to heed Jesus’ call to “seek the welfare of others” and to honor “his unflinching advocacy for the least and last in society [which] must guide us in our personal and international dealings.” The board invited dialogue with people of other faith traditions to “work together to seek peace” and asked Brethren to renew their commitment “to the way of Jesus Christ and to God whose love extends to all.”

The board’s statement about what was likely to happen if the United States pursued war was a prophetic voice crying in the wilderness of violence. Do any readers of MESSENGER remember how you and your congregation received the board statement at the time? If so, that might be added to current study of the statement and the 11 scriptures on which it is based.

■ **Fifth, bridge-building between Brethren pacifists and many non-pacifists, whether Christian or not, can bear fruit for the non-killing way of Jesus, if coalition-builders are willing to follow the evidence that nonviolent action and peacebuilding strategies are more likely to produce desirable outcomes, even against ruthless opponents, than violent campaigns, especially over the long run.** This con-

clusion is empirically documented by Erica Chenoweth and Maria J. Stephan in *Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict* and by Chenoweth in *Civil Resistance: What Everyone Needs to Know*.

The way to follow Jesus most closely is to take the non-killing, law-enforcing, compassionate path, even toward those who may be as disliked as Samaritans or have knowingly fallen short of honoring the law. The bedrock Brethren belief in not killing and being kind (yet firm and principled) toward others, even adversaries, is confirmed once again by the negative consequences of falling short of Jesus’ way in Afghanistan.

Simply to follow Jesus’ nonviolent way is sufficient guidance for Bible-believing Brethren. Additional arguments showing the harms of a violent war and the practical benefits of nonviolent measures add strength to the Christian pacifist’s position, because they make clear that nonviolent strategies can be practical and prudent as well as ethical. This understanding moves non-pacifists who respect evidence much closer to pacifists. Pacifist followers of Jesus show a different way of living. After the Afghan experience, pragmatic non-pacifists should be less distant from the pacifist way of living than ever before. 

Kathie Kolmiz, *The Volunteers*, sheet 2 of the series *War*, 1922



Robert C. Johansen is a member of Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind. His latest book is *Where the Evidence Leads: A Realistic Strategy for Peace and Human Security*. He is professor emeritus of political science and peace studies at the University of Notre Dame.

“ Afghans who sympathize with one of the terrorists’ goals—to remove foreign troops from their region of the world—probably have grown in numbers during the US perpetration of war. ”



# HOPE FOR THE LONG HAUL

by Wendy McFadden

Nicholas J Stankus/flickr.com

**I**f ever there was a scripture text that seemed right for the times, it's one that assures us that God has a plan. That's what we get in Jeremiah 29.

We've been carried off to a land we don't recognize and we're eager to seize whatever good news we hear. I don't have to tell you what exile looks like: For a long time we couldn't safely see anyone outside our own households. People we knew got sick. Some people died. Actually, a lot of people died.

Where I work, all the scenarios that were written up early in the pandemic were based on when a vaccine might be developed. Nothing in the scenarios imagined a situation where the vaccine itself would become divisive. But here we are, peering into 2022 and beginning to recognize that words like "normal" and "return" aren't the right ones anymore. So we might feel like those people who got carried into exile, and we might long for Jerusalem.

What's especially exhausting about the pandemic is that we're also in other kinds of exile—with other disorienting

events that seem out of control. You know what those feelings of exile are for you. For me, I think of a planet that we're using up. I think of a country where anyone can get a gun—and the inevitable results when we allow that. And I think of the injustice of what Martin Luther King Jr. called "the two Americas," where it's possible to live life not knowing that the other half has a completely different experience when it comes to health, housing, and the criminal justice system.

So here we are—in the midst of exile—with a prophecy from Jeremiah.

Here's some backstory: In the previous chapter, we find a prophet named Hananiah. It's easy to see why he would be popular. Hananiah tells the people that everything is going to be fine. Don't worry: We get to return to Jerusalem in just two years.

But the prophet Jeremiah faces off with him and denounces him as a false prophet. In fact, he says Hananiah is so wrong that, because he has lied to the people, he will



die within a year. Which he does! (I tell you, sometimes things seemed more clear-cut back in those days.)

So Jeremiah is right, and Hananiah is wrong. The people of Judah aren't going to be rescued tomorrow—and not even in their lifetimes. Rescue is so far away that they should just settle in for the long haul. They should plant gardens and have kids. Their kids should get married and have their own kids.

Even more surprising, these exiled people should pray for the wellbeing of the place where they have been exiled.

What we have in chapter 29 is a letter that Jeremiah has written to the exiles in Babylon. There are several verses that might sound familiar. The admonition to build houses and plant gardens is so concrete that the words are often taken out of context and used rather literally in our own settings; I've probably done that myself. In addition, the words are so beautiful and poetic that we might forget that they were bad news to those to whom Jeremiah was writing.

But it's not all bad news. The most familiar words from Jeremiah 29 come shortly after that: "For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope" (v. 11).

This verse has been a source of comfort for a very long time, but it seems especially popular in these days of internet memes and signs in home decorating stores.

It is comforting to know that God has a plan, that it's for our good, and that it's filled with hope. Actually, every day when I read the news, I think, *Hey, God, now would be a good time to implement that plan. We're hanging out here in the land of exile, you know. Oh, and could you—in a gentle sort of way, of course, not lethally like you did with Hananiah—tell everybody which of the prophets are the false ones?*

Let's think more about that plan. It's fine to post verses from Jeremiah 29 on a sign or a meme, but perhaps we can dig deeper. Let me offer three questions to ponder:

### Who is included in this plan?

In our culture and because of the way the English language works, we tend to interpret the word "you" in the singular. In many other languages, the grammar would tell us that God's plan is not just for me personally. We do know from scripture that God cares for each of us individually and knows the numbers of hairs on our heads, but in an individualistic culture we need to keep reminding ourselves that the Bible speaks most often in the plural. God is speaking to the community.

Back when I lived in central Pennsylvania, I learned the word "y'uns" or even "y'uns all." That's the right idea.

So this plan is first of all for the Judahites stuck in Babylon, and maybe also for God's people in other places, like here. But it's for *us*, not *me*.


### What does it mean to seek the welfare of our city?

This instruction was intended to shock. The language is like the prayer for the government that appears as part of the service for Shabbat—but the people would have expected the words to refer to Jerusalem, not to Babylon. It's praying for our enemies, the ones holding us captive and exercising power over us. The word translated here as "welfare" or "wellbeing" is *shalom*. We are to pray for the *shalom* of our enemies—for their peace and wholeness.

This is a challenge. I can pray for my enemies. But, to be honest, I'm pretty sure I pray for them to repent, not to flourish. But if I am committed to God's peace, I need to do better.

### Who are we in the story?

When we read the Bible, it's easy to identify with the underdog. So we might see ourselves as the Israelites forced to flee Egypt—not pharaoh. We might see ourselves as Joseph beaten and shoved into a well—not the jealous brothers. We might see ourselves as the good Samaritan, not the religious leaders who passed by the victim—and certainly not the robbers.



“God isn’t playing hard to get. God wants to be sought with your whole heart, and then there’s rejoicing when you are together again.”

Here in this story we might identify with the Judahites taken captive and carried off to Babylon. But, while there’s plenty for us to learn from this vantage point, perhaps we are not the Israelites.

Who else might we be?

Could we at times be the Babylonians, wielding power against someone weaker?

Could we ever be the false prophets—conveying untruths that are motivated by the wrong reasons? That’s hard to swallow.

I would rather see myself as Jeremiah, speaking truth and standing on the right side of history.

Maybe there’s room in this story for us to see ourselves in all these people. We can learn something each time we shift the camera angle.

One learning for us is to take a good hard look at power and empire, since that’s what this story is about.

Just recently, new research shows that many Americans agree with the statement that “God intended America to be a new promised land where European Christians could create a society that could be an example to the rest of the world.”

One-third of Americans agreed with this statement. More than half of white evangelical Protestants agreed, and there was a strong overlap with so-called Christian nationalism, which is a melding of Christianity and American identity. This research comes from the Public Religion and Research Institute (whose head, Robert Jones, spoke a few years ago at Bridgewater College, one of the Brethren colleges).

When one of my daughters was in middle school, her English teacher assigned the class a paper exploring their European heritage. Because her heritage is only half European, my daughter asked whether she could write about her mother’s non-European heritage, which happens to be Asian. The answer was . . . no.

This in a city where more than 50 percent of the children are Hispanic. I doubt the teacher meant any harm. In

her worldview, being white and European was “normal,” and to be otherwise was not.

What’s the harm in Christians believing that America is the new promised land and that European Christians are the example to the rest of the world? Well, in short, that’s the gospel of false prophets. It’s the false prophets of Christian nationalism, which is certainly not consistent with the Church of the Brethren—a group born out of a wariness of empire and the unholy marriage of church and state.

It’s also the gospel of the false prophets of racial supremacy. Certainly it’s harmful for Hispanic and Asian and Black children to be taught that being European is the only heritage worth writing about. But it’s also harmful to white children. Our country is going through a painful racial reckoning, and it would be less traumatic—and less violent—if the education of previous decades had been more honest.

Scholars say a basic theme of this book of the Bible is Jeremiah dealing with the false prophets of his day. If so, then we have a lot in common with his target audience.


There’s one more idea in this section of Jeremiah 29, and it might be even more reassuring than the fact that God has a plan for us:

*Then when you call upon me  
and come and pray to me,  
I will hear you.*

*When you search for me, you will find me;  
if you seek me with all your heart,  
I will let you find me, says the Lord. . . .*

In the old game of hide-and-seek, the aim is to be hard to find. But not too hard. The worst thing would be if everyone gave up and went home while you were still hidden. If they didn’t care enough to tell you they were leaving. If they didn’t let you be found. Because, even though you want to be hidden, you really do want to be found.

God’s version of hide-and-seek isn’t quite like that; it’s not a game. But we can be sure that God wants to be found. God isn’t playing hard to get. God wants to be sought with your whole heart, and then there’s rejoicing when you are together again.

Perhaps that is the true meaning of *return*. God is present in Jerusalem, but God is also present in Babylon. So when we return to God, we are returning home. 


# it changed my life

## TESTIMONIES OF BROTHERS VOLUNTEER SERVICE

### What I learned about people

**I** was in a conversation with a woman in our community who has known me most of my life. She is a retired teacher, as am I. She knew I had been in Poland after college, but didn't know it was through BVS. She asked me if I could say one thing about that experience that influenced me. Without thinking, I said it changed my whole life.

Upon reflection, I realize that it's the best answer I could have given. It influenced my decision about graduate school and helped focus my career, but more importantly it influenced my way of dealing with all the people I have encountered since then—students friends, colleagues, people with whom I disagree, and the list goes on.

It's impossible to say how many times things that I learned through my experience in BVS have popped into my mind as I have lived my life. I am so thankful I took that step after Manchester to enter BVS. 

Larry Klingler, Unit 93, Brethren Agricultural Exchange Program (1971-1973)

### Through the eyes of others


**B**VS gave me incredible experiences connecting with multiple communities of people in different settings, all working to make their world better for those who lived there.

First, I participated in two orientations on the South Side of Chicago which taught me about the wide variety of




“ It taught me to see the world through others’ eyes and be inspired by their efforts to improve their lives and the lives of others in their community. ”



I have always been grateful for the variety of experiences and people I met through BVS. It taught me to see the world through others’ eyes and be inspired by their efforts to improve their lives and the lives of others in their community. 

Myrna Frantz, Unit 159, Church and Peace Office (1983-1985)

## The things I learned

I can say with all honesty that BVS literally changed my life. My project was at Woodland Altars Outdoor Education Center in the Southern Ohio District where I served mainly as office manager. I must’ve made a decent impression on the center’s director because he asked me to stay on as a salaried employee after my year was up—which I did, and I stayed for another seven years. The things I learned and the friendships I made at Woodland Altars have lasted me right into my life now—and that was back in 1980! 

Diane Bellomo, Unit 145, Woodland Altars (1980-1981)

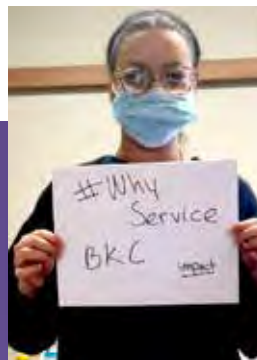
## A chance to grow up

I loved my time serving in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. During my time volunteering at L’Arche Kilkenny and incredABLE, I really grew as a person. I learned how to take care of others, learned about two different, yet similar cultures, and got to experience what it is like to live the village life for the first time.

communities that makes up the US. We worshiped and lived in African American communities, which was an education for me, having grown up in the suburbs.

Next, I spent two years at Church and Peace in Germany, which was seeking to be faithful by encouraging Christian communities for nonviolence and advocating against the arms race. This gave me the opportunity to visit Christian communities in Germany, France, and the Netherlands.

Finally, I worked in Iowa at a community action office assisting families to overcome poverty, and which started an advocacy program against domestic violence and sexual assault. This taught me to respect and be supportive of all persons and seek to empower them to be their best selves. This also gave me job skills to begin working in human services following BVS.



**Why service** These photos and testimonials are from current and past Brethren Volunteer Service workers. Go to [www.brethren.org/bvs](http://www.brethren.org/bvs) to learn more about volunteering.



My second year of BVS ended up being a blessing in disguise. I loved working at incredABLE and it ended up being the best job and one of the best years of my life. I loved the opportunities to learn more about the cultural differences between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. I enjoyed learning more about Protestantism and Catholicism. I enjoyed learning the deep history of the island of Ireland and sometimes get more homesick for it than I do for the US.

My time spent on these two BVS projects gave me a chance to grow up more, become more responsible, and learn about how to care for others and myself. I really needed that intentional poverty lifestyle to learn how to be responsible financially especially. I learned about teamwork, how to help others when they need it, and to ask for help when I need it. I learned how to be patient and care for others who sometimes could not communicate their wants and needs effectively. These skills helped me tremendously with my current job teaching kindergarten at a private English academy in South Korea. [📖](#)

Rosemary Sorg, Unit 304, L'Arche Kilkenny and incredABLE (2014-2016)

## Inspired by Matthew 25

**I**t's been a while. Fifty years to be exact. The flow of life was different back then. Practically everyone attended a church of their choice, and life was less rushed. The country was part way through the Vietnam War, and the BVS units were large due to conscription. We were given \$15 a month stipend, which was plenty to see us through the month.

Not being a member of the Church of the Brethren, I was not familiar with BVS. But Helen Herr came to my

church to talk about Church World Service, and she mentioned being in one of the first BVS units. I went home feeling called, so I applied and took a year's unpaid leave of absence from my job. After five weeks of training in New Windsor, Md., I landed on a project in the inner city of Chicago.

My BVS experience was life-changing for me, but I have often wondered how my decision to join BVS impacted the lives of those I journeyed with throughout that year. Some of that impact was evident immediately as I watched a child's face break into a smile, helped a teen pitch a tent under the stars they had never seen because the lights of the city blocked them, or shared the joy of the mom who just finished sewing her first item of clothing. But most of the impact will remain unknown, as it should be.


There are endless memorable moments, but one that





stands out is the summertime preschool we started for the kids scheduled to begin school in the fall. We asked the local kindergarten teacher what we could teach the children that would be most helpful to her. (The community was culturally diverse. At least half of the kids spoke only Spanish, and we spoke only English.)

She advised us to teach them their ABCs, numbers, colors, and shapes. It sounds like such a simple thing, but starting school without knowing those basics, with a language barrier besides, puts them behind from the get-go. Very quickly, the children learned those things and more. Helping them was such a joy. The teacher was grateful.

You see, being a part of BVS isn't just about what it can do for you. It's all about what you can offer to others while showing acceptance, grace, love, and compassion. Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40, NIV). 

Susan Frost, Unit 90, Douglas Park Church of the Brethren (1971)

## A family thing

I have five years of BVS and four different projects that helped form who I am today and the life I have lived.

My first project I was 18, just out of high school, and went to Douglas Park Church of the Brethren on the west side of Chicago. It was an eye-opening and life-changing time for me to get to know the families and especially the kids in the neighborhood.

Soon afterwards, I found myself heading to Northern Ireland to work in a youth club in Ardoyne, a Catholic neighborhood of West Belfast. I stayed about 15 months and loved my time with the neighborhood youth running discos, driving the van, arranging various cooking or craft classes, and playing pool.


I then went to Glebe House, a small farm where children from Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods were brought to the countryside for adventures together. We had



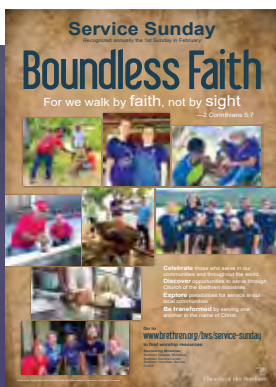
volunteers from England, the US, France, Germany, and India. I learned how to milk goats along with many other practical skills.

When I returned to the States at the end of 1979, I was soon called to Elgin to work a year as an assistant to the orientation director and the recruitment director. It was a wonderful opportunity to get a bit more behind the scenes of the Church of the Brethren and BVS, and to welcome and help orient new volunteers. Driving the big bus, preparing training sessions and practice projects, and helping folks choose their projects were all extremely rewarding and valuable life lessons for me.

Twenty years later I got to be a BVS project director as the recruiter for Innisfree Village, a life-sharing community with adults with disabilities at the foothills of Shenandoah National Forest. I still enjoy inspiring and being inspired by folks who choose a life of service, peace, and simplicity.

My parents, Bill and Jeanne Chappell, were BVSers for 13 years and my sister Deborah Chappell Kristensen for 2 years in Germany. It's a family thing. 

Nancy Chappell, Unit 99, Douglas Park Church of the Brethren (1972-1974), European Program (1977-1979), BVS office (1980)



## Service Sunday

Congregations are invited to observe Service Sunday on Feb. 6 to recognize those who serve, or have served, in their local communities and throughout the world. This year's theme is "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Corinthians 5:7). This observance is sponsored by the Service Ministries of the Church of the Brethren: Brethren Volunteer Service, Brethren Disaster Ministries, Brethren Service Center, and FaithX. Find worship resources and more information at [www.brethren.org/bvs/service-sunday/](http://www.brethren.org/bvs/service-sunday/).



# Take me home, Brethren roads

by Walt Wiltschek

**D**epending on your musical tastes, you might be familiar with Country Roads, the Yellow Brick Road, Holiday Road, or even Old Town Road. But for those of a more Anabaptist ilk, did you know that quite a few Brethren-themed roads crisscross our country?

In a few places, their proliferation is even sufficient to cause some confusion. Take a case that occurred a few years ago in northeastern Tennessee, for example. Washington County officials found that people were confusing Brethren Church Drive with Brethern Church Road about 10 miles away. And, yes, the second one was misspelled.

“We just keep having calls and we need to fix it,” county 911 staff member Lesley Musick told the Jonesborough (Tenn.) *Herald & Tribune*. “There are many duplications of road names in the county, but this one just keeps on coming up.”

Compounding the problem was people misspelling the correctly spelled “Brethren Church Drive” as “Brethern” when they called, sending responders to its transposed cousin across the county. The local Brethren congregations didn’t help the situation, either: Brethern

Church Road was home to the former Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren, while a few years back similarly named Pleasant View Church of the Brethren made its home on Brethern Church Drive.

So it was, at least, a pleasant conundrum.

County commissioners put their minds to it, debating whether to affect the 58 addresses who lived on Brethern Church Road or the 43 on Brethren Church Drive. What to do?

Two years after the discussion began, with many possible changes debated along the way, a decision was reached. Brethern Church Road would henceforth be known as Brethren Church Road. By fixing the typo, and also changing the addresses on the road to four-digit numbers, they hoped the 911 system would better distinguish between the two. Time will tell.

While there aren’t documented cases of such confusion elsewhere, you can find quite a variety of other Pietist pathways. Another Brethren Church Road exists in Myersville, Md., for example, with Myersville Church of the Brethren near one end and Harmony Church of the Brethren near the other

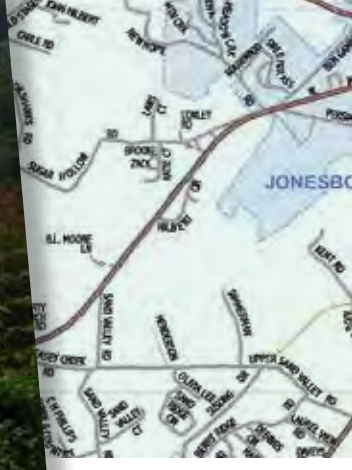
(along with a nearby Lutheran Church whose Brethren address might give it a bit of an identity crisis).

Or for Brethren history buffs, the former home of Elder John Kline—Linville Creek Church of the Brethren in Broadway, Va.—is located on Brethern Road, and longstanding Amwell Church of the Brethren in Stockton, N.J., is perched at the end of Dunkard Church Road.

Dave Shumate, district executive minister of Virgina District—which spans southeastern West Virginia, southern Virginia, and western North Carolina—barely had to blink before he rattled off a list of such routes in his region.

Shumate’s own home congregation, Crab Orchard (W.Va.) Church of the Brethren, sits on its own Brethren Road, for starters. Some 30 miles away in Lindside, the Spruce Run congregation resides at the corner of Back Valley Road and Dunkard Church Road. And over in Bassett, Va., you’ll find the Bassett congregation on Brethren Drive. (There’s also a Brethren Road in the Roanoke area, but it’s apparently named for a Grace Brethren church.)

Numerous other churches are on roads named for the particular



congregation, too, such as Fraternity Church of the Brethren on Fraternity Church Road in Winston-Salem, N.C., but don't actually have Brethren in the name.

Head north to Pennsylvania, and you'll find Codorus Church of the Brethren in Loganville, Pa.—among the oldest in the denomination—perched on a hilltop along Dunkard Valley Road, testifying to a name given to the whole area. It even made at least one online list of “Top Valleys in York County, Pa.,” although the stiffness of the competition is uncertain.

(Unlike the situation in Tennessee, by the way, thankfully it appears that no “Dunkard Valley” or “Dunkard Church” place names have been misspelled with an extra “R” near the beginning.)

Lest you think the eastern part of the country has a corner on the Brethren name market, you can also drive down Brethren Road near Lanark, Ill.—although it's a drive of less than a mile—home of Cherry Grove Church of the


Brethren. And a more lengthy Brethren Road exists on the plains of Cushing, Okla., with Big Creek Church of the Brethren among its addresses (along with the Brethren Road RV Park).

And then, of course, there's the whole community of Brethren, Mich. (with a population of 410 in the 2010 census), located toward the top left part of the Lower Peninsula's “mitten.” It contains a short Brethren Heights Road and a plethora of other things with Brethren appellations, from the Brethren EZ Mart to Brethren Bungalows. Lakeview Church of the Brethren is also in town, but it's on Coates Highway.

Oh, and if one Brethren Heights Road isn't enough, you can head 80 miles southeast

and take the one that leads to Camp Brethren Heights near Rodney.

All of that doesn't even touch on the roads named after early Brethren founders and leaders, like Camp Mack Road in Milford, Ind., leading to Camp Alexander Mack, or the streets in the neighborhood around Modesto (Calif.) Church of the Brethren, such as Mack Court, Naas Court, and Becker Court.

So when you're ready to travel, maybe on the way to Annual Conference this summer, it might just be time to get on the Brethren road again. 



Walt Wilschek

*Do you know of other interesting Brethren-inspired place names? Send them to MESSENGER at [messenger@brethren.org](mailto:messenger@brethren.org).*

# Audacious love in trying times

by Peggy Faw Gish

George Draskóy/flickr.com

**I**t's pretty clear that we can no longer hold back dramatic environmental disaster," my friend confided, as a group of us gathered to think about what courses of actions we might take. "I've lost hope in working for any real change. The only thing we can do now is give love and palliative care to those around us."

I took a deep breath and took in the gravity of what she was saying. And I started reexamining how I've been viewing our current dilemma and what I've understood as the responsible and faithful response.

It's not just my friend who's come to this conclusion. Rather than motivating us to act, the evidence of increasing climate crisis has left many feeling sunk and in a spiritual and emotional wilderness. I can understand this, but I'm not there. While I agree with her about the scientific conclusions and the severity and urgency of the problem, I still cling to hope and believe we must do all we can to forestall or mitigate it. In other words, we're called to love and support each other in these trying times, and

take action.

Perhaps it'd be helpful to look back to other times in our lives when we reached the end of our ability to handle a difficult situation—say we were hurt in personal relationships or part of a group of fellow Christians trying to revive a once vibrant church community—yet God broke in and surprised us with unexpected or audacious hope and strength. Such experiences make it easier to return to that hope when another dilemma or crisis hits.

## Deep love buoyed me up

For me, one such time was when our peace team went into Iraq—a seemingly impossible situation—with hope that we could be part of God's work to prevent war. Some of us felt called to stay on in the country when the 2003 war on Iraq started, not knowing what that would mean. We were walking into uncharted territory, and one by one, fear surfaced within us, threatening to derail our good intentions. When it happened to me, the rest of the group gathered around to pray and help me remember why I felt

called to be there. I reconnected with the clarity I had had that God wanted me and others of faith and goodwill to not only witness against war, but also walk with my brothers and sisters of Iraq as they reaped the horrible consequences of our country's power and self-serving actions. We would find a way to be an instrument of peace.

I realized it was the deep love for the people there that was buoying me up and helping me move ahead in spite of my fear. My prayers became focused more on their wellbeing and for love than for courage or strength. I was less centered on myself and more on what God wanted to do among the people there. The love I was given also rekindled hope, and taking action helped keep this hope alive. Acting closely with the Iraqi people and out of love brought with it a deep joy. I knew how weak I was—so this wasn't coming from some personal super-strength that I had achieved, but from the gifts God was giving me. I needed to keep asking for it, so my ongoing prayers were fervent and absolutely necessary.

That didn't mean it was easy for us,

or that we were able to succeed in everything we tried, but fear no longer held us back. We were able to think creatively and take bold, audacious actions, even if we didn't know if such steps would be possible or accomplish what we wanted. For me, each step was a leap of faith.

### Love can be the spark

Even now, when I'm challenged with doubt, discouragement, or fear in other circumstances, I can reconnect with the hope and strength that comes from the power of love. I believe that any of us who have received God's love, and have experienced God's Spirit working in our life, can tap into these gifts and be able to act with boldness even in seemingly hopeless situations.

Think of a car battery. It can be pretty important when you turn the key to start your car on a cold winter morning. What a sinking feeling to hear it whine, or not even turn over, and what a relief to hear it sputter and kick in. Love can be the spark that restarts the engine, or that breaks through the "whine" or downward spiral of our spirit.

This experience is expressed in the song "Balm in Gilead": "Sometimes I feel discouraged, and think my work's in vain, but then the Holy Spirit revives my soul again."

I also think of Jeremiah, who, when Jerusalem was about to be conquered, bought a piece of land (Jeremiah 32-34). He acted out of hope and faith in God's power to restore and heal them as a people, even if it didn't seem possible to those around him.

When we're given love for our brothers or sisters in our congregation and a deep desire for reconciliation and unity, we're given new ability to rise above our own pain, deal with our pride and failure, and see what God wants to show us about our part in the disharmony. And then we

may acknowledge our wrong. We become more able to go to others in the congregation and tell, in the spirit of love, the truth as we see it. Such love seeks to reconcile and repair, encourage and rebuild.

In a difficult personal relationship, love can give us clarity to identify and deal with the hurts and stumbling blocks and make what changes need to be made.

With catastrophic social crises, finding hope is also linked with love. Do we love God enough to care for God's creation? Does love for our neighbor compel us to do what we can to witness to the truth, identify injustices and greed involved with the environmental crisis, and call for repentance (turning around and changing directions)? Does love spur us to advocate for making needed personal and corporate changes? Do we love our children and future generations enough to feel the impending suffering so deeply that we cry out to God to shake us up, turn us around, and empower us? Do we cry out for love, so that we will no longer be thwarted by helplessness, hopelessness, or fear of failure?

I envision communities of faith gathering to share and pray together, taking seriously the fear and discouragement we feel, but then helping each other to move beyond it. When earnestly sought, the love given to individual members multiplies like yeast and helps the gathered body of the church break through the walls and free the Spirit to inspire and guide.

Love leads the church and its members to care for the victims of disasters, but also work to prevent disasters and the suffering they cause.

Individuals and congregations are led to take steps to make their own lifestyles, homes, or physical plant more environmentally sustainable.


In a program with other congrega-

tions or organizations, churches may encourage people from all sectors of their community to openly pledge actions toward sustainable change.

Church members will reach out directly to national leaders or corporations to advocate for drastic change in industrial production, consumption of energy, and use of natural resources.

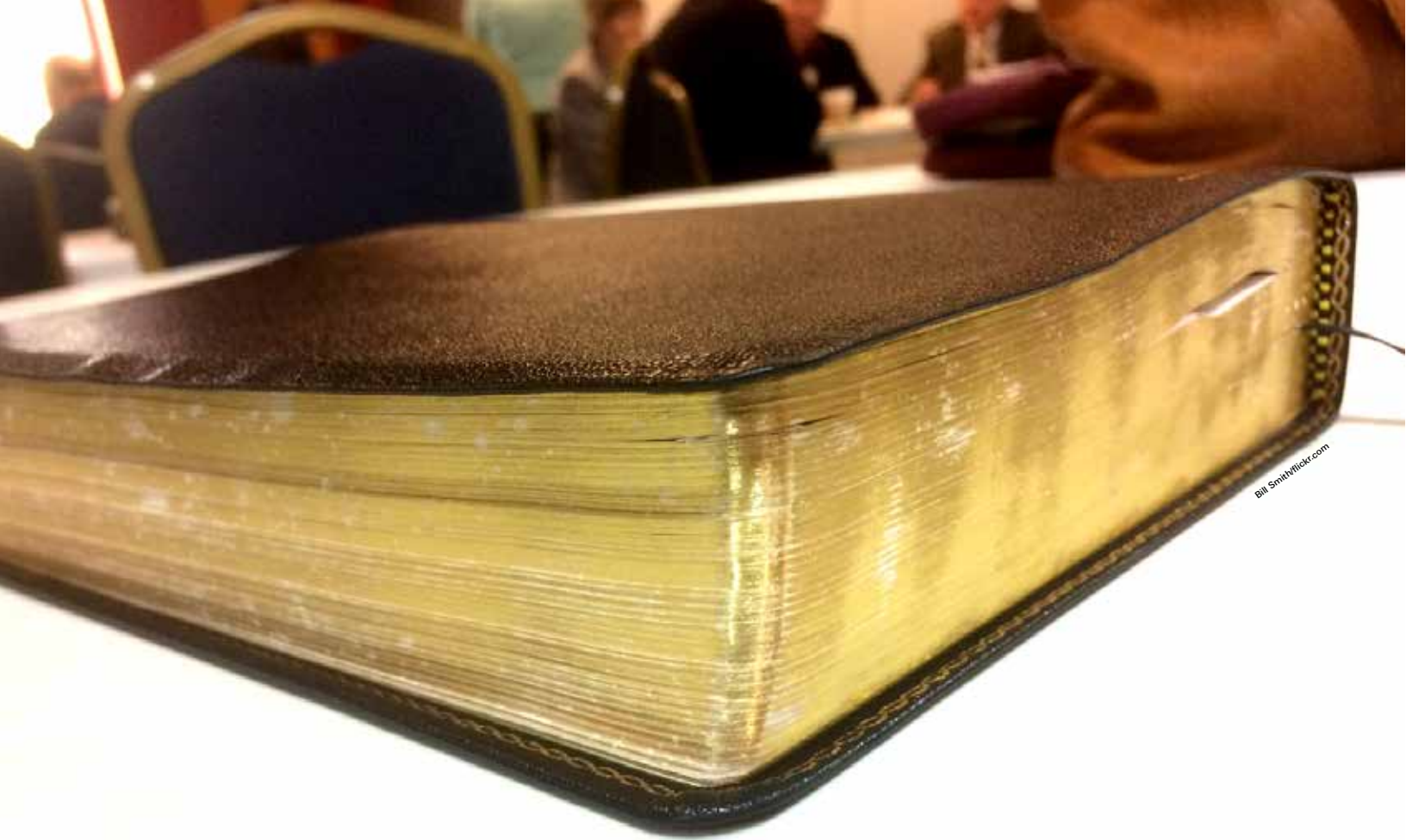
Love propels others out of their comfort zones to nonviolently accompany indigenous tribes who, out of love for the earth and future generations, act to preserve the land and water from disastrous contamination of tar sands and crude oil pipelines. They expose how governments and corporations have defied treaties and land rights of these indigenous communities to develop and gain huge profits while causing massive depletion and contamination.

Let's not grow weary or become numb to the gospel, but rediscover and live out the truths given us through scripture and song—love conquering fear, the availability of God's Spirit, and the power of the resurrection to give us hope and boldness.

God is good and is ready to equip us to do the work we're called to. Acting out of despair or guilt does not bear fruit and can lead to paralysis. With love, we are given new hope and even joy, as well as creativity and strength to be part of God's work in redeeming the world. There are actions and steps that meet different abilities and sensitivities, that we can envision and carry out—if love lights a fire within us. 

Peggy Faw Gish is a Church of the Brethren member, a farmer, a longterm peace activist with Christian Peacemaker Teams, and an author. Her books include *Iraq: A Journey of Hope and Peace* and *Walking Through Fire: Iraqis' Struggle for Justice and Reconciliation*. The latter is available at [www.brethrenpress.com](http://www.brethrenpress.com).

“With love, we are given new hope and even joy, as well as creativity and strength to be part of God's work in redeeming the world.”



# 150 years of studying the Bible together

by James Deaton

**B**rethren Press is no stranger to collaboration when creating faith formation materials. For example, *Shine: Living in God's Light*, our current children's curriculum, is the latest in a long line of collaborative projects we've had with Mennonites.

For adult formation materials, Brethren Press partners with 24 other Protestant denominational and independent publishers to form the Committee on the Uniform Series (CUS), stewarded by the National Council of Churches of Christ in the USA. This ecumenical committee creates six-year cycles of Bible

outlines and passes them on for partner publishers to adapt to their unique settings.

This year Brethren Press joins in celebration of the 150th anniversary of the CUS and the work we accomplish together in creating the International Sunday School Lessons, or the Uniform Lessons Series. The Church of the Brethren's adult Sunday school quarterly, known as *A Guide for Biblical Studies* today, has used these Bible outlines as the foundation for curriculum development for over 130 years. That means it's one of the very oldest publishing efforts in the history of the Church of the Brethren.

## A study plan

At its core, the Uniform Lessons Series is a systematic plan for reading and studying the Bible. When the CUS began its work 150 years ago, Protestant churches in the United States were seeking practical ways to bring order to the mostly unstructured Sunday school movement that had taken off. Denominational Sunday school lessons were a hodgepodge of topics, basically whatever suited the teacher of each class.

At the National Sunday School Convention in April 1872, participating churches created a committee that would select a course of Bible lessons

“A group in an urban Methodist church, a suburban Baptist church, and a rural Brethren church might read and study the same scripture on the same day.”



that embraced “a general study of the whole Bible, alternating between the Old and New Testaments semiannually or quarterly, as they shall deem best.” This committee would become what we now call the CUS. Within a couple of years, the committee expanded to include Christian churches in Canada and the United Kingdom. Today, the CUS has members in Puerto Rico and Nigeria.

The systematic plan birthed out of this committee called for folks of all ages in Sunday schools across the country to study the same scripture on the same day. This uniformity was felt within congregations by having the same text addressed in every class of every age. Since everyone had studied the same scripture, families were equipped to continue faith conversations started at church.

The uniformity extended across denominational lines, where a group in an urban Methodist church, a suburban Baptist church, and a rural Brethren church might read and study the same scripture on the same day. This plan is not unlike the lectionaries some churches use today to guide worship planning.

### What the Brethren thought

By nature, Brethren struggle to agree on a *uniform* method of anything. Plus, formal catechistic training that accompanies baptism or church membership is not something we do. So, how did the Brethren come to use something like the Uniform Lessons Series in developing curriculum?

The Sunday school movement itself was a contentious idea among Brethren, with the 1838 minutes recording a negative response:

“Considered most advisable to take no part in such things.”

Despite this Annual Meeting recommendation, the White Oak congregation in Pennsylvania organized a Sunday school in 1845, and the Philadelphia congregation followed in 1853. The main critique was that the home, not Sunday school, was the place where children should learn the Bible and where Christian values should be taught. Sunday schools were human institutions, devoid of biblical authority, that reflect worldly customs.

Eventually the Church of the Brethren became more tolerant of Sunday schools, in spite of a dissident minority. The acceptance of Sunday schools, along with salaried ministry, revival meetings, missionary plans, musical instruments, and other practices, was one of the unscriptural innovations that led to the Old German Baptist Brethren splitting away in 1881.

The first Brethren adult Sunday school publication to utilize the Uniform Lessons Series was *The Brethren's Quarterly*, an early predecessor of *Guide*. Although lessons from the 1890s are not explicit that they follow the outlines, a careful review shows that they match perfectly.

At the turn of the century, several concerns related to the full adoption of the use of the Uniform Lessons Series were reflected in Annual Conference deliberations. Queries in 1909 criticized the Uniform Lessons for focusing too much on the Old Testament and depriving Brethren congregations of important New Testament teachings. These queries also pointed out that “distinguishing

doctrines” of the Church of the Brethren were being ignored. Annual Conference was asked to provide alternative curricula that would be more Brethren. Two petitions, in 1924 and 1927, authorized Annual Conference to ask the committee in charge of the Uniform Lessons Series to include lessons specifically on peace in its planning.

As the 20th century advanced, graded curricula that matched age-appropriate scriptures and lessons with children and youth served most widely the needs of young people in the church. These graded lessons became more popular than curricula based on the Uniform Lessons Series, which continued to be used for adult faith formation.

### Iron sharpens iron

By using the Uniform Lessons Series, the Church of the Brethren joins Christians around the world in a serious study of the *whole* Bible, from Genesis to Revelation. Over the course of each six-year cycle, there's a dedicated effort to include one lesson or daily Bible reading from each book of the Bible. Of course, there are some



1892

1910

1928

1945

1994

2020

key scriptures and stories that will always rise to the top over time. And having to pair dissimilar scriptures just to make sure all the books have been covered can be a challenge. But for Brethren, this intentional exposure to the entire biblical witness, not just the familiar parts or the parts we like, is valuable.

Do we lose our Brethren distinctiveness if we continue such partnerships? History proves there is strength and wisdom in collaboration. The CUS boldly claims “there is no other cooperative movement for the study of the Bible equal to this.” Julie Garber, former editor of Brethren Press who participated in CUS gatherings, echoes this statement: “It was one of only a few places in the church universal that we truly worked together. We didn’t have to agree on the import of any scripture. That was up to each tradition. We came together as a people guided by scriptures that are literal, metaphorical, straightforward, and

mysterious.” As iron sharpens iron, colleagues from diverse backgrounds study the Word of God together in faithful discipleship.

There’s also strength in the flexibility found in this partnership. The Uniform Lessons Series is not prescriptive, forcing partner publishers to align to any theological agenda or to remove denominational uniqueness. Instead, the series is well-planned framework that leaves generous room for adaptation, and our writers have the freedom to craft Bible study material especially for Brethren congregations.

### **New wineskins**

Brethren Press is grateful for the many years of partnership between the Church of the Brethren and the CUS. This opportunity to be an equal partner, and to glean wisdom from other Christian educators and publishers in our common work of equipping disciples and spreading

the gospel, is vital to our witness. Celebrating this history is a testimony to the blessings found when sisters and brothers work together in unity, and a foretaste of things to come.

The CUS is continually assessing the effectiveness of the materials it creates as it gets a better sense of the spiritual and intellectual needs of learners. The pandemic has affected the ways in which we gather and study together, how we view the devotional life, and how we view the Bible and its authority in our lives.

What new wineskins will be created out of our shared work together? As the history of Sunday school has shown us, the structure of curricula and the modes of delivery have changed, but the common commitment to gather around the Word of God to listen, to grow, and to know our God more fully remains. **W**

*James Deaton is managing editor of Brethren Press, and represents the Church of the Brethren on the Committee on the Uniform Series.*

“ Celebrating this history is a testimony to the blessings found when sisters and brothers work together in unity, and a foretaste of things to come. ”



# The man in the truck

by Marty Barlow

## was driving to a meeting on a Saturday morning.

I had heard that a new building was going up on a winding, narrow road that I could take as a short cut. As I approached an especially sharp curve the new building was right there in front of me, and I strained to get a good look. Unfortunately, I wandered into the left lane and an oncoming truck had to escape into a ditch to avoid crashing into me.

Keeping my eye on the rearview mirror, I slowly drove off and watched the truck ease out of the ditch. Soon I noticed it coming up hard behind me and following me close. I thought: I am a respectable oldish church lady who is driving carefully (now). He will tire of following me.

Then I came to a stop sign. At that opportunity, the truck jammed to a stop behind me. The driver jumped out and headed in my direction. I eased my window down just a couple of inches and he yelled in at me, “Did you not see that you ran me off the road back there!! What is the matter with you? I could have been killed!”

I glanced up at him, then looked straight ahead. I sighed, shrugged slightly, and said, almost as if I were talking to myself, “Yeah, well, sorry or whatever!”

Seriously, that’s exactly what I said! When he realized I was not going to say more, he flipped around, his face red, and stalked toward his truck. He spun his wheels as he sped off. When I looked at my hands—that just moments before had seemed so dismissive—they were trembling.

This is an embarrassing story. I’ve never told it before! I’ve had training in conflict transformation and have even provided training to others on occasion. So what happened? Why was I unable to take responsibility and apologize?

Let’s role-play it. Let’s say you ran the man off the road. Of course you stop your car as soon as you realize. You put the window down quickly or—maybe even better—you jump out of the car and say with warmth, “I am SO sorry I scared you! I was distracted and I just messed up. Are you hurt? Is your truck okay?” But I didn’t do any of that. Not even close.

Most role-plays underestimate how intense emotions complicate our ability to handle conflict. Shame was the first emotion that interfered with my good thinking; then anger and fear entered the picture. By the time the man stalked up to my window I was immersed in a potent stew. All the time, I was rehearsing the reasons the man should not be upset, why he should not be following me. I was not reflecting on why he might reasonably be upset or any of the strategies I had been taught for handling conflict skillfully.

This incident reminded me that the only way we can be a living peace church is if we recognize, with a humble heart, that when it comes to strong emotions we Brethren are no more competent than anyone else.


So what do we do? To start, we can ask ourselves honestly: What am I like when I am in the throes of intense emotions like anger, fear, or shame? Often the response is fight, flight, or freeze.

Am I out of control physically or irrationally argumentative when angry? Then my response is fight.

Do I try to escape, refusing to engage with the other, giving them the silent treatment or avoiding them altogether? This response is flight.

Am I paralyzed and frozen in place, unable to think rationally? This means I freeze.

Clearly, I was frozen and paralyzed in the situation with the man in the truck. That awareness allows me to plan ahead for difficult moments before I’m in the middle of them. A similar strategy may be useful for those who get caught in fight or flight.

Being honest about and aware of our own behavior when we are emotional is a first step to being a true peacemaker of integrity in our troubled church and world. 

Marty Barlow is a member of Montezuma Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Va. She served as moderator of Shenandoah District in 2020 and is a former member of the Mission and Ministry Board.

“ To start, we can ask ourselves honestly: What am I like when I am in the throes of intense emotions like anger, fear, or shame? ”

# Justice and kindness

## 2 Samuel 9:1-7, 9-12

by Gene Roop

**T**oday's text may seem like an odd intrusion into stories of David's military defeat of the kingdom's enemies (2 Samuel 8-10). In fact, 2 Samuel 9 functions as the concluding chapter of the long narrative about David and Saul, as well as the opening chapter about David's reign and the succession of Solomon.

Samuel—prophet, priest, and judge—anoined Saul as the God-ordained leader and king of Israel (1 Samuel 10). After a disappointing series of events, Samuel declared God's rejection of Saul as king (13:13-14) and subsequently anoined David (16:13).

It is vital to recognize the critical importance of being anoined. Anoining did not mean Samuel chose Saul, but that God chose Saul. Anoining marks the divine choice of a person for a specific task. In the ongoing narrative

of the conflict between Saul and David, twice David had a chance to assassinate Saul. Twice he did not kill God's anoined (1 Samuel 24 and 26).

The relationship between David and Jonathan, Saul's son, also played into 2 Samuel 9. These two men became what we now call best friends forever. The narrator says Jonathan loved David as much as he loved himself (1 Samuel 18:3; 20:17). When David was informed of Jonathan's death, he said: "I weep for you, my brother Jonathan. You were so loved by me" (2 Samuel 1:26, writer's translation).

### David and Mephibosheth

The narrative begins with a question: "David asked, 'Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul to whom I may show kindness for Jonathan's sake?'" (2 Samuel 9:1). Phrased this way, the question brings together several components that affected the beginning of David's reign.

Clearly, love for his friend influenced David's action toward Jonathan's disabled son, Mephibosheth. But there was more involved. Several times the narrative reminds us that Jonathan and David's relationship included a covenant and an obligation, not only related to each other but also concerning their descendants (1 Samuel 20:14-17, 23, 42). It is important to remember that in ancient Israel such a covenant involved God. David and Jonathan made this covenant in God's presence. It is similar to this phrase often spoken in the covenant of marriage:

"In the presence of God and these witnesses, I pledge my love to you."

Politics also played a role. David came from the south, Judah. Saul was from the north, Israel. At Hebron, in the south, the people anoined David as king of Judah (2 Samuel 2:4). Saul's son, Ishbosheth (Ishbaal), was made king in Israel (2 Samuel 2:8ff).

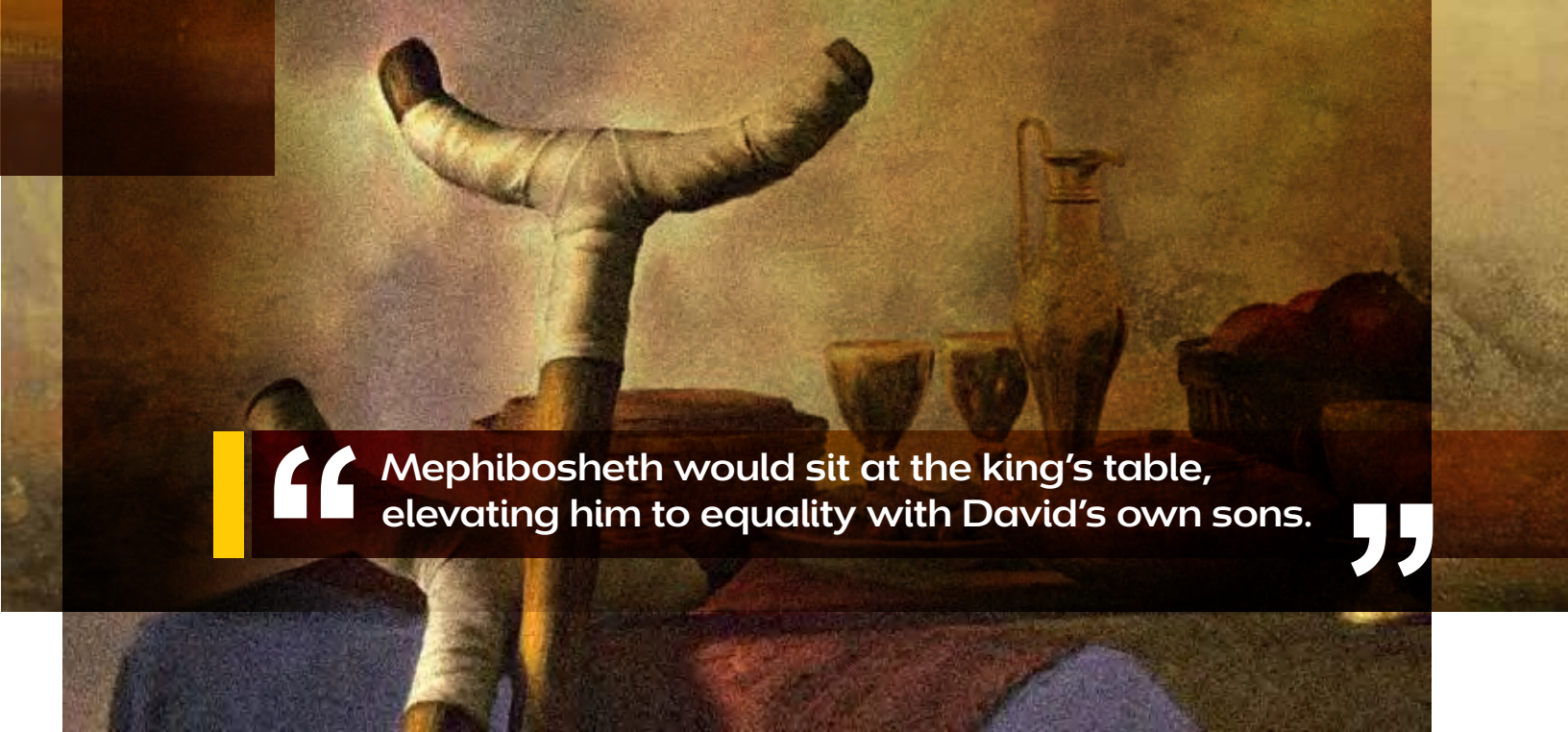
Saul's popularity in Israel did not die with his death. That allegiance did not die even with the assassination of his son, Ishbosheth. There remained groups in the north that were not happy about being ruled by an adversary from Judah (2 Samuel 19). David, the southerner who was now king of Judah and Israel, wisely chose to be careful about the way he treated the family of Saul.

Personal love and compassion, obligatory covenantal promise, and political considerations merged when David sent for Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son and Saul's grandson. Mephibosheth had been accidentally dropped by his nurse when they were fleeing from a Philistine attack (2 Samuel 4:4). The injury to his legs left him disabled.

David made two decisions. He ordered all the royal land of Saul to be returned to Mephibosheth. David chose the family of Ziba, one of Saul's servants, to administer this land. This provided Mephibosheth with a source of financial security. Secondly, and perhaps most surprisingly, David declared that Mephibosheth would sit at the king's table, elevating him to equality with David's own sons (2 Samuel 9:11b). It is fair to assume that most, if not all,

### Reflect

- Think about unexpected or unusual acts of kindness, given the social, economic, and political tensions that characterize our time. What motivates these surprising actions?
- As Christians, we value integrity. Can we serve others if our motives are to some degree self-serving or obligatory? In your mind, what counts as acting with integrity?
- How does it feel to be on the receiving end of benevolent giving? How does it affect one's relationship with the giver and one's sense of self?

A painting depicting a man with a wooden staff, possibly a beggar or a traveler, standing in a room. On a table in front of him are a pitcher and two glasses. The scene is lit with warm, golden light, suggesting an indoor setting. The man's staff is wrapped in white cloth, and he appears to be in a state of need or seeking help.

“ Mephibosheth would sit at the king’s table, elevating him to equality with David’s own sons. ”

northerners responded favorably to David’s treatment of their royal family.

We notice that Mephibosheth responds submissively. Falling on his face and bowing in respect, he says, “I am your servant” (v. 6). Mephibosheth understood power (v. 8). David’s military had erased most of Saul’s friends and family (2 Samuel 3:1).

### Hesed

The story itself narrates David’s actions on behalf of Mephibosheth—with no mention of his love for Jonathan or political expediency. Three times the narrative uses the word *hesed* (vv. 1, 3, 7). We have no word in English that adequately translates this Hebrew noun. *Hesed* includes elements of loyalty, faithfulness, covenantal commitment, and compassion. It quite often describes an action taken on behalf of another which exceeds the expectation of custom, promise, or responsibility.

Jesus’ parable of the good Samaritan provides a good example of *hesed* (Luke 10:30ff.). No one expected that a Samaritan would stop to help an injured Jew, let alone pay for his care. Indeed, intense animosity existed between Samaritan and Jewish communities. It is doubtful that either group would have welcomed the help of the other, let alone expected it.

Brethren have often pointed to John Kline of Virginia as an example of one who lived out *hesed*. During the Civil War he appeared willing to help the wounded from both sides. Even though southern bred, Kline was known to oppose slavery. Distrust of him resulted in his brief arrest in 1862. Two years later, Kline was assassinated as he was returning home.

### Person, promise, politics

It might be unusual for us to act on behalf of another to the degree exhibited by the Samaritan in Jesus’ story or John Kline during the Civil War. However, we do act to aid those who need help. Especially in emergencies like the pandemic as well as floods and tornadoes, we see and participate in countless acts of care, kindness, and compassion. Usually, we don’t choose to help based on the color of someone’s skin, where they worship, or the cost of their clothes. So, what does prompt us to help?

We often see pictures of individuals who are running for office working at food banks, visiting children’s hospitals, and the like. Do they care about the homeless and those who are ill, or is it a matter of political expediency? We see entertainment or sports figures put their name on fundraising events

for medical and other charities. Wealthy leaders in the community give money for libraries, museums, and educational buildings. Do they care, or is it just good public relations?

We can’t know for sure what motivates charitable acts. Perhaps those involved don’t know for sure themselves. Often, maybe most of the time, our motives are mixed. We help because we feel obligated as Christ’s disciples or because we care about those causes and institutions. Sometimes we act just because we see someone who needs help. We just do it! *Hesed* is alive and practiced in our time as it was in the time of David.

Why did David act so benevolently toward the disabled grandson of his political rival? Was it his love for the young man’s father? Was it obligation as promised? Was it on behalf of David’s relationship with the northern half of his kingdom?

One, two, or all the above? The narrative allows us to decide. If his motives were mixed, would we say that David acted with integrity? ❗

Gene Roop is Wieand Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Bethany Theological Seminary. This year’s MESSENGER Bible studies come from *A Guide for Biblical Studies*, the adult Sunday school quarterly published by Brethren Press, in recognition of the 150th anniversary of the Uniform Lesson Series.

Craig Thompson



## Brethren Disaster Ministries completes Dayton project, continues hurricane rebuilding

**B**rethren Disaster Ministries has completed its tornado rebuilding project in Dayton, Ohio. Grants of \$10,000 from the Greater Dayton Disaster Relief Fund and \$5,000 from the National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster covered some of the costs.

A Hurricane Florence rebuilding project in Pamlico County, N.C., continues through April with support from an Emergency Disaster Fund grant of \$52,000.

### More grants

- \$30,000 from the EDF for the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development's winter weather aid for Syrians who are displaced within Syria and in Lebanon.
- \$25,000 from the EDF to the Congolese Brethren in Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo, for repairing 23 damaged homes and building 31 new homes following the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo.
- \$5,000 from the EDF for a shipment of hygiene kits to displaced people in Yemen in partnership with Corus, the new umbrella for merged programs of Lutheran World Relief and IMA World Health.
- \$5,000 from the Brethren Faith in Action Fund (BFIA) to East Dayton (Ohio) Fellowship for signage to promote outreach ministries.
- \$4,697.17 from the BFIA to Lorida (Fla.) Iglesia de los Hermanos for outreach and worship ministries.
- \$763.72 from the BFIA to Ellisforde (Wash.) Church of the Brethren for audio/video and computer equipment for online worship.

## On Earth Peace ends executive position

At its board meeting Oct. 7-9, the board of On Earth Peace discussed challenges of staffing with a growing cohort of interns and a persistent structural deficit.

After careful consideration, including two hours of racial caucusing to explore how internalized racial superiority and inferiority play into decisions, the board decided to eliminate the position of executive director as of the end of 2021 while continuing to fully support expansion of the internship program. During an interim period in 2022, executive responsibilities will be distributed among staff, board, and interns.

The board also updated bylaws, with a reduction of the size of the board from 15 to 12 as the most significant change.



### The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee

met last October: (top row, from left) Bob McMinn, Deb Oskin, Art Fourman; (bottom) Gene Hagenberger, Dan Rudy, Nancy Sollenberger Heishman. The group worked on the 5-year review of pastoral compensation and benefits to be presented to Annual Conference, updated the "Guidelines for Pastors' Salary and Benefits," reviewed and recommended changes to the "Guidelines for Continuing Education," and received an update from a former member of the committee, Ray Flagg, who is helping develop a "Pastoral Compensation Calculator" for a new "Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement."



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## Bethany Seminary board affirms anti-racism efforts

**B**ethany Seminary's board has made a statement in support of the seminary's work to pursue racial justice. The school in 2019 created a framework designed to intentionally confront racial hierarchy, implicit bias, and systemic racism, growing out of a strategic vision goal "to promote cultural, racial, and theological diversity throughout the institution."

The board of trustees statement:

*"As Children of God, we join with others to pursue the path of righteousness in the midst of social turmoil. We humbly and fully commit ourselves as members of the Bethany Theological Seminary Board of Trustees to stand against all forms of racism, discrimination, bias, privilege, abusive power, colonialism, and racial hierarchy. We recognize these insidious elements are pervasive on individual, interpersonal, institutional, and systemic levels. We also grieve the ugly and harmful mental, physical, spiritual, educational, social, economic, ecological, and societal effects these foundations impose upon our human family.*

*"To this end, we are dedicated to eliminating all such structures in this Seminary and working to uphold justice, equity, diversity, interconnectedness, and accessibility. In doing so, we fully acknowledge and accept that this journey will require us as individuals and as a collective Board to be faithfully and consistently committed to seeking God's will in the ways and spirit of Jesus, Our Lord and Savior. We also understand that our work will be challenging, uncomfortable, and painful but, in doing so, remain resolved that all facets of our Bethany learning community—including this Board—will become transformed into new and greater instruments through our efforts to fulfill the Seminary's mission so that the world flourishes. It is in this spirit that we call upon our entire Bethany family to join us as we, together, strive to address this vital charge.*

*"It is our hope and prayer for God to act in and through us as we intentionally work to fulfill this important and necessary calling. With humble hearts, may we always be reminded that sincere dedication to hope, continued learning, self-examination, and evaluation will be integral to our efforts, and that there is no ending to this journey. And, with Jesus as our example and inspiration, may our efforts as a Board contribute in positive ways that bring about a new and beloved community at Bethany Theological Seminary."*

## Nigeria Crisis Response continues in 2022

The Nigeria Crisis Response budget for 2022 has been set at \$183,000, supported by a grant of \$210,000 from the Church of the Brethren Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF). Plans were made to end this collaboration between the Church of the Brethren and Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) in 2021, but were revised due to ongoing violence in northeast Nigeria.

Working with EYN's Disaster Relief Management, program priorities are repairing homes, peacebuilding and trauma recovery, agriculture, livelihood, education, food and medical and home supplies, and staff engagement.



### National Youth Conference worship and music coordinators

met with Youth and Young Adult Ministries staff: (top row, from left) Erika Clary, NYC coordinator; Becky Ullom Naugle, director of Youth and Young Adult Ministries; Bekah Houff, university pastor at Manchester University in Indiana; (center) Walt Wiltschek, Illinois and Wisconsin District executive; Cindy Laprade Lattimer, co-pastor of Stone Church of the Brethren in Huntingdon, Pa., and co-chaplain at Juniata College; Shawn Flory Replogle, executive director of Organizational Resources for the Church of the Brethren; (bottom) Jacob Crouse, a music leader at the Washington (D.C.) City Church who does audiovisual engineering for the American College of Cardiology. Houff, Lattimer, Replogle, and Wiltschek are worship coordinators, and Crouse is music coordinator.

## Personnel notes

**Jen Jensen** began Dec. 13, as Thriving in Ministry program manager in the Office of Ministry. Her work includes the Part-Time Pastor; Full-Time Church program. Most recently she worked for Kindred Hospice of McPherson, Kan. She was director of Spiritual Life and Service for McPherson College for five years. She is a graduate of the University of Nebraska and plans to complete a master of divinity at Bethany Seminary in May.

**Doug Phillips** retired Dec. 31, as executive director of Brethren Woods, after 39 years in leadership of the camp in Shenandoah District. Originally from Johnstown, Pa., he attended Eastern Mennonite University, completing courses in camping and youth ministries. In 1982, he began as director of Brethren Woods. During his tenure, the facility and programs grew from 2 buildings, a fulltime director, and a part-time staff member, to 30 structures and 6 full-time staff. The district has appointed assistant director Linetta Ballew as acting director.

**Lynn Evans** of Pottstown, Pa., has begun as long-term volunteer office manager at rebuilding sites of Brethren Disaster Ministries.



# How COVID changed evangelism

by Jeremy Ashworth

**H**ow did COVID change evangelism? How is this season affecting the ways that we extend the gospel and connect with our community? The answers are unfolding in real time, one church at a time.

To that end, I want to share some of our church's outreach experiences in the COVID era. We're not always successful, and what follows might not work for you. But we offer our imperfect testimony in the hopes that something in it would be hopeful, helpful, God-honoring, and encouraging.

In early 2020, Circle of Peace Church was running out of space. We went to two services, and God gave us a miraculous start on a new building.

Then COVID hit.

For eight months we did not meet in person. Worship was 100 percent online, a big struggle for a relational, non-tech-savvy church like ours. But to our surprise, a few people found us online and wanted to become new members! One person, who lived three hours away, bought a house near our campus so she could be close to her new church family. We were amazed.

We spent the next seven months worshipping outdoors, and began livestreaming. The setup and teardown was labor-intensive. We got noise complaints. And 60 new households came to worship for the first time. Almost all of them were driving by and saw the sign that said "Church Outdoors." That's all it took.

This past summer we began worshipping indoors with three options:

A 9 a.m. service (mask required), a 10:30 a.m. service (mask optional), and 10:30 livestream. The attendance at 9 is light, but through it we've reached a number of medical personnel, and we are all better for it. The 10:30 is smaller than it was pre-pandemic, but gaining momentum. The big change is livestream. We invested in the technology and, even though we have problems with it every single week, it's a lifeline. Those who participate online often outnumber those who participate in person.

For now, here are six realities we're facing:

- **Flux.** Changes still happen around us and in us. We see turnover in staff, membership, leadership, and neighbors. People are all over the place, and it's hard to meet someone where they're at when they're all over the place. So we pray that we would engage the instability and steward the flux. We ask God to grow our "flux capacity."
- **Initiative.** We decided early on that faithfulness meant experimenting our way forward. So we took the initiative to pursue as much as possible. We hired a youth minister and took on projects serving the Navajo Nation. Not every effort was fruitful, but when we moved a little God moved a lot.
- **Isolation.** More than ever, people have great community hunger but anti-community habits. Never have so many people not returned my calls or texts. Of the 60 new families that came to Circle, only 4 or 5 agreed to

meet for coffee. Distance may be medically helpful, but it is relationally problematic.

• **The internet.** One day masks will disappear, but online worship is here to stay. The internet is our new front door. Community connection doesn't end there, but it starts there.

• **Personal evangelism works.** White supremacists, conspiracy theorists, and political extremists are all making disciples. If they can, so can we. So crucify the excuses. Embrace the call to give the world something better to believe in.

• **Buildings.** Buildings aren't ultimate, but they matter. They always have. Our facility felt cramped pre-pandemic. Now our low ceilings and narrow hallways are positively panic-inducing for some folks. So we've taken our building project off pause. We're imagining a new space for a new era, with an emphasis on flexible usage, multiple modalities, and outdoor venues. We want to make space to make disciples.

If you want to know more about anything we've tried, or if you want to do some sharing of your own, just email me ([pastor@circleofpeacechurch.com](mailto:pastor@circleofpeacechurch.com)). I'm serious. We're all in this together, sharing our story as we're living it, discovering God's faithfulness as we go.

Jesus is still alive. The tomb is still empty. Death is still defeated. COVID definitely changed evangelism. But it didn't change the gospel.

Jeremy Ashworth is pastor of Circle of Peace

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**CLASSIFIEDS**

**Organ for Sale.** After selling our church property in May 2021, Pomona Fellowship COB in California is looking for a new home for our organ. This Britson Organ is a wonderful electronic organ with 3 manuals (Choir, Great, Swell), a curved pedal board, multiple stops for each manual and the ability to tie manuals together. Its features include: Lightened Rock-ertabs, Reversible Tutti, Programmable Midi, Programmable Stop Selector Switches, & Foot Stop Selector Switches. It comes with a Plexi-glass Music Rack with Light, Bench with music storage space, & External speakers.

The instrument has been in storage since May 2021. We are not asking much for this expensive instrument because we know that it will serve someone else better than us now. \$100 and buyer must coordinate/pay for transport. Contact the church office at 909-629-2548.



# Called to a career in Nursing...

**"After working as a CNA and two years of nursing coursework, I can confidently say that being a nurse is absolutely what I want to do."**

Makenzie aspires to become a nurse practitioner. "I love the science involved in nursing, just as much as I love the art of caring for patients."

Makenzie Goering  
McPherson Church of the Brethren

## Can the Church of the Brethren help?

The Nursing Scholarship program is available to members of the Church of the Brethren enrolled in an LPN, RN, or nursing graduate program. Application deadline is April 1. Application materials are available at: [www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships](http://www.brethren.org/nursingscholarships).





**Being a faithful steward**

Thank you for the “Rethinking Thriftiness” Potluck article by Jan Fischer Bachman in the November 2021 issue. As much as I want to

stretch my charitable giving dollar, I find it hard to buy products online when a local store is around the corner. I want to be a faithful steward in my community, and support the livelihoods of local people of modest

means. I appreciate the reminder to “leave the edges of our fields” to allow my small purchases to do some good here at home.

**Ann Carol Nash**  
South Bend, Ind.

## TURNINGPOINTS

**An online form is now available to submit information for Turning Points. Go to [www.brethren.org/turningpoints](http://www.brethren.org/turningpoints).**

Or send information to Diane Stroyeck at [dstroyeck@brethren.org](mailto:dstroyeck@brethren.org) or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Information must be complete and less than one year old to be published. Individuals are not listed under both Centenarians and Deaths in the same issue.

**Centenarians**

**Hilligoss**, Betty, 101, Columbia City, Ind., Oct. 17  
**Julius**, Glenn, 100, Dover, Pa., Aug. 25

**New members**

**Big Creek**, Cushing, Okla.: Ayla Britt, Kemberly Burtrum, Payton Jones, Emily Myers, Leon Silkwood  
**Gettysburg**, Pa.: Bob Peters, Leah Peters  
**Lancaster**, Pa.: Janet Wasson  
**Middlecreek**, Rockwood, Pa.: Jullien Pritts, Jaiden Wyant  
**Midland**, Va.: Andrea Esquivel, Allen Graves, Victoria Graves, Rhea Lewis, Mindy Pennell, Pablo Portillo, May Riehl  
**Mount Morris**, Ill.: Larry Caldwell, Dorothy Senise  
**Mount Vernon**, Waynesboro, Va.: Jim Bunyard, Sherry Bunyard  
**Ridgely**, Md.: Albert Anderson, Charlie Bunker, Anna Hutchison, Gail McCubbin, Victor Reynolds  
**University Park**, Md.: Charlotte Morataya, Abigail Robelle

**Wedding anniversaries**

**Bergy**, Keith and Jean, Caledonia, Mich., 76  
**Bolt**, Kenneth and Esther, Boonsboro, Md., 68

**Breidenstine**, Glenn and Pat, Lititz, Pa., 66  
**Gerfen**, Chris and Audrey, Cushing, Okla., 50  
**Grew**, Joseph C. and Faye Ann, Somerset, Pa., 60  
**Hartle**, Herman and Gloria, Mount Morris, Ill., 65  
**Julius**, Glenn and Grace, Dover, Pa., 70  
**Moyers**, Clarence and Elizabeth, Harrisonburg, Va., 68  
**Saunders**, David and Sylvia, Mount Morris, Ill., 60  
**Sonafrank**, John and Pat, Kokomo, Ind., 60  
**Swigart**, David and Erla, McVeytown, Pa., 65  
**Toms**, Irv and Joyce, Mount Morris, Ill., 50  
**Wine**, Ray and Ann, Bridgewater, Va., 71

**Deaths**

**Allison**, LaRue Hope Seese, 92, Johnstown, Pa., July 2  
**Almarode**, Madeline Hewitt, 91, Fishersville, Va., Sept. 4  
**Atkins**, Earl Allen, 88, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 25  
**Atkinson**, Ruth Evelyn Gerdes, 91, Mount Morris, Ill., Oct. 12  
**Bayer**, Daniel Max, 97, Roanoke, Va., June 15  
**Benedict**, Leroy Robert, 90, Sebring, Fla., May 20  
**Boyer**, Harry, 95, Johnstown, Pa., March 23  
**Butterbaugh**, Marquita Munson, 93, Mount Morris, Ill., Feb. 10  
**Buttram-Rogers**, De Loris Ilona, 93, Sebring, Fla., Aug. 27  
**Castaneda**, Miguel Angel, 62, Modesto, Calif., Oct. 6  
**Coleman**, Doris Brown, 92, Orlando, Fla., Aug. 22  
**Couser**, David L., 98, Troy, Ohio, Oct. 31  
**Davis**, Eileen M. Shaffer, 76, Johnstown, Pa., Nov. 5  
**Deardorff**, Glenn Elwood, Sr., 87, Fayetteville, Pa., Oct. 27  
**Eby**, Jacob Wenger, 96, Dallas Center, Iowa, Oct. 6  
**Erisman**, Noah (Dale), 90, Franklin Grove, Ill., Oct. 27  
**Eveland**, Herbert Leslie, 83, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 16  
**Fleming**, Douglas Earl, 51, Harrisonburg, Va., June 14  
**Gallup**, Alene D. Borneman, 90, Mount Morris, Ill., Nov. 4  
**Garrison**, Clyde Junior, 78, Stuarts Draft, Va., May 14  
**Hann**, William, 81, Sebring, Fla., July 8  
**Hawbaker**, Stanley Alan, 80, Dallas Center, Iowa, Oct. 15  
**Hollar**, Henry M., 95, Rockford, Ill., May 18  
**Hylton**, Olen Lee, 81, Salem, Va., Aug. 27  
**Kelliher**, Tamela Jean Aylor, 54, Aroda, Va., Sept. 23  
**Kurtz**, Lois Arlin Gauntz, 96, Stanardsville, Va., Oct. 25  
**Light**, Linda Faw, 82, Portland, Ore., July 22  
**Longwell**, Thelma Hadden, 99, Sheloceta, Pa., Oct. 5  
**McKinney**, Eugene, 95, Martinsburg, Pa., Nov. 5  
**Miley**, Richard, 85, Roanoke, Va., Sept. 22  
**Miller**, Norman L., 74, Lewistown, Pa., Sept. 25  
**Noffsinger**, Beverly J. Marihugh, 94, Sebring, Fla., Sept. 2

**Oltman**, Marlo D., 88, Buhler, Kan., Nov. 10  
**Osborn**, James Leon, Sr., 76, Sebring, Fla., March 31  
**Pappas**, Rebecca Hartman, 71, Troy, Ohio, Oct. 16  
**Pezzanite**, Linda Lou Linebaugh, 77, Keyser, W. Va., Oct. 31  
**Ringgold**, Frances Turner, 91, Harrisonburg, Va., Sept. 13  
**Rittgers**, Elsie Arlene Wise, 99, Dallas Center, Iowa, Oct. 18  
**Rotz**, Robert C., 91, Shippensburg, Pa., Oct. 30  
**Russell**, Donna M. Danzberger, 69, Saint Thomas, Pa., Oct. 16  
**Shaw**, Duane Dennis, 48, Staunton, Va., Sept. 7  
**Sheridan**, John Emmett, 81, Cushing, Okla., April 23  
**Sherman**, Ruby Arloene Jagger, 101, Columbia City, Ind., Sept. 30  
**Smiley**, Constance Diane May, 66, Waynesboro, Va., June 5  
**Snavelly**, Joyce Elaine Hoover, 92, Ionia, Mich., Nov. 16  
**Snyder**, Ronald, 87, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Oct. 20  
**Soucek**, Jo Ann Smith, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., Oct. 18  
**Stearn**, Ann Jeannette, 89, Harrisonburg, Va., April 9  
**Turner**, Margaret Yoder, 90, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 11  
**Wade**, Norma Kay Snook, 81, McVeytown, Pa., Oct. 8  
**Walters**, Doris Lea Harmon, 84, Cushing, Okla., Nov. 4  
**Wetsel**, Helen May Moore, 91, Harrisonburg, Va., Jan. 16  
**Witkovsky**, Lowell H., 89, Greenville, S.C., Oct. 26  
**Wolfe**, Archie Richard, 89, Sebring, Fla., June 18  
**Wright**, Hazel, 97, Frankfort, Maine, Nov. 12

**Yerty**, Lee Frederick, 68, Roaring Spring, Pa., Sept. 30

**Ordained**

**Waggy**, Linda, Shen. Dist. (Montezuma, Dayton, Va.), Nov. 13

**Licensed**

**Shrout**, Robert, W. Marva Dist. (Beaver Run, Burlington, W.Va.), Oct. 24  
**Swick**, Brian, W. Pa. Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Johnstown, Pa.), Nov. 14  
**Tutolo**, Amiel, Virgina Dist. (Troutville, Va.), Nov. 14  
**Yeckley**, Jeffrey, W. Pa. Dist. (Berkey, Windber, Pa.), June 13

**Placements**

**Bach**, Ann, plural ministry team, Stevens Hill Community, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 18  
**Bach**, Jeff, plural ministry team, Stevens Hill Community, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 1  
**Boyd**, Harold, from interim pastor to pastor, Hollins Road, Roanoke, Va., Dec. 1  
**Estep**, Audrey, plural ministry team, Stevens Hill Community, Elizabethtown, Pa., Oct. 18  
**Funkhouser**, Ricky, pastor, Cedar Grove, Mount Jackson, New Market, Va., Sept. 1  
**Glick**, J.D., from interim pastor, Staunton, Va., to interim team pastor, Montezuma, Dayton, Va., Nov. 15  
**Mills**, Judy, pastor, Trinity, Troutville, Va., Nov. 1  
**Wyrick**, Ronald, interim team pastor, Montezuma, Dayton, Va., Nov. 15

# That's our church

**W**hen a favorite sports team leaves for another city they typically take their history with them. The Baltimore Colts took championships won by the legendary Johnny Unitas to Indianapolis. The Dodgers took the storied legends of the Boys of Summer, including Jackie Robinson, to LA.



FRANK RAMIREZ

But when the Browns left Cleveland for Baltimore, the city rebelled. The NFL decided the city would keep the legacy of people like running back Jim Brown and founding coach Paul Brown, as well as the nickname Browns, along with the eight championships won during the era of four yards and a cloud of dust.

I've thought about that a lot these past months as our divisive culture invaded our storied church. And those who have decided to leave our beloved church can't take our heritage away from us.

Like Ruth, an outsider, who knew her inherited faith better than her born-and-bred mother-in-law, Naomi (so well that she gleaned enough grain the two staved off starvation), I have cherished our history and heritage since 1972. That was when, having already registered as a conscientious objector, I discovered the Church of the Brethren.

From our foundation, the essence of being Brethren is the willingness of women and men to study scripture together until we reach consensus, regardless of how long that takes. Sometimes it takes decades, but we can afford to be patient. We love Jesus. We love the Word.

In 1762, Catherine Hummer of White Oak, the first woman to preach among the Brethren, enthralled people near and far with her visions of angels, God's grace, and divine mercy. Annual Meeting stated that those who benefited from her preaching and those who didn't shouldn't look down on each other. That's our church.

In 1798, Alexander Mack Jr. admitted to his friend John Preisz that he'd read the same scriptures but couldn't see them in the same light. Nevertheless, he chose to characterize their disagreement in a positive way, comparing their dif-

ferences to the way the "flowers in the garden are quiet and peaceful even though one is embellished in blue, another in red and still another in white." That's our church.

In 1858, a 14-year-old Julia Gilbert, crippled for life by childhood illnesses, changed the way her Ohio congregation practiced love feast because she convinced the elders their practice was not consistent with scripture. Fifty-two years later, she changed Brethren communion practice again: After decades of queries and letters, Annual Meeting finally allowed women to break communion bread with each other rather than having it broken for them by a male elder. That was because Gilbert spoke movingly before the meeting, insisting she only wanted "to be in touch with Jesus Christ." That's our church, too.

When Evelyn Trostle stared down a genocidal mob to protect Armenian orphans; when Dan West told Brethren farmers what starving people needed was a cup, not a cow; when conscientious objector Carlyle Frederick doggedly walked hours on the treadmill while subsisting on a few hundred calories a day during the starvation experiment of 1944-1945 so that postwar starving Europeans could be safely rehabilitated; when Don Murray's extemporaneous comments about his years in Brethren Volunteer Service inspired Hubert Humphrey's suggestion four years later to the newly elected President John F. Kennedy to create the Peace Corps; when the Church of the Brethren banner waved prominently during the March on Washington; when Ted Studebaker said, "Life is great! Yea!"—that's our church!

When Ken Shaffer bent over backwards to make my research in the Brethren Archives fruitful, even providing a place to sleep while I worked on a project—doing no less than all the other dedicated leaders and administrators I have known at the Brethren offices in Elgin—that's our church, too.

If people choose to leave our church I wish them Godspeed, but our faith, history, and heritage will stay with us—not because we're possessive about it, but because we're loving students of scripture in context. **FR**

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

“From our foundation, the essence of being Brethren is the willingness of women and men to study scripture together until we reach consensus.”



# Let's come together again! Annual Conference

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and to build community among Brethren across the denomination.*

—Annual Conference participant

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embraces us  
Romans 15:7

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AC 2019 photos by Laura Brown, Cheryl Bumbaugh, Coryford, Donna Parcell and Glenn Risgel.



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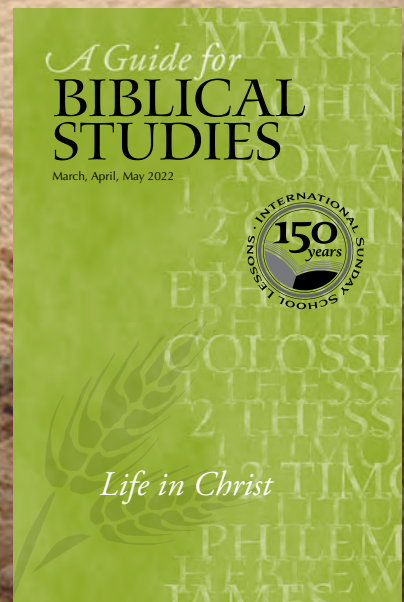


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