

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

# MESSENGER

MAY 2022 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

Geen oorlog

Нет войне

No guerra

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Savaşa hayır

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## No war!

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Kein krieg

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没有战争



# Gathering in community

“When the day of Pentecost had come,  
they were all together in one place.”  
~Acts 2:1



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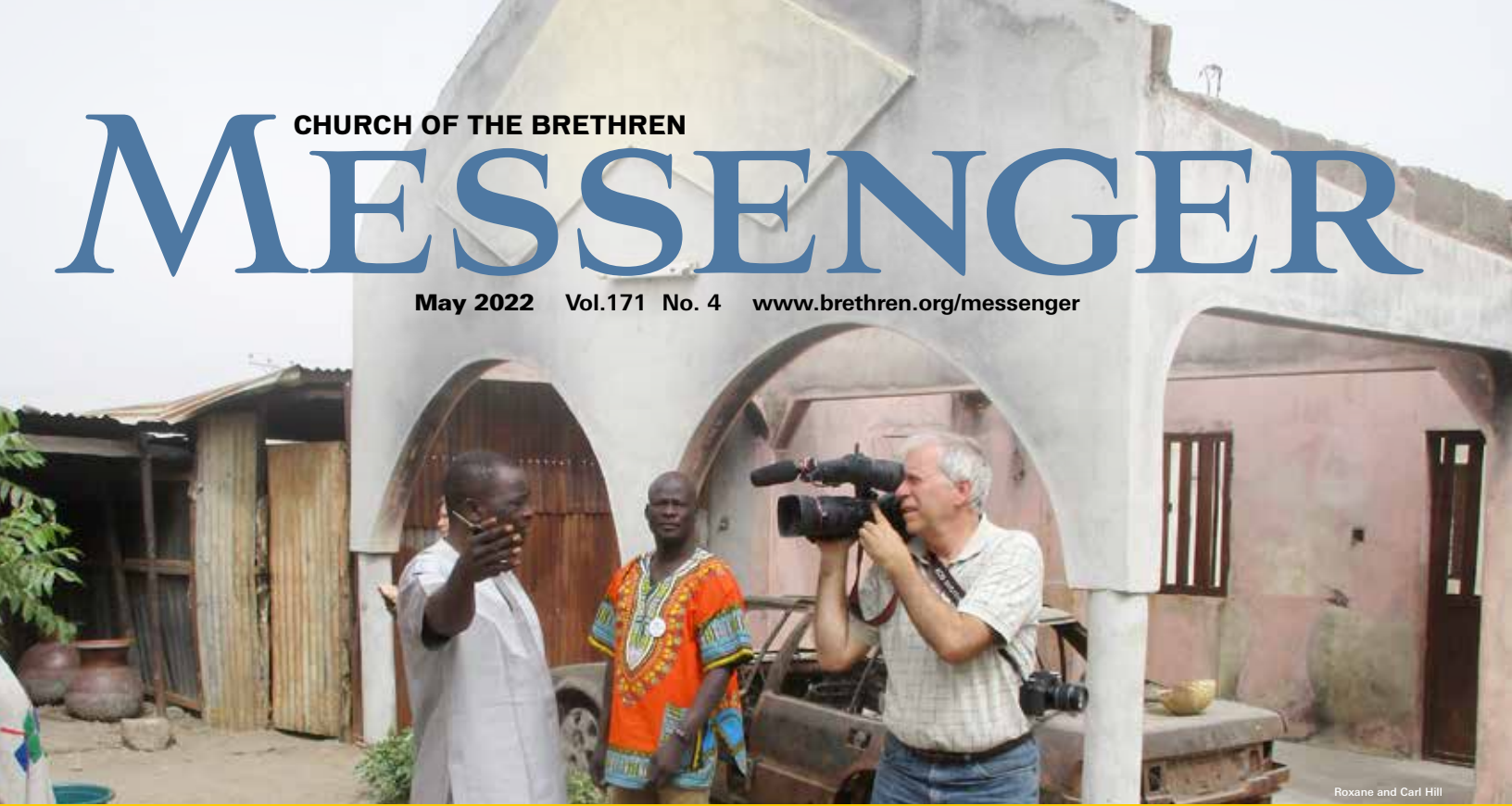


Church of the Brethren  
1451 Dundee Ave. Elgin, IL 60120

Office of Mission Advancement  
MA@brethren.org

# CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Roxane and Carl Hill

Publisher: Wendy McFadden Associate editor: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford  
Web editor: Jan Fischer Bachman At-large editor: Walt Wiltschek Design: The Concept Mill

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## on the cover

Cover artwork features "Mother Against War" (1956), a linocut by Mexican muralist Andrea Gomez y Mendoza. The words "No war" are translated into many of the world's languages.

# Kumbaya

**first learned of pacifism** when I became acquainted with the Church of the Brethren. While there was no glorifying of war in my upbringing, my parents were solidly in the just war camp. Since those days, I've been steeped in the stories of the Brethren peace witness and have embraced it as part of my understanding of the Christian faith. I've learned from the many peace church members who take seriously the biblical admonition to study war no more.



WENDY MCFADDEN  
PUBLISHER

In ecumenical circles, I've seen how fellow Christians hold in high regard those who live out this peace witness. Even if they don't choose it for themselves, they see pacifism as a gift that enhances the church's presence in the world.

I saw a different point of view recently when an Anglican priest who claims to "strongly tend toward Christian non-violence and pacifism" published an article saying the situation in Ukraine is different. "Prayers and hopes for peace" are naïve and flimsy, she insisted, and Christian pacifists are in denial about the reality of evil. "We cannot simply hold hands,

sing 'Kumbaya,' and hope for the best."

Why is it that singing "Kumbaya" has become shorthand for clueless Pollyannas? Frankly, I'm glad for all the campfires and singing that have helped form Brethren for generations. The world would be a better place if everyone grew up spending a week each year at summer camp.

A few years ago, "Kumbaya" was in the news because of speculation that it should rightfully be attributed to the Gullah Geechee people, descendants of Africans who were enslaved on plantations of the lower Atlantic coast. The other two origin stories circulating for decades were contradictory and illogical.

Enter the American Folklife Center archive at the Library of Congress, which has the earliest known recording of the song, a cylinder recording from 1926. After thoroughly examining the various claims, the center concluded that "Kumbaya" is an African American spiritual that originated somewhere in the American south.

"We can't be fully confident that the song originated in Gullah, rather than in African American English more generally," wrote Stephen Winick. "But it is certainly likely that Gullah Geechee versions led to it becoming a popular song today."

Actual pacifists don't spend a lot of time singing "Kumbaya"; they're too busy working for peace. But in a world suffering from the evil of war, a fervent prayer sung by African Americans a century ago is always welcome. Come by here, Lord, come by here.

*Wendy McFadden*

## HOW TO REACH US

**MESSENGER**  
1451 Dundee Avenue  
Elgin, IL 60120

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

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

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

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“Honor your father and mother”—this is the first commandment with a promise: “so that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.”

—Ephesians 6:2-3



## NEBRASKA KNOWLEDGE

**W**hen Brethren gather in Omaha in mid-July, it will be the first time Annual Conference has visited Nebraska since 1970, when it was in Lincoln. Lincoln also hosted the Big Meeting in 1964, 1926, and 1901. Since it’s been more than half a century, here is some Nebraska trivia to get you ready and impress your friends:

■ The University of Nebraska’s mascot is the **Cornhuskers**, and the name is well earned. According to Nebraska Corn, the state annually produces more than one billion bushels of corn, trailing only Iowa and Illinois. It ranks second in ethanol production. The state’s nickname is also The Cornhusker State.



■ The NCAA **College World Series** baseball tournament takes place in June each year at the TD AmeriTrade Park Omaha. Omaha began hosting the event in 1950.

■ The movie **Nebraska**, released in 2013, was nominated for six Oscars, including Best Picture. It follows a father and son on a road trip to claim a sweepstakes prize.

■ Omaha’s **Henry Doorly Zoo** is often ranked among the best in the country. It’s home to about 17,000 animals. The aerial “Skyfari” tram is a highlight.



■ Nebraska, part of Western Plains District, is home to four **Church of the Brethren congregations**. And Peace Church of the Brethren in Council Bluffs, Iowa, is located just across the Missouri River from Omaha.

■ The observance of **Arbor Day** began in Nebraska, dating to the 1870s. It was sparked by Nebraska City newspaper editor J. Sterling Morton.



■ Omaha’s **sports teams** include the Class AAA minor-league baseball Omaha Storm Chasers, the Omaha Beef indoor football team, and the Omaha City FC (indoor) and Union Omaha soccer teams.

■ The powdered drink **Kool-Aid** was created in Hastings, Nebraska, in 1927 by Edward Perkins. You can find historical displays about “Nebraska’s official soft drink” in the Hastings Museum. Also in town you can find a plaque identifying the official “birthplace” as well as the Kool-Aid Man’s footprints in cement.



■ Insurance company **Mutual of Omaha** is, of course, based in Omaha. Some other notable Nebraska companies include Warren Buffett’s Berkshire Hathaway, Union Pacific, and Cabela’s.

## DID YOU KNOW?

**A**ccording to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics,

the average member of the clergy in the United States earns about \$57,000 per year (figured for full-time pay). Some other average salaries: sales manager \$142,390 per year; educational administrator \$102,650; funeral home manager \$82,900; accountants and auditors \$83,980; tax preparers \$51,080; computer systems analysts \$102,210; web developers \$81,320; engineers \$104,000; chemists \$81,930; historians \$72,130; social workers \$57,880; lawyers \$148,030; teachers (preschool through high school) \$64,870; archivists \$61,880; medical records specialists \$48,310; home health aides \$29,260; medical assistants \$38,190; firefighters \$55,290; flight attendants \$62,280; carpenters \$55,190; security guards \$35,830; dishwashers \$27,350.

Learn more about clergy compensation on p. 11.

## Playing the keys to life

**S**unday after Sunday at Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren, her fingers danced across 66 black and white keys. The melodies and chords resonated throughout the vaulted sanctuary, the result of hours of preparation the week before. Preludes, postludes, offertory compositions, and hymns—weddings and funerals—she was asked to play them all.

But as a child, Jackie Cover Davis never imagined becoming a church pianist or organist. She took piano lessons only because her best friend did. In her teens, she occasionally played piano at church and then eventually taught herself to play the organ.

But then, every Sunday from 1974 until Dec. 31, 2021, she played the church's Hammond organ, never accepting a salary or stipend. "I felt any talent I had was a God-given gift," she says. "I never felt right accepting money for playing."

Now in her mid-80s, Davis is retiring as church organist



but will continue to play now and then if needed. The members of the Canton church are grateful for her lifelong contribution and celebrated with her during the morning service on Sunday, March 6. —Carol Davis

## Support for Ukraine

### Prayers for Chernigov Brethren in Ukraine

**A**n update from pastor Alexander Zazhytko of the Chernigov Brethren in Ukraine was shared by Keith Funk, pastor of Quinter (Kan.) Church of the Brethren. "Alex and family are no longer in Chernigov (Chernihiv). They are at an undisclosed area in Ukraine, where it is safer for them," he reported. "As with many in their country, they are now of the status of refugees. . . . Remember this family in prayer as they have left their home for purposes of safety and security. And may we pray for this war to end that life, hope, and peace be restored to this people and their land."

**Skippack Church of the Brethren in Philadelphia, Pa.,** was one of the congregations across the denomination who have been praying for Ukraine.



### Living Stream Church of the Brethren

shared a "how to" video for making Ukrainian Easter eggs. "As we continue to pray for the Ukrainian people and for peace, we remember that Easter is a special time for them," said the church newsletter. "Most are Ukrainian Orthodox and celebrate Easter on April 24, a week after us. . . . Take on their practice of creating beautiful and ornate Easter eggs (pysanky), and praying for peace as you do so. . . . Perhaps there are Ukrainian people in your community with whom you might connect through this activity."

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.

## A precious jewel

**A**nna Jewell of Roaring Spring, Pa., and Claysburg Church of the Brethren is a precious “jewel” to her large family and her church family. Now 97, she has been a part of the Claysburg church since age three months.

Sewing and quilting have been a huge part of her life. As a young girl, her mother always had a quilt in a frame in their home, and she and her late sister Verna loved to quilt together. She has quilted with groups at the Claysburg church, the Lutheran Church in Claysburg, and Roaring Spring Church of the Brethren. When she no longer participated in quilting groups, she continued quilting at home. All of her daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren have received one of her handcrafted quilts or coverlets.

A deacon for many years, and an avid “prayer warrior” with a faithful card ministry, Jewell has made volunteering a constant theme in her life. She and her late husband, Roy, volunteered at the Claysburg Area Food Bank, which is housed at the Claysburg church. Her husband was raised Lutheran and she was raised Brethren, and throughout their marriage they worshiped together each Sunday, alternating Sundays in one another’s church.

She has volunteered in the gift shops at the Village at Morrisons Cove and at Nason Hospital. Her support for Heifer International includes selecting an animal gift each January in honor of each of her great-grandchildren. Every year she has donated coverlets to Church World Service (CWS) to be used as baby covers or lap robes. In October 2021, she donated 40 coverlets to CWS. She has promoted the CWS Blanket Sunday Offering for decades and is so passionate about it that even during the pandemic, in May 2021, she challenged her congregation to raise \$1,000—and they did!

Pastor Ron Bashore used her as an illustration for his sermon series on “Recognizing and Using Your Gifts and Talents to Serve the Lord”—a long and rich testimony of serving and doing for others. —Linda B. Bashore

[Just as the magazine was going to press, MESSENGER received word of Anna Jewell’s death. —Ed.]



**Pacific Southwest District** announced a new church building for Centro Ágape en Acción Church of the Brethren in Los Banos, Calif., in April. “Please hold this new church in your prayers as they continue to put God’s love in action.”

## Churches celebrate 120, 100, 40, 10

**Glendora (Calif.) Church of the Brethren**, established in 1902, marked 120 years with worship and a luncheon on March 13. Pastor Bob Morris’ announcement of the plans for the day included a prayer phrase in three languages, which along with the menu—Mediterranean and Mexican—displayed the multicultural friendliness of the congregation: “God willing; Kung kalooban ng Diyos; Si Dios quiere.”

**Restoration Los Angeles** is celebrating its 10th anniversary in 2022 and also 100 years of ministry in East Los Angeles, Calif. This plaque honors the heritage and roots of the congregation in the former congregations of Belvedere and Bella Vista.



**Miami (Fla.) Haitian Church of the Brethren** celebrated its 40th anniversary in March. It was established by Miami First Church of the Brethren in 1982. “We ask that you join us in giving praise to God for all of those who gave their time, talents, and resources for this ministry to be planted and survive 40 years,” said pastor Ilexene Alphonse and the leadership team.

## Bethany receives \$1.2 million gift

**Bethany Seminary** received a gift of \$1.2 million from the estate of the late David Thomas Wood and Jane Marchant Wood of Boones Mill, Va.—one of the largest estate gifts in the 116-year history of the seminary. It will help provide faculty support and student scholarships.

The Woods were farmers and orchardists, raising beef cattle and producing apples, and longtime members of Bethlehem Church of the Brethren. Bethany noted that David Wood was the first lay person to serve as moderator of Annual Conference and Jane Wood was a member of the former General Board.



# A vision shaped by video

**Dave Sollenberger embraces the role of denominational moderator**

by Walt Wiltschek

Cheryl Brumbaugh Cayford

**F**or several decades now, Dave Sollenberger has turned his lens on the Church of the Brethren. The talented videographer can be seen behind the camera at Annual Conference, National Youth Conference, National Older Adult Conference, and any number of other events.

This year, though, Sollenberger is spending most of his time out in front of the camera, helping the denomina-

tion take a good look at itself in a different sort of way. After a double term as moderator-elect due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Sollenberger will preside as moderator of the 235th Church of the Brethren Annual Conference in Omaha, Neb., July 10-14—the first in-person Conference since 2019.

“I’ve interviewed every moderator for the last 35 years, so I really should know how a moderator acts,” he says, with his typical deadpan humor. “I

have no excuse for not being an acceptable moderator. But it will be a hoot, I know that for sure!”

As moderator, Sollenberger has also been doing some serious work, helping the church to remember its roots and value its diversity while meeting with Brethren across the country and beyond. His desire for the church comes through in the theme he chose for the gathering: “Embracing One Another as Christ Embraces Us.”

“ I believe Dave’s most important gift is listening for and discerning the importance essence of any story. He may start with hours of video footage and interview sound bites, but in time he’ll locate just the right video clip and quotation that captures the very heart of that story. —Larry Glick ”





tor Gerry Greiner encouraged him to think about using his extensive media skills for the church, it planted a seed.

In 1986, while still working in TV news, Sollenberger did the video coverage for the denomination's National Youth Conference, and the rest is history. Telling the church's story soon took center stage as he crisscrossed the country by car and traveled to mission areas around the world.

"I saw the breadth of the church in a way I never would have experienced it," he says. "I saw the evangelism projects, the work of the Washington Office, Brethren Benefit Trust with investments, On Earth Peace with the peace academies—I got to see almost every aspect of the church by someone saying, 'Do a video on this.' I had to learn what each of those programs is about. I saw a little of what Brethren were about and what they were like in almost every district in the denomination."

Chris Douglas, long-time director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry and then of Annual Conference, had a front-row seat to much of Sollenberger's work. He covered six National Youth Conferences, a dozen Annual Conferences, and a variety of other events she coordinated, and his careful and creative work always proved invaluable.

"I just have the utmost respect for Dave," she says. "He is a person of incredible integrity, and he has a commitment to peace that I think probably rivals an M.R. Zigler or Ted Studebaker or anyone else. And his travel has given him a deep insight into the Church of the Brethren, who we are both in the US and around the world. Frankly, very few people have had all those kinds of experiences to bring to bear on their moderatorship."

In addition to professionalism and Brethren values, Sollenberger often injects his dry wit into his work. ("I try

"The question I'm asking people is, 'How much diversity can you take? What are you willing to put up with to maintain unity? I think that's really where we are at right now,'" Sollenberger says. "We don't agree on everything, and nothing says we have to, yet unity is a high priority—a biblical call from Jesus himself. Unity is what promotes evangelism. But we have to be able to tolerate some differences in order to get to that point."



Sollenberger's experiences grounded him deeply in the Church of the Brethren. He grew up in the Annville (Pa.) congregation, where his mother was chorister and his father served as a moderator and Sunday school teacher. While he was growing up, the church shifted from free ministry to a paid pastor and introduced instruments into worship.

Eventually he headed off to Manchester College in Indiana—bucking the family tradition of going to much closer Juniata College—to study communications and their strong radio program. He was influenced there by the active Brethren Action Movement during the Vietnam War and local mentors like Cliff Kindy and Bob Gross, deepening a strong belief in the Brethren peace position that his family had helped to shape.

After graduation, Sollenberger headed into network news reporting for TV and radio in Pennsylvania, covering everything from local crime sprees and politics to the Three Mile Island nuclear plant's near-meltdown. He had a desire to do more advocacy-focused work, though, and when Camp Swatara direc-

## About Dave Sollenberger

**Home:** Annville, Pa., and North Manchester, Ind.

**Congregation:** Member of Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren (Lebanon, Pa.)

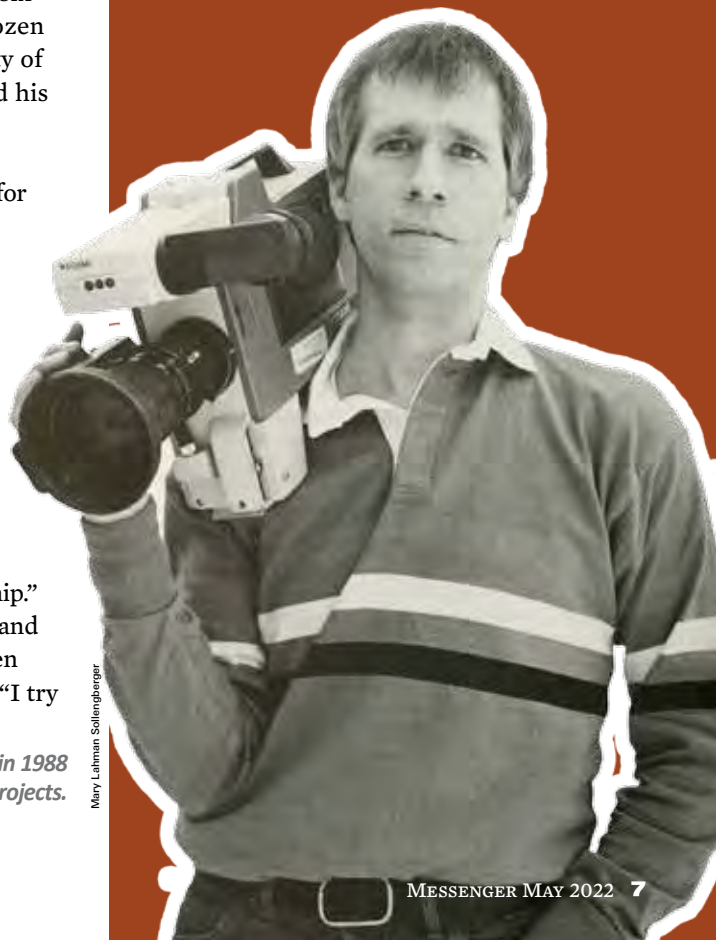
**Family:** Wife, Mary; children Chrissy, Micah, and Joshua, and their spouses; some grandchildren have also recently joined the family.

**Education:** Undergraduate degree at Manchester College; master's from Bethany Theological Seminary.

**Vehicle:** For many years, Dave's faithful VW Bug—now nearing a half million miles—has taken him on all those video-seeking trips around the country. A red Prius sometimes gives it a break.

**Church service:** Served seven years on the Atlantic Northeast District board and five years on the Church of the Brethren General Board in addition to his current service as moderator.

**Hobbies:** Playing guitar, especially with the Bittersweet Gospel Band, and cheering for his beloved (and occasionally frustrating) Philadelphia Phillies.



Mary Lahman Sollenberger

*A MESSENGER cover feature in 1988 focused on Dave's video projects.*

to take faith seriously, but I certainly don't take myself seriously," he says.) That might be most fully on display at the biennial National Older Adult Conference, where Sollenberger, his frequent video partner and long-time friend Larry Glick, and Chris Stover-Brown deliver information and wacky antics through the NOAC News team.

"Working with Dave on video projects can be educational, challenging, multi-tasking, uplifting, fun, tiring, inspiring, and rewarding—pretty much all at the same time," Glick says. "While we have shared some of the behind-the-scenes activity that goes into developing the newscasts, I think few people understand that the only way NOAC News happens is through Dave's fast and masterful editing skills. It is fascinating to watch him transform what was merely an idea a few hours ago into an entertaining newscast."

Douglas notes that Sollenberger's strong technical skills were especially welcome during the pandemic, when so much of the church's activity was forced online, including the first-ever virtual



*Enten Eller and Dave Sollenberger work on virtual denomination events.*

Annual Conference. Others helped bring that to reality, too, but having Sollenberger as part of the Annual Conference officers team proved to be just the right fit for the time.

"I had no idea on the day that Dave was called that his gifts, expertise, and experience would be so perfect for what the church needed in those two years of not being able to meet in person," Douglas says. "He really understands how you try to create a feeling in a worship service that's being done online, how you understand the audience that will be participating. He's just remarkable, and what a gift that was to the church."

Sollenberger has been grateful that

the easing of the pandemic this year has allowed some more in-person contacts during his year as moderator, including some delegate briefings in districts this spring. And, of course, he's looking forward to finally seeing Brethren gather together in Nebraska this summer.

"I really hope people come to Omaha," he says. "I know there are still people worried about the pandemic, but I think we can get around that. We have to balance those concerns with the need to actually be together and interact in person. Not seeing each other eye-to-eye has really harmed our church. We'll benefit by being together." **KL**

# Annual Conference returns to a full business agenda

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

## Leadership

David Sollenberger will preside as moderator, assisted by moderator-elect Tim McElwee and Conference secretary James M. Beckwith.

The Program and Arrangements Committee includes Carol Higgs Elmore, Nathan Hollenberg, and Beth Jarrett.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich is the Conference director.

**T**he Church of the Brethren annual meeting was first canceled and then went online during the pandemic, but in 2022 returns to a full business agenda in-person in Omaha, Neb., July 10-14.

The agenda includes one item of unfinished business and seven items of new business, after several years in which the compelling vision took precedence.

"Update to Polity Regarding Annual Conference Agencies" is brought by the denomination's Leadership Team, which in 2017 was asked to update polity for the agencies Bethany Seminary, Brethren Benefit Trust, and On Earth Peace. Proposed polity would define an Annual Conference agency and the processes to become an agency, resolve conflicts between an agency and Annual

## Equipping sessions

The 2022 Conference is shifting away from a long-standing practice of offering insight sessions, focusing instead on “equipping sessions” providing hands-on tools and resources to use in ministry.

In addition, there will be meal events and interactive “talk back” sessions with the leadership of the Annual Conference agencies and the Mission and Ministry Board.

Conference, and review agency status.

**Query: Standing with People of Color** comes from Southern Ohio/Kentucky District. It asks, “How can the Church of the Brethren stand with People of Color to offer sanctuary from violence and dismantle systems of oppression and racial inequity in our congregations, neighborhoods, and throughout the nation?”

**Query: Breaking Down Barriers—Increasing Access to Denominational Events** comes from Living Stream Church of the Brethren and Pacific Northwest District. It asks, “Should the Brethren explore the possibilities of how we can faithfully, in good order and with proper representation, use technology to remove barriers and facilitate the full participation of delegates and those desiring to be present for Annual Conference and other events, who might be better served—and could better serve the body—from a distance?”

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee is bringing two items, “**Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement**” and “**Revised Guidelines for Pastors’ Salaries and Benefits**” and a “**Revised Minimum Cash Salary Table for Pastors.**” The committee has been “re-imagining” the compensation and working relationships between pastors and congregations. The “Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement” would replace the present Start-Up and Renewal Agreements that pastors and congregations complete each year and includes several worksheet-like forms, a glossary and explanations of terms, and information

about pastoral taxation. The revised table would make a number of changes, such as in the percentage increase between a pastor’s years of experience and the range between education columns, and would raise the starting salary for pastors.

## Amendments to the appeal section of the “Ethics in Ministry Relations” polity

are recommended by the Standing Committee of district delegates, affecting appeals that involve termination of a ministerial license or ordination. The changes recognize the committee’s need for more time to prepare to receive appeals, provide leeway when two or more appeals are received in the same year, and clarify in polity the current requirement that “the dissatisfied party shall have exhausted every means of resolution or reconsideration” at the district level before bringing an appeal.

**Revisions to the bylaws of the Church of the Brethren** include a

## Worship



**Sunday, July 10:** Moderator David Sollenberger will speak on “Following Jesus Again . . . Must We?” The offering will support Annual Conference.

**Monday, July 11:** Leonor Ochoa, a church planter in Atlantic Northeast District, will speak on “Loving Beyond the Pain.” An offering will be received for ministerial training for international

Church of the Brethren leaders.

**Tuesday, July 12:** Preacher to be announced. Offerings will support a local nonprofit called Girls, Inc. of Omaha.

Girls, Inc. also is the recipient of this year’s **Witness to the Host City**. Donations of various types of supplies including school supplies, art supplies, hygiene items, clothing, and games can be brought to worship on Tuesday evening to be shared during the offering. The Conference website offers a list of requested supplies.

**Wednesday, July 13:** Nathan Rittenhouse, co-founder of Thinking Out Loud Together (toltogether.com) and a minister in Shenandoah District, will speak on “The Family of God.” An offering will be taken for the Church of the Brethren’s Core Ministries.

**Thursday, July 14:** Belita Mitchell, a former moderator and recently retired as lead pastor of Harrisburg (Pa.) First



Church of the Brethren, will speak on “Share the Love and Make the Connection.” The offering will help fund transportation for international guests attending the Conference.

The worship planners include Dawn Ottoni-Wilhelm, Paula Bowser, Tim Hollenberg-Duffey, and Carol Elmore. Scott Duffey is music coordinator, with Julie Richard as choir director and Ryan Arndt as pianist.



variety of nonsubstantial changes, proposed by the Mission and Ministry Board.

**The ballot**

Candidates for moderator-elect are **Marla Bieber Abe** of Lynchburg (Va.) Church of the Brethren, a retired pastor, and **Madalyn Metzger** of Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren, who is vice president of marketing for Everence Financial.

Nominated for Conference secretary are **Connie R. Burkholder** of



*Marla Bieber Abe*



*Madalyn Metzger*



*Connie Burkholder*



*David Shumate*

Monitor Community Church of the Brethren in McPherson, Kan., a “semi-retired” pastor and former district executive, and **David K. Shumate** of Daleville (Va.) Church of the Brethren,

district executive for Virlina District and a former Conference moderator.

The full ballot is found on the Newsline Digest pages of the April MESSENGER.

➤ **Bible studies**

The Conference Bible studies will be led by **Stephen Breck Reid**, professor of Christian Scriptures at George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas, and **Denise Kettering-Lane**, associate professor of Brethren Studies and director of the MA Program at Bethany Seminary.

➤ **Special performances**

**Ted & Co.** will give a performance of the play *We Own This Now*. Starring Ted Swartz and Michelle Milne, the play by Alison Casella Brookins looks at love of land, loss of land, and what it means to “own” something.

Concerts will be given by two Church of the Brethren groups: the **Bittersweet Gospel Band** and **Mike Stern & Friends**.

➤ **Age group activities**

Activities are offered for early childhood, kindergarten through second grade, third through fifth grade, junior high youth, senior high youth, and young adults. There will

be a children’s choir as well as field trips for the elementary ages, youth groups, and young adults.

➤ **Pre-Conference events**

The **Standing Committee** of district delegates will meet July 7-10. The **Ministers Association** event on July 9-10 features Tod Bolsinger speaking on “Tempered Resilience: How Leaders Are Formed in the Crucible of Change.” The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership is offering a concurrent course as a Directed Independent Study Unit available to academy students and ministers seeking continuing education credits.

➤ **How to attend**

Go to [www.brethren.org/ac](http://www.brethren.org/ac) to register to attend in person, to attend as a virtual nondelegate, and—during the Conference—to find the links for worship services. Viewing worship online is free and does not require registration.

Virtual nondelegates will have access to livestreaming of the business, the concerts and play, and selected additional sessions.

**COVID response plan**

COVID-19 vaccinations are not required but strongly encouraged. Participants are asked to take a COVID test within 24 hours prior to arrival. Those who test positive or

have had a recent exposure to someone who has tested positive are to stay home and will be refunded their registration. If participants fall ill during the Conference, they are to get tested, isolate, and report positive test results.

The response level—including any masking or social distancing, whether there will be congregational singing, and how meal events will be handled—will be determined based on the nationwide transmission rate and guidance from local health officials.



# The laborers deserve their wages

by Daniel Rudy

**S**ince its formation in 1986, the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee (PCBAC) has served the church by making recommendations to Annual Conference regarding the salaries, benefits, and general working conditions of pastors in the Church of the Brethren. In those 35 years, expectations regarding work and vocation have changed tremendously in both the secular world and the church.

While we respond to concerns that others bring to our attention, the committee is mandated to review the larger compensation and benefits policies for pastors at regular intervals. We have been engaged in this review over the last three years, bringing our own observations and experiences while also engaging in conversation with other leaders in the Church of the Brethren who have experience and expertise in pastoral compensation. Through those conversations, five major concerns have emerged:

- The vast majority of our pastors (roughly 77 percent, according to

a 2019 study conducted by the Part-time Pastor, Full-time Church program) serve in either less than full-time or less than fully compensated roles.

- Congregations are getting smaller, leaving the financial burden to fewer families. The problem is not that congregations do not want to pay their pastors; it is that congregations have higher costs and fewer financial resources.
- Interpretation and practice regarding the use of current pastoral agreements vary across the denomination, and good information is not always easy to find. This poses difficulties when pastors transition from one district to another.
- Many pastors work without good job descriptions, and many congregations want further guidance on how to create them.
- Many congregations struggle with the complex tasks of translating budgeting decisions to pastoral agreements and tax forms.

These difficulties are not new. Our committee believes that approaching pastoral compensation through the values and beliefs of the Church of the Brethren can bring new life into the relationships between congregations and pastors.

The priesthood of all believers is one of the most basic values of our faith. Since our beginnings in 1708, the Brethren have taught that every person who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord is ordained to the general ministry of the church upon baptism. Within that general calling, we set apart men and women to empower and equip the whole church to live out their ministry as followers of Jesus. The way that we arrange pastor/congregation relationships needs to reflect this core value. Ministry is not something our pastors do *for* us; it is something that our pastors lead and equip every follower of Jesus to do *with* us.

Another basic value of our faith is honesty and transparency. Jesus taught that our yes should be yes and our no should be no (Matthew 5:37). Applying “simple speech” to complex documents

is a challenge, but the design of the Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement and the Guidelines for Pastors' Salaries and Benefits now includes tables of contents, glossaries and descriptions, and other helpful explanations to present information clearly. The goal is to help pastors and congregations navigate conversations about salary, benefits, and working conditions in ways that are life-giving, not adversarial.

Finally, we believe that all pastors should be compensated fairly for their time. We have created a Pastoral Compensation Calculator to help congregations and pastors understand the relationship between how much the congregation is offering in terms of salary and benefits and how much average pastoral time their pastor should provide, based on the 44-hour, full-time work week recently approved by the Council of District Executives. Brethren Benefit Trust plans to post this calculator on its website for broad accessibility within the denomination.

One way the church witnesses to the larger world is how we nurture and care for those who labor on behalf of Christ and the church. Our faith in Jesus needs to be lived out in practical and meaningful ways, and that includes our employment practices. We should never lose sight of how the complex legal details of pastoral compensation and benefits affect congregations and

pastors in the real world.


In addition to proposing changes to pastoral agreements and the Guidelines for Pastors' Salaries and Benefits, the committee is proposing significant adjustments to the Minimum Cash Salary Table for Pastors. While we are recommending an adjustment to the starting salary in order to keep pace with other vocations with similar educational requirements and vocational responsibilities, the most significant change is in the relationship between educational levels.

There are three educational levels listed: master of divinity (M.Div.), bachelor's degree with approved ministry training (B.A.), and no bachelor's degree but with approved ministry training (no B.A.). In the current table, pastors with a B.A. make 85 percent of those with an M.Div., and pastors with no B.A. make 75 percent. Translating those percentages into dollars, a beginning pastor who has an M.Div. but no experience makes \$6,332 per year more than a pastor with a B.A. and no experience. With 30 years of experience, a pastor with an M.Div. makes \$11,448 more than the pastor with a B.A. and no experience.

While education is important, so is experience. With this in mind, the committee proposes narrowing the range between levels of education, so that by 10 years of experience a pastor with a B.A. would make 95 percent of

the M.Div., and the pastor with no B.A. would make 90 percent of the M.Div. Translated into dollars, a pastor with 30 years of experience and an M.Div. would make \$3,768 more than a pastor with 30 years of experience and a B.A.

This narrowing of the range comes from raising the salaries of those *without* an M.Div., not by lowering the salaries for those with one. This change to the Minimum Cash Salary Table, along with the development of the Pastoral Compensation Calculator, will help the church live into the value of compensating all pastors fairly for their time.

While change is difficult, we believe that standardizing best practices in compensation and benefits across the denomination—and providing training to every district on how to use the new Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement—will improve relationships between congregations and pastors, better equip congregations for ministry, and help the Church of the Brethren more faithfully live out the values we proclaim. Our committee holds our congregations and pastors in prayer—a prayer that in ministry together we might more faithfully follow Jesus. 

Daniel Rudy is pastor of Ninth Street Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va. He is a member of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee, a committee of Annual Conference.

## Report and recommendations

The report and recommendations are available in the Annual Conference booklet and at [www.brethren.org/ac2022/business](http://www.brethren.org/ac2022/business):

- Report of the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee
- New Business Item #5: Integrated Annual Ministry Agreement and Revised Guidelines for Pastors' Salaries and Benefits

- New Business Item #6: Revised Minimum Cash Salary Table for Pastors
- New Business Item #7: Annual Cost of Living Adjustment to the Minimum Cash Salary Table for Pastors

A video on the Annual Conference website discusses the problems and recommendations in more depth.



# Knitting into the mystery

by Lezah Lakin

**I**'ve always loved knitting and crocheting afghans and giving them away. During the process, God gives me a name or a person it's meant for. This provides for me a creative outlet and a dear one to pray for.

Four years ago we started a prayer shawl ministry at Greenhill Church of the Brethren (Westover, Md.). We call ourselves "Chains of Blessings." We make shawls, lap robes, blankets, and afghans for those who are ill or grieving, to celebrate friendship and connections, for those moving or getting married, for those who need physical and emotional healing, and for those in transition.

The need for the shawls and the desire to make them seem to be like a fire that feeds itself. As our hearts open more deeply, our awareness of people who would benefit from a shawl grows. This is an amazing outreach of love and compassion. It feels like stitching into the mystery of God's spirit and presence. No matter what our prayers are or how perfect our intentions, part of the process of making the shawls, giving them away, and receiving them will always be something that lies beyond our describing in words.

The word "mystery" has connections to the Greek word "*myein*," which means "to shut the eyes." Our prayer shawl ministry invites us to "shut our eyes," so that we can

be opened to seeing what happens within ourselves and our encounter with another person. The mystery that unfolds silently as we knit or crochet our stitches asks us to risk seeing new things, to experience God in ways that are unfamiliar to us.

Isaiah 43:19 reminds us: "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?" God is always doing something new with us, for us, and in us. The strange thing that happens is that we begin to see God's mystery manifest itself visually by the labor of our own hands.

After casting on and stitching into the first few rows, suddenly the rows begin to form something. Always, the moment arrives when this odd jumble of stitches and rows emerges to reveal a beautiful pattern of color and texture. Out of a single strand of yarn, a flowing fabric emerges that will eventually wrap itself around another's shoulders and speak love into our hearts, a visual expression of God's mystery.

No two shawls look or feel alike, and no two people work at it exactly the same way. All these things work together to express the inexpressible Spirit and presence of God in our lives. **W**

Lezah Lakin is a member of Greenhill Church of the Brethren and of the Camp Mardela board. She lives in Pocomoke City, Md.

“ This is an amazing outreach of love and compassion. It feels like stitching into the mystery of God's spirit and presence. ”



# WHAT IS A CHRIST-LIKE RESPONSE TO OVERWHELMING MILITARY MIGHT?

*Or, how might an Anabaptist respond  
to the Russian invasion of Ukraine?*

by Robert C. Johansen

**A**s Brethren rooted in the Anabaptist-Pietist tradition, we are Christians who care deeply about every human being on Earth. We feel solidarity with Ukrainians as they struggle against violence and injustice from military invasion. Engaging in constant prayer and giving abundant contributions of spiritual and material aid to victims are very important. Still, we long to do more to confront the daily monstrosities of military aggression and to support the human beings who face deadly violence.

What else can we do?

We can more deeply explore how following Jesus might contribute, not to unrealistic hopes of melting the hardened hearts of today's pharaohs, but to realistic possibilities for changing our way of living in today's international system. That system made Russian President Vladimir Putin possible, it made the war in Ukraine likely, and now it makes the prompt achievement of an equitable peace difficult and unlikely.

If this war could have been prevented through nonmilitary means, as is certainly plausible, we have a duty to God and to Ukrainians whose blood is being shed to reexamine our way of doing international relations. If we view complicated military, political, and economic relations among nations primarily through the lens of military logic, we will be inclined to believe conventional wisdom that the only way to stop aggressive military power is with defensive military power.

On the other hand, if we view international relations through an Anabaptist lens of following Jesus in responding to imperial military power, we discover some promising

measures for addressing overwhelming military might. If implemented, these could enable peacebuilders to be both ethically faithful *and* politically responsible, rather than to be content (as many citizens are) with emphasizing only one approach—either to do what is right or to do what is effective—while downplaying the other.

This “following Jesus approach” can be summarized in five statements:

**First, Anabaptists believe that it is more important to follow Jesus than to follow the government, any government, if their paths diverge.** The basis for this is Jesus' explanation: “My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here” (John 18:36). Yet, he also said we are to live out his kingdom *here and now*, in this world. This may be one reason our parents taught us: “Be *in* the world (acting now), but not *of* the world (not imitating our society).”

Jesus apparently came to this position during his 40 days in the wilderness while facing serious temptations to assume political power, as described in Luke 4:1-13 and Matthew 4:1-11. Jesus responded with a clear “No” to the devil's tempting offer to put magnificent political power in Jesus' hands if only he would scale back the reign of God as the highest authority in his life. If we follow Jesus in resisting this devilish temptation to become attached to political power, we would give up our attachment to today's militarized balance-of-power system, a system which is far more war prone than necessary.





**Second, Jesus never favored killing anyone, so neither should we.** We should love our neighbors as ourselves and also love our enemies. This means, at the least, not killing them.

**Third, loving and not killing others does not mean that we simply allow violent, evil conduct to occur or that we become a doormat for ruthless people like Putin to walk all over us.** On the contrary, we should strongly resist misconduct and injustice by supporting an expanded rule of law and overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:21). In a nutshell, Anabaptists oppose the violence of war as strongly as they can without using violence to counter it, because that seems in accord with what Jesus did.

As an example, Anabaptists can aid interested Ukrainians (and Russians) to develop effective measures of civil resistance to discourage and possibly reverse Russian occupation. Ukrainians might adapt some measures from the experience in neighboring Poland where Lech Walesa and the Solidarity movement ousted a communist government and authoritarian military in 1989.

Erica Chenoweth and Maria Stephan have compared all extensive violent and nonviolent resistance campaigns in the 20th century (*Why Civil Resistance Works: The Strategic Logic of Nonviolent Conflict*). Their research shows that civil resis-

tance—although no panacea—actually has worked better than military resistance in ousting oppressive rulers, especially when a large percentage of citizens agree on the goal.

**Fourth, in trying to follow Jesus consistently, Anabaptists oppose all military aggression by anyone, including by the US government.** When the United States attacked Iraq in 2003, that too was a “war of choice,” illegal and ill-advised. The two wars are not equivalent, but they both are acts of military aggression, brought on by the international system, and blind to scriptural warnings against becoming attached to political and military power.

**Fifth, Anabaptists also reject killing because they understand that one use of violence tends to generate a cycle of further hatred and violence, sometimes erupting years later.** Previous violence in Eastern Europe surely made the current war more likely. Jesus also seemed intent on preventing violent acts from leading to a cycle of more violence: “All who take the sword will perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52).

When Jesus faced betrayal and the prospect of being killed, he rebuked Peter for fighting. He did not fight or kill anyone to escape or save his life, even though he was innocent and did not deserve to die. So, the familiar argument that we should be willing to kill others in order to protect

“Loving and not killing others does not mean that we simply allow violent, evil conduct to occur.”

the innocent seems not to have been a compelling argument for Jesus, although he might have interposed himself between an attacker and an innocent person to shield that person if he could. His refusal to fight did seem confusing to some disciples whom he pointedly told not to take up the sword.

In sum, Anabaptists follow Jesus by resisting the temptation to become attached to worldly power and by not killing to oppose adversaries or to express compassion for friends.

**Let us now look briefly at two concerns that arise from following Jesus.**

First, would this approach allow ruthless people like Putin simply to take over, using violence to do so? This would not be likely; contemporary Anabaptist peacebuilders support efforts to replace the order-maintaining role of military force with the rule of international law and global institutions designed to prevent war and gross violation of human rights. Once these could be established, there should be far less danger for people who live in a system with enhanced global governance than for those who live in the existing international system, which has enabled the destruction of Ukraine and risks even worse destruction in a possible nuclear war and the melting of the polar ice caps.

There are not enough peacebuilders in the world today, including Anabaptists and others, to assert sufficient political pressure on foot-dragging governments to establish the global governance necessary for dependable peacekeeping. But, if and when there are enough, global governance probably could be realized.

Second, critics often test Anabaptists by asking: If a less violence-prone, global governance approach really could work, can you show how it would solve problems right now in Ukraine? Sadly, it is too late for either a nonviolent

approach or a more violent approach with a no-fly zone to quickly restore Ukrainian rights. It is impossible for *any* approach to take away damage to a house after it has been burning for some time.

If one really wants to prevent a house from burning, then one should build a fireproof structure that might use concrete to construct unburnable walls and clay tiles on the roof. Similarly, if one really wants to prevent war and invasions like the Ukrainians have suffered, then dependable plans for maintaining peace need to be built before the fire starts.

These would include peacebuilding initiatives such as strengthened international law and multilateral law-enforcing institutions, verifiable and enforceable arms control and disarmament measures, international economic integration and preplanned sanctions to constrain outlier governments, and detailed worldwide arrangements to resist any illegal usurpation of power and stop initiatives toward military aggression.

Humanity has not yet done these things because many decisionmakers, especially in the great powers and the highly dissatisfied states, are too focused on military preparedness as the main instrument to maintain *their* security rather than to build human security for all. Yet the preparations for war, with which we are familiar, do not produce nearly the same fireproofing results as would preparations to maintain peace, with which we are *not* familiar. Within countries, we keep peace through a legal system with help from representative government, checks and balances, and carefully overseen institutions for law enforcement.

We could keep peace internationally in analogous ways, but we do not. Not because it would be impossible, but because we have lacked willingness to put such a peaceful legal system in place. We see a tiny part of what could be done by observing the influence of economic sanctions and

“ For peacebuilding to succeed, more people need to understand, build faith in, and implement peacebuilding initiatives that can effectively enforce international law. ”

“ Skeptics of Jesus’ way . . . have long felt certain that it would not be practical or politically responsible. ”

international law in resisting aggression in Ukraine now. How effective these may turn out to be will be determined by how seriously and strictly the United States and other allies implement them, maintain them, and relate their squeeze to bringing conduct into conformity with existing laws against committing aggression, killing civilians, and changing national boundaries through the use of force.

For peacebuilding to succeed, more people need to understand, build faith in, and implement peacebuilding initiatives that can effectively enforce international law. Also, citizens need to re-direct the priorities of many decisionmakers who (as Luke indicated that the devil understands) are enamored with their own political power.

Skeptics of the idea that Jesus’ way of love includes law have long felt certain that it would not be practical or politically responsible. The Zealots, for example, hoped that the Messiah would be a great military leader who would free the Jewish homeland from Roman occupation. As the military aggressors in Jesus’ neighborhood, the Romans played a role analogous to that now being attempted by the Russian army in Ukraine.

Yet Jesus did not endorse the Zealots’ violent insurrection against the Roman military aggressors. He also resisted the temptation to use any violence to become politically or militarily more powerful than his Jewish critics, the Sadducees and Pharisees, whose local religious authority

was upheld by the Romans, who created local puppets.

To help move today’s militarized world in a less violent direction, Christians can live humble, exemplary lives of compassionate service that could enable their faith community to be a transformative influence in their home towns, nation, and the world. For example, peacebuilders can encourage wrongdoers in this war to be held accountable to international laws prohibiting crimes against humanity. There is no statute of limitation for such crimes, so we should prepare for a long journey of bringing accountability to individuals responsible for crimes.

Peacebuilders could ask US officials to join the International Criminal Court now, so that the United States would no longer unintentionally give aid and comfort to dictators like Putin who have refused to accept the reach of international law. The rule of law already would have been strengthened somewhat if the United States had joined the court long ago, so it now could stand on moral high ground with Europeans and 123 other members of the court in insisting on Putin’s obedience to international humanitarian and human rights laws.

Peacebuilders also can voice support for economic sanctions to halt the war, and ask for even stronger ones to curtail Russia’s export of natural gas. Peacebuilders might ask US oil companies, which will reap higher profits because they will sell more gas at higher prices: Why should any



“ War’s declining utility for achieving desirable outcomes is becoming so obvious that this development is drawing the positions of some non-pacifists and Anabaptists closer together. ”



corporation make extra profit from war while ordinary people are sacrificing to achieve peace?

Failure to employ economic sanctions with utmost seriousness after Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014 resulted unintentionally in “teaching” Russian oligarchs that the threat of sanctions need not deter them from making war in 2022 because earlier sanctions were easy to evade.

Peacebuilders can work now to ensure that this time the United States and allies will more vigorously implement them.

Years ago, the United States and Ukraine might have quietly accepted the possibility that Ukraine could become a neutral country that would not join any military alliance in return for all foreign troops being prohibited from entering Ukraine. That was the strategy used to achieve Soviet withdrawal of troops from nearby Austria after World War II. It worked. Austria has been at peace and independent ever since.

We can learn from recognizing that, throughout most of nearly 3,000 years of human history, people habitually asked, “Who shall be our king?” Then people awoke and asked, “Do we need a king?” Humanity struggled some years before an answer to that question became clear and democratic institutions were very widely established to replace monarchs. But eventually, most people have come to believe that powerful kings are no longer a good idea, even though there were a few relatively good ones.

Similarly, for centuries people have asked, “Who will have the strongest army?” And “How will we constrain armies from hurting us?” During the 17th century and following the religious wars in Europe, which included some of the bloodiest fighting in European history, a few people (including Anabaptists) began to ask, “Do we need big armies?”


It may take more time before the answer to that question becomes clearer and global institutions have been estab-

lished to replace the role of military power with world law to keep order, prevent war, and protect our habitat. But eventually most people will understand, if we do not destroy ourselves first, that offensive military systems are problematic and no longer needed.

Early Anabaptists also thought about the appropriate role for a king. Their position was: “God is our only king. We recognize no other final authority over us.” That conclusion was a secondary reason for opposition to infant baptism: It was a marker of citizenship and of loyalty to the prince.

As long wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Vietnam, and elsewhere have demonstrated, war has lost much of its ability to produce good political outcomes, even against weaker military opponents. This may yet be demonstrated in Ukraine, because, win or lose, Russian officials have surely undermined their goal of bringing the Ukrainians willingly or joyfully into a positive relationship with Russia.

War’s declining utility for achieving desirable outcomes is becoming so obvious that this development is drawing the positions of some non-pacifists and Anabaptists closer together, enabling them to work together to increase effectiveness over the long run. Peacebuilders of diverse theological persuasions and faith traditions are coming to believe that, if enough people choose, they can model a way of living that shows how to loosen human attachment to the power of armies, how to transform the existing militarized international system, and how to build a rule of law to prevent war and to serve the “least of these.”

To live as such a transformative people could be one part of our calling to respond to the violence in Ukraine. 

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

# The still, small voice speaks

by **Ron Martin-Adkins**

In the infinity  
Of space and time,  
I wait to hear a Word  
From the still, small voice of Divinity,  
Whose secrets stretch far,  
Far beyond my feeble ability...

And then I hear:

“When you observe or experience  
Wars and rumors of war,  
Know that as the Great I AM,  
I weep,  
I disapprove,  
I object,  
I dissent,  
I protest,  
I condemn,  
From the depths of who  
I AM.”

Ron Martin-Adkins is a retired Church of the Brethren pastor living in Candler, N.C.



# ...And by what we have left undone

by Tim Harvey

**J**ada Williams addressed the **Gun Violence Prevention Commission** in Roanoke, Va., with a sense of purpose. Her teenage son, Jamal, was the innocent victim of a gang-related shooting during the summer of 2021—a tragic situation of being in the wrong place at the wrong time.

The shooting left Jamal with significant, long-term disabilities. In the months following, Jada barely left his bedside. But her fierce maternal care came at a high price. Caring for Jamal meant quitting her job. Quitting her job meant spending the savings intended to purchase a home for her family, which includes three other young children. Spending her savings meant being unable to afford rent, so now she and her children live in the basement apartment of a church member's home.

Caring for Jamal often felt like neglecting the rest of her family.

For all the tragedy that has befallen Jada and her family, what struck our commission was her poise and determination. She was not angry; in fact, she is grateful for our work. But she was determined to be heard.

Since that night when her family's life was forever changed, Jada has tried everything she knows to get help for her family. She's visited every social service agency in our city seeking assistance with nursing care, support for her children, and housing. In every instance, she came away empty-handed.

It seems that our city has an abundance of agencies employing hundreds of people whose life mission is to provide assistance to people in all kinds of circumstances. In all kinds of circumstances, it turns out, but hers. She came to the Gun Violence Prevention Commission to insist that, as we seek solutions to gun violence, we not neglect to find solutions for victims like the families who fall through the holes of the social safety net after news coverage moves on to the next story.

## Ministry beyond the congregation

I sought appointment to the Gun Violence Prevention Commission out of the commitment to peace and nonviolence I've learned as a lifelong member of the Church of the Brethren and my 18 years of pastoral leadership in Roanoke. Brethren in the Roanoke Valley have a long history of ministry with our entire community, an emphasis that has continued as gang-related gun violence is increasing in the high-poverty, historically Black northwest quadrant of our city.

But as I drove home the evening Jada spoke, it occurred to me that I have the privilege of *choosing* how to respond to people like her. Do people in my white, middle-class, suburban congregation have any obligation to Jada? We share a faith, a city, and a common humanity.

The Oak Grove congregation finds

great spiritual value in our outreach: we tithe our congregational giving and designate much of that money to nonprofit organizations that provide housing, counseling, and medical care to people “in need.” Beyond our tithe, we regularly offer our time and talent to a nonprofit organization that builds beds for children who don't have one. We eagerly support our denomination's disaster response programs through special offerings.

But two things are clear. The first is that ministries like these have real impact and address significant need. The second is that charitable giving has not yet touched Jada in a way that will change this new trajectory of her life. The social safety net is barely keeping her head above water.

Remarkably, Jada did not come to the Gun Violence Prevention Commission to ask for assistance. Even after she learned I am a pastor, she did not ask if my congregation could help her. All she insists is that our commission be aware of the people who are falling through the cracks and do something about it.

## An uncomfortable confession

Each Sunday in worship, Oak Grove church members seek reconciliation with God and one another by confessing that “we have sinned against [God] in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.”



Could the struggle of Jada's family be something we have left undone? A challenge with familiar liturgy is that repetition can leave us deaf to our words, granting us the privilege of keeping a deeper significance of prayer at arm's distance. What would we learn if we asked God to show us what we are leaving undone? How can we translate these words into action and "produce fruit in keeping with repentance"?

Such prayer might cause us to reconsider the meaning of "neighbor." This is the issue at the heart of the parable of the good Samaritan, a story so well known that the phrase "good Samaritan" has long been part of our secular vocabulary.


Jesus tells this story in response to someone who asks, "Who is my neighbor?" In a story of people who either do or do not assist a man badly wounded in a robbery, we find that being a neighbor means personally entering someone's suffering. The

Samaritan man is held up as a model because he becomes involved at great personal and financial cost. His direct intervention, which sets the wounded man on the road to recovery, comes while others are so busy with religious obligations they have no time to be curious about a man left for dead.

Repenting of things left undone need not cause us to overlook the good work we are already involved in. Financially supporting those who serve our community extends the reach of our congregations and strengthens our neighborhoods in significant ways.

What our repentance offers is an invitation to go deeper, recognizing that healing the brokenness in our communities will involve a costly personal involvement. It might begin with a partnership with a congregation across town, where we show up and earn the right to hear their stories, where we learn of both the beautiful and the broken places in

neighborhoods we rarely visit. It might mean investing our time and talent in ministries and programs that others are sponsoring, providing assistance and encouragement for those already working on the front lines of brokenness. It might mean having our preconceptions shattered and our hearts touched about what life really looks like for neighbors we have not yet met.

We live in a time where it is popular to blame others for the things they have done. But a commitment to public ministry challenges us to consider the things we have left undone—thinking about people and situations we've not thought about and seeing people we prefer not to see. We can decide to do what has been undone. We can invest our faith in a compassionate neighborliness that walks the long road with people for whom there are no quick answers. 

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

“ What our repentance offers is an invitation to go deeper, recognizing that healing the brokenness in our communities will involve a costly personal involvement. ”

# Young pastor + rural church

## How it's working

interview by Diane Mason

Google Street View

**W**hy would a young man newly graduated from Bethany Theological Seminary purposely seek a pastorate in a small, rural church? Diane Mason interviewed Thomas McMullin and Sharon Heien about McMullin's call to Fairview Church of the Brethren in rural southern Iowa.

**Sharon, you were a member of the pastoral team that preceded Thomas' ministry. Describe how the congregation discerned their future leadership after three of the four team members moved away or retired.**

We prayed. We knew we needed to seek the Lord's leading on this and not try to copy what



other churches around us were doing. We fall into a trap when we try to imitate rather than be faithful to the venture God has for us. Our openness to a young pastor with seminary-only experience grew from our season of prayer.

**Thomas, what drew you to the Fairview church?**

I was a bit skeptical when the Fairview church was first suggested to me. I only knew that it was small and rural. I decided to go for a visit, though, because serving there would allow me to be within a couple hours of home and I could help out my family. My preconception was very wrong! I was surprised by Fairview's vibrancy and commitment to service in the community and beyond.



**Sharon was kept on the congregation's staff to serve as a mentor to you for your first year. Thomas, describe that relationship.**

I think it's great! Working with Sharon has been so awesome that I asked the congregation to renew her mentoring position for another year. We're in contact once or twice each week. She offers me wisdom from years of experience dealing with a variety of situations and people, and helps me understand what is worth worrying about—and most stuff isn't.

**Thomas, how did the congregation as a whole help you get started?**

Fairview has been tremendous. They didn't expect everything from me right off the bat, which allowed me to ease into ministry. They give honest feedback and offer some really good ideas. I listen to all of them and consult with Sharon about how they



“His involvement with a young professionals group and his coaching and substitute teaching lets others know ‘there is a church out here.’”



might be implemented or set aside. The congregation has been very forgiving of my mistakes.

The pace here is refreshingly slower and it's much easier to get to know everyone. I get to see them in other roles in their lives outside the church, such as family parties, and around town. There's a closeness which keeps you in check when you're seen in small community situations outside the church.

#### **Sharon, what advantages have you noticed in hiring a young pastor?**

Thomas is energetic and has worked hard to visit and get acquainted with the church and with the community. His involvement with a young professionals group and his coaching and substitute teaching at the school lets others know “there is a church out here.” It's also good that he's not afraid to try things with technology.

#### **Let's talk about the COVID pandemic. Thomas, what challenges were there starting a first pastorate during the pandemic?**

I started at Fairview in November 2020 during a big surge of cases about six months into the pandemic. During the interview, the question of wearing masks came up. I felt that kind of decision should be made by the congregational leadership rather than the pastor. Masks weren't an issue because I didn't make it an issue.

Before I came, the congregation had

been video recording services during the week to be played on Sundays. During summer 2020, they met outside in the parking lot—staying in their cars like a drive-in movie. When it got colder, the congregation moved back inside the building, adding a Facebook Live option for those who weren't comfortable coming in person.

Actually the pandemic turned into a positive experience. Since meeting formats had been changing anyway, the congregation was very open to my suggestions. The pandemic was another factor that allowed me to ease into the role of pastor, since not all the church activities were going on at the time.

However, it was challenging to build relationships when the only contact I had with the people of the congregation outside Sunday was phone calls and texts. I eventually was able to visit everyone by the next summer.

#### **Thomas, in what ways has your training at Bethany prepared you for this role?**

I learned to be a deeper thinker. Bethany gave me confidence in the research skills I use to prepare Bible studies and sermons. I now value time in personal reflection, and think I am a more complete person.

I gained more empathy for others at Bethany. Listening to people in class I didn't agree with and still counting them among my friends has helped me better see where people are coming from. I can better relate to people both inside and outside the

congregation and am open to share God's love to all.

#### **Thomas, what is important for seminary graduates to know when seeking their first placement?**

It's not about the dollars. Find a supportive congregation willing to take in an unproven pastor. Be passionate and give grace to the congregation as they get used to you. Don't take things too seriously. The job of pastor can eat you alive. You have to be thick-skinned in this messy work. Sharon reminded me the pastor is not the only reason people come to church.

Establish a support system. You can really benefit from a mentor or coach, another pastor in the district or community. It's important to have someone to share your concerns and worries with. And develop friends outside the congregation so not everything is work-related.

#### **Sharon, what is important for a congregation to understand when hiring a first-time pastor?**

Listen, listen, listen—realize it's a new pastor. Listen to the Lord and let him be the guide in the church.

#### **Thomas, any closing remarks?**

I couldn't have picked a better place than Fairview for my first pastorate!

Diane Mason is retired from the leadership team at Fairview Church of the Brethren in Unionville, Iowa, and now lives in Hillsboro, Kan., where she provides pulpit supply within Western Plains District.



# God foretells destruction

Isaiah 47:10-15

by David Radcliff

The Lion of Babylon by Gus Wallen / flickr.com

**I** have been to Babylon. In December 2001, I was part of a Church of the Brethren delegation that traveled to Iraq at the invitation of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC). When the trip was originally planned, our purpose was to learn about the humanitarian impacts of the sanctions placed on Iraq following the first US-led war against that country in 1990. Shortages of food, medicines, and economic activity were inflicting a heavy toll on the people.

Then just months before our departure, 9/11 happened, which significantly changed the nature of our visit. The humanitarian issues were still quite present, but even this soon after the terrorist attacks, it was clear that the United States had Iraq in its sights. So, while we met with United Nations officials, medical personnel, church leaders, and others about relief aid, we also felt the weight of the looming conflict.

There are two thoughts on this

experience that may be germane to our text today. First, we visited the palace of the king of Babylon, complete with its elaborate defense and prancing gods. Even today it seems formidable. To get to the king's palace, attacking forces had to make their way through a high-walled maze as boiling oil was poured on them from above. We stood before the wall upon which writing appeared in Daniel 5. For all these portents of might and mystery, that empire did indeed fall.

Additionally, one of our most memorable visits was with a Shiite cleric in the city of Kerbala, southwest of Baghdad. No friend of Saddam Hussein, who was Sunni Muslim, this religious leader sat our delegation down in a large hall and gave us a talking-to, summarized by this eye-opener: "Why does America have to act like it is God in this world?"

(On our return, the church sent humanitarian assistance through the

MECC, and our group did all it could to warn against going to war.)

### Been there, done that

In the first 38 chapters of Isaiah, the Assyrian Empire is the existential threat to Judah's security. From chapter 39 on, the prophet tells King Hezekiah that Babylon is the much greater future threat.

Second Isaiah (chapters 40–66) deals with Babylon's power and eventual collapse. These writings originated with Isaiah's disciples and can be divided into two periods: Chapters 40–55, usually called Deutero-Isaiah, were written about 538 BC after the experience of the exile; and chapters 56–66, sometimes called Trito-Isaiah, were written following the return of the exiles to Jerusalem after 538 BC.

So, the writers had great familiarity with the fact that empires come and go with regularity. We can all name a few empires that thought they might last

“Common traits that seem to always lead to downfall, however, are arrogance and a misplaced confidence that they possess the magic to avoid the fate that befell others.”

forever. Common traits that seem to always lead to downfall, however, are arrogance and a misplaced confidence that they possess the magic to avoid the fate that befell others. Another similarity these failed civilizations often share is overexploitation of God's creation. The mighty Roman Empire, for example, met its end at least in part due to rampant deforestation.

### **I am**

We know that one of the names for the Lord God is “I AM WHO I AM,” as revealed in Exodus 3:14. So, it is telling that one of the charges leveled by God in Isaiah is that Babylon claimed this moniker for itself: “I am, and there is no one besides me” (47:8).

Whether in a large corporation or a congregation, when some at the top of the ladder have this attitude, we can count the days (or at least the years) until that tower comes toppling down. The more voices and perspectives that are added to the mix, the better the chances are the entity will not only survive but thrive. Recent reports have shown that diversity of all kinds in a workplace increases profitability and makes companies smarter and more innovative.

A side note: We can also say this about human attitudes toward the rest of creation. When we see ourselves as the only ones who matter, as the only ones with good ideas for how to thrive, as the ones with nothing to learn from the rhythms and symbiosis of nature, we can imagine that our end will be near.

And then there is the false sense of security embodied in “no one sees me” (v. 10). First and foremost, the Lord God sees. And we know that when God sees injustice, unrighteousness, and arrogance, there is displeasure. We also know that God's prophets and people of con-

science and courage see and respond to bad behavior, whether of empires or oppressive structures of all kinds. The ferment they can stir can be formidable, as we have seen in our nation of late.

We might raise the question here as to whether we see God as active in judging and bringing down empires today in the same way, as seems to be the case in this scripture. Didn't Jesus shift focus to personal behaviors (forgiveness, peacemaking, care for the stranger) and to systems of oppression (racial hierarchies, corrupt religious structures, exclusion of women)?

Certainly not all Christians accept this shift. I recently attended a service held by a Christian group that very much saw our own nation as God's chosen instrument in today's world, with God ready to bless our military and cultural battles if we would but return to our former ways.

Wherever we come out, we can see God's hand in the order of things as nations or other entities find their comeuppance when they persist in arrogant and self-centered behaviors.

### **Burned**

A word about magical thinking: It will eventually burn you! This section of Isaiah 47 is dripping with sarcasm as the Lord taunts those who rely on enchantments of various sorts to guide their way. There is mention of “the power of the flame” in verse 14, which may be a reference to the Babylonian god of fire, Girra, who played an important role in purification rituals where he was commonly invoked together with gods such as Ea, Marduk, and Shamash.

God warns that while one may imagine warming oneself around such a ritualistic flame, one is more likely to be consumed! While such rituals may be comforting, as we think these gods


will rally to our aid, turning to such nonexistent entities actually means “there is no one to save you” (v. 15).

This reminds us of magical thinking in our own time. Some seem to believe we are immune to the ravages of climate change or the inevitable decline of a nation or the demise of cherished religious traditions or the consequences of risky personal behaviors. That would never happen to us! The danger here is that such thinking allows one to put off or refuse altogether actions that might stave off disaster.

### **Silver lining**

Collapse is not always pure disaster. An example: Due to the thickness of the rain forest canopy, sometimes only one-thousandth of the sunlight and one-third of the rainfall reach the forest floor. When a large tree comes crashing down, while this may be bad news for the tree itself and the over six hundred beetle species that called it home, it also opens space. Suddenly, it is raining light and . . . rain, where both had been in short supply. Voilà—new life emerges!

The same, perhaps, is true for us. While we are no Babylon collapsing under the weight of our hubris and deluded by magical thinking, we may still find things we cherish coming down around us. And there may be some sense of God's judgment. Have we not paid close enough attention to God, who desires to lead us into some new place or by a different set of priorities?

The question then becomes this one: How do we seize this time of tree-toppling turmoil as a moment to see the new light and feel the refreshing rain, allowing these gifts to awaken new possibilities of faithful living? 

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

## Mission and Ministry Board addresses Ukraine

**A statement on Ukraine topped the agenda of the Mission and Ministry Board**, which met March 11-13 at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and via Zoom. Carl Fike chaired the meeting, assisted by chair-elect Colin Scott and general secretary David Steele.

The board also heard updates on finances, addressed Brethren Faith in Action Fund guidelines, approved hiring a consultant for a survey related to the Strategic Plan, heard numerous reports, received training on “Active Listening” led by Jay Wittmeyer of the Lombard (Ill.) Mennonite Peace Center, and appointed Ben Barlow of Montezuma Church of the Brethren to the Germantown Trust.

**The statement on Ukraine** called for a time of concerted prayer and action for peacebuilding, renewed commitment to Annual Conference opposition to conventional and nuclear war, committed to aid and advocate for refugees and migrants—regardless of national origin,

and committed to renew efforts to care for those in need in every country involved in the conflict and affected by the global financial disruption. The full statement is online at [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org).

**In 2021 year-end financial reporting** the board learned that, at \$48.5 million, the denomination’s total net assets increased \$6.2 million from 2020. The increase is due to investment gains, a large surplus in Core Ministries, an increase in restricted giving, and a significant increase in bequest giving. (All numbers are pre-audit.)

**The Core Ministries** received congregational giving totaling \$1.6 million, down \$87,000 from 2020 and \$168,000 behind budget. At \$709,000, individual giving to Core Ministries was up \$135,000 from 2020 and \$164,000 ahead of budget—the highest individual giving total since 2009. Expenses were under-spent by \$542,000, with many events either postponed or moved to virtual or hybrid. Core Ministries ended 2021 with

a net surplus of \$214,000, and \$200,000 was set aside for future budget shortfalls. For the first time since 2014, Core Ministries finished with a net asset balance over \$2 million.

**Brethren Press** received a \$100,000 distribution from the Gahagen Trust for expenses related to children’s curriculum, which along with the shifting of some staff costs to Core Ministries helped the publishing house close out 2021 with a \$118,000 surplus.

**Material Resources** suffered significant reductions in its primary sources of income, leading to a deficit of \$21,000 for the year and a net asset deficit of \$185,000. The board’s Stewardship of Properties task team is including assessment of the Material Resources program in its consideration of questions about property management.

**The Conference Office** had lower expenses in 2021 due to a virtual Annual Conference and finished the year with a \$46,000 surplus.



Jana Coustka / iStock

*Refugees from Ukraine on the Ukraine-Slovakia border.*

## Ukraine aid among first grants of 2022

**Responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine**, Brethren Disaster Ministries in March began working with ecumenical partners to determine best avenues for disaster relief. An Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) grant of \$10,000 was given to CORUS International—former long-time partners IMA World Health and Lutheran World Relief. A grant of \$25,000 to Church World Service was for an initial response through partner organizations working with refugees in Moldova, Romania, and other Balkan countries.

**Haiti:** An EDF grant of \$220,000 went to long-term programming and new house construction following the 2021 earthquake. This is a joint Brethren Disaster Ministries and Haitian Church of the Brethren response.

**Tennessee:** An EDF grant of \$30,000 finances the opening of a new Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding project for flood recovery in Waverly, Tenn., following catastrophic flash flooding in August 2021.

**Maryland:** An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports the Somerset County (Md.) Long Term Recovery Group following tidal flooding in the Chesapeake Bay area in October 2021.

**Delaware:** An EDF grant of \$5,000 supports Wilmington (Del.) Church of the Brethren in long-term recovery efforts following flooding caused by Tropical Storm Ida last August.

# Venezuela church is made official

**A** **SIGLEH, the Church of the Brethren denomination in Venezuela,** is now official. The denomination was established by a decision of its first annual conference Feb. 21-28. The meeting was held in Colombia because of difficulties within Venezuela.

A large Venezuelan delegation included pastors, delegates, and representatives from seven indigenous groups (Piapoco, Jibi, Yekuana, Wayuu, Sanema, Yavinapi, and Carinna), along with pastors from the USA including Joel Peña of the Mission and Ministry Board, Jeff Boshart as director of the Global Food Initiative, and Eric Miller as co-executive director of Global Mission.

Thirty-three churches totaling some 1,548 members reaffirmed their commitment to ASIGLEH, among them 13 churches of the indigenous groups and 7 new affiliated churches.

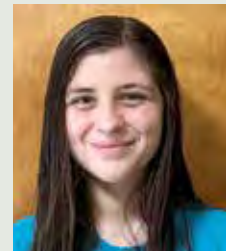


Joel Peña



Zakariya Musa

**Crago Bread and Stover Kulp Water**—two new factories opened by Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria)—in the city of Mubi in Adamawa State, are named for former Church of the Brethren mission workers. Stover Kulp Water is named after one of the founders of the Church of the Brethren Mission in Nigeria in 1923. Crago Bread is named after Tom Crago and his wife, the late Janet Crago, who helped create the EYN Pension Office in 2006.



**Winners of the speech contest** for the 2022 National Youth Conference are (from left) **Hannah Smith** of Brownsville (Md.) Church of the Brethren, a freshman at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College; **Anna Schweitzer** of Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren (New Paris, Ohio), a high school junior living in Indiana; and **Kara Bidgood Enders** of Ridgeway Community Church of the Brethren (Harrisburg, Pa.), a junior in high school.

## Personnel notes

**David Shumate** will retire as Virlina District executive minister on Dec. 31. He has led the district for almost 30 years, since Jan. 1, 1993. He is currently the longest-serving middle judicatory staff person in the Church of the Brethren as well as in Virginia. His service to the denomination has included a term as Annual Conference

moderator and service on numerous committees including three Conference study committees (World Mission Philosophy and Global Church Structure, Vision of Ecumenism for the 21st Century, and Review and Evaluation), the Ministry Advisory Council, Pastoral Compensation and Benefits

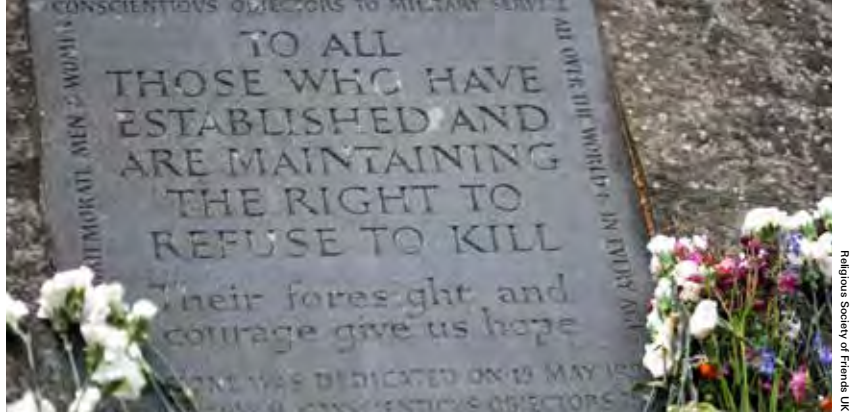
Advisory Committee, New Church Development Advisory Committee, and the Council of District Executives, where he has been chair and treasurer. His lifetime commitment to ecumenism has included two terms as president of the Virginia Council of Churches.

**Connie Sandman** retired from Brethren Benefit Trust

on April 30, after a 40-year career at BBT where she held the record for longest tenured employee. She began at BBT on April 26, 1982.

**Joe Vecchio** has announced his retirement as administrative assistant for Pacific Southwest District, as of the end of 2022. He has worked on the district staff for 29 years.

Commemorative stone  
in London, U.K., recognizes  
conscientious objectors.



# Thank you for your service

by Denzel Short

**A**s I went to pay at a small store, the owner asked me if I was a veteran, because she gives veterans a discount. I shared the story of how I met my draft obligations during the Korean War by going to Germany through Mennonite PAX to build homes for war refugees and worked in an agricultural program in Greece to help people improve crop productions. The store owner said that qualified me for the discount.

But what surprised me and I appreciated much more than the small discount is when she said, “Thank you for your service.” I have often shared my story of alternative service during the Korean War, but never before have I received that response.

My father was drafted during World War I and served as a conscientious objector. There were no opportunities for COs then like there were in later wars, so they were in camp with military veterans. At one point an officer ordered my father and the other COs to strip naked and form a line; he said they would be shot. As they waited for the bullets, they were hosed with ice cold water.

Years later the COs from that camp met for a reunion. The commanding officer was invited to the reunion to speak. He thanked the men and told them how much he appreciated their witness and service at this camp. Although none are living now, I say, “Thank you for your service.”

During World War II, my brother was drafted as a CO. He worked first at a farm and then at a camp in Idaho. He finished his service at a mental hospital in New Jersey. Because of COs working in mental hospitals, there was a dramatic improvement in kindness and care for mental patients. To these people, I say, “Thank you for your service.”

In 1953 I went from Backnang, Germany, where we were


building homes for war refugees along with six other PAX men, to open a unit in Enkenbach. Approximately one year later, as more PAX men arrived, I was asked to go to Greece and work in the agricultural program there. A year or two after I left Enkenbach, General Hershey came for a visit. He was in charge of Selective Service, and came to see if the PAX program met Selective Service standards.

As I understand it, he ate a meal with the PAX men and happened to sit beside one named Hershey. General Hershey, who I believe had some knowledge of the peace churches, commented to the other Hershey about following the teaching of his church.

When PAX director Dwight Wiebe asked General Hershey what changes he would recommend in the program, the response was, “Don’t change a thing.” PAX Service spread all over the world. PAX men, “Thank you for your service.”

Today, because there is no draft, I feel we are not teaching the antiwar and peace position that has always been part of our identity. This position needs to be taught. COs working in mental hospitals served their country. Mennonite and Church of the Brethren volunteers served their country. Others who worked as conscientious objectors served their country.

As they worked to improve health, reduce hunger, provide clothing, and educate, they were also serving Christ by following his command to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and visit those in prison.

For all who have served or will serve in this capacity, I say, “Thank you for your service.” 

Denzel Short is a member of Living Peace Church of the Brethren in Canton, Mich.

“Today, because there is no draft, I feel we are not teaching the antiwar and peace position that has always been part of our identity.”

# Finding community



by **Tori Bateman and Marie Benner-Rhoades**

**T**he red hats of Christian Peacemaker Teams are a familiar sight to many Brethren—a symbol of the peacemaking tradition of our faith, the stories we’ve heard from our elders who served on CPT teams, and the current work of the programs in Iraqi Kurdistan, Palestine, Colombia, and Lesvos, and with Indigenous communities in North America.

Since its founding by historic peace churches, CPT has been a way for Brethren to live out the biblical call to peacemaking—and for many Brethren, their Christian faith is what drew them to Christian Peacemaker Teams in the first place. This was the case for us: Tori encountered CPT while working as a Brethren Volunteer Service volunteer, and Marie remembers connecting with CPTers as a youth at Annual Conference.

Now as members of the steering committee, we’re aware of additional perspectives on the name of “Christian Peacemaker Teams.” Team members from other religious traditions, or no religious tradition, have felt like they don’t fully belong in the organization, or that their own spirituality isn’t honored. In many of the communities that CPT accompanies, Christians have done great harm. In those places, the name is therefore both harmful and confusing—and a barrier for teams to overcome before they can build authentic relationships with others.

These situations raised important and urgent questions for us. What do we do when the name becomes an impediment to peacemaking? How do we react when the name is actively excluding beloved members of our community? How does Christianity (including the Church of the Brethren) participate in and benefit from systems of oppression that CPT is working to change?

That’s why we’ve become “Community Peacemaker Teams.”

This change is not one that the steering committee took lightly. It is the product of years of discernment, and it’s rooted in the experiences of teams on the ground, the local communities they accompany, and our growing practice of “undoing oppressions,” including that of Christian hegemony.

Many members of the Church of the Brethren that


we’ve talked to have joined us in our excitement over the name change. One person likened the change to the growth of Heifer International, which started out as a Church of the Brethren project but eventually spun off into a more expansive organization with greater impact.

Peggy Gish, a longtime member of CPT from the Church of the Brethren, has “mixed feelings” about the name change. She has found it “personally strengthening” to have unity in discernment and group worship with the explicitly Christian identity, especially while working in dangerous situations.

But she also sees the difficulties: “It made it more difficult for the Iraq team to build trust with Muslim populations, because they associate the name ‘Christian’ with US imperialism around the world, or with groups only wanting to convert them to Christianity and not caring about the oppression and other violence they live with.”

Cliff Kindy, another Church of the Brethren member with longstanding engagement in CPT, says, “The ‘Christian’ that came in the form of shells from an Abrams tank or missiles from a fighter jet into Iraq while I was there, or the ‘Christian’ boarding schools that buried Indigenous cultures and children, are among reasons to change ‘Christian’ to ‘Community.’”

“The flip side for me,” Kindy continues, “is that Jesus’ nonviolent resurrection in the face of empire violence, more than the Good Friday drama, is the upside-down Way that carried me into my justice-building, peacemaking paths with partners and team members during my decades with Christian Peacemaker Teams. In those years we worshiped across faiths, and sometimes without faith, in an attempt to point toward what we found as genuine Christianity.”

Over the coming months, Community Peacemaker Teams will be living into our new name, and exploring how our new inclusive title will open doors for deeper relationships, stronger programs, and more challenges to the way we think about peacemaking. 

Tori Bateman and Marie Benner-Rhoades are members of the steering committee of Community Peacemaker Teams. CPT was founded by the Mennonites, Brethren, and Friends.

**So many memories**

I very much appreciated Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's October article on Church World Service. It brought back so many memories from my childhood! My father John Heisel was the manager of the Nappanee (Ind.)

Brethren Service Center in the late 1950s to early 1970s, and later the Modesto (Calif.) Brethren Service Center in the 1970s, so I grew up immersed in Brethren Service and Church World Service. While in Modesto, my father was released to work part-time with Church World

Service, and I can still remember him organizing a large CROP Walk in Modesto.

When it was determined that the Modesto location was going to be closed, leaving only the New Windsor Center open, I took one of the burlap bale covers (as seen in a picture that illustrates the article) and stamped it with all the stencils that I could find as a souvenir. I am thankful, too, that I have a recording of an interview my father did with M. R. Zigler at the Modesto Center.

**Gail Heisel**  
Upland, Calif.

**Is this necessary?**

It was with sadness that I read the article assembled by the referenced group of our own seminary ["Bethany Seminary board affirms anti-racism efforts" in the January/February issue]. Was it written because the board had no position on "racial justice" or was it written because they felt a need to join in the chorus?

To take a half page to issue a



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**WARM WISHES**

**Appreciation to CEO Stephen Coetzee of Fahrney Keedy Senior Retirement Village** whose inspired leadership of team of dedicated associates brought us safely through COVID-19!  
—*Mary (Varner) Rosborough*

**Happy May Birthday Pastor Nathan Hollenberg!** We are grateful and blessed to have your leadership. From the Linville Creek Congregation of Broadway, Va.

**Congratulations to Elvis Cayford on your 90th birthday this May!** We love you! From your family.

**Thank you, Rachel Gross,** for many years as the volunteer director keeping the Death Row Support Project running!



position statement that could very well have been said in nine words—We will not discriminate on race, creed, or color—seems a bit overdone. Could this attitude be one reason we are not in the forefront of producing leaders? Following the group is not leading.

Is this statement even necessary?

**Leroy M. Keeney**  
York, Pa.

Send letters to [messenger@brethren.org](mailto:messenger@brethren.org) or MESSENGER, Attn: Letters, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Please include hometown and phone number. Letters should be brief, clear, and respectful of the opinions of others, with strong differences handled in the spirit of Matthew 18. Preference is given to letters that respond directly to items in MESSENGER. Anonymous letters will not be considered.

**Average monthly cost**

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

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## TURNINGPOINTS

### New members

- Big Creek**, Cushing, Okla.: Bob Patterson  
**Bremen**, Ind.: Joan Kline, Keith Kline, Linda Tyler  
**Garden City**, Kan.: Sally Campbell, Kurt Wenzel, Leslie Wenzel

### Wedding anniversaries

- Anderson**, Bill and Gail, Martinsburg, W.Va., 50  
**Arendt**, Michael and Patricia, Gettysburg, Pa., 50  
**Burkholder**, Bruce and Jean, Harrisonburg, Va., 55  
**Hosler**, Dave and Jean, Lititz, Pa., 50  
**Jarrels**, John and Helen, Bridgewater, Va., 67  
**Mitchell**, Donald and Belita, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 50  
**Preston**, Charles and Carol, Martinsburg, W.Va., 60  
**Southerly**, Norman and Mary, Port Republic, Va., 66

- Wilson**, John and Floretta, Lititz, Pa., 71  
**Wilson**, Marvin and Carolyn, Martinsburg, W.Va., 60

### Deaths

- Bachtell**, Joseph Samuel, 90, Boonsboro, Md., March 10  
**Bixler**, Howard E., 83, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 16  
**Brubaker**, Dennis L., 80, Myerstown, Pa., Feb. 19  
**Chadwick**, Ethel Greenwood, 96, Cushing, Okla., Jan. 15  
**Claar**, Laura E. Mowry, 96, East Freedom, Pa., Jan. 20  
**Clark**, Lois Treasure Whitacre, 99, South Bend, Ind., Feb. 6  
**Daugherty**, Louis Edward, Jr., 75, Fishersville, Va., March 11  
**Dixon**, Betsy Jean, 89, Hagerstown, Md., March 9  
**Driver**, Gene Edward, 87, Timberville, Va., April 20, 2021  
**Eckenrode**, Helen Petropoulou, 95, Philadelphia, Pa., Feb. 15  
**Epperly**, Edward Ray, 95, Christiansburg, Va., Feb. 1  
**Fike**, Samuel Kenneth, Sr., 79,

- Cordova, Md., Feb. 18  
**Hall**, Michael Leroy, 76, Elkhart, Ind., Feb. 17  
**Harmon**, Allen Lee, 62, Cushing, Okla., Feb. 8  
**Heckman**, Galen Albert, Jr., 81, Cerro Gordo, Ill., Feb. 6  
**Hill**, Larry M., 70, Defiance, Ohio, Jan. 14  
**Jewart**, Louise Alice Crownover, 88, Creekside, Pa., Jan. 17  
**Kauffman**, Elizabeth Ann, 90, York, Pa., Feb. 2  
**Kline**, Carolyn E. Poole, 78, Frederick, Md., Feb. 15  
**Kramer**, Carol A. Jenkins, 86, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 16  
**Landis**, Elaine Hacker, 87, Myerstown, Pa., March 6  
**Laurent**, Arzonias Mae Bomar, 71, Ashland, Ohio, Feb. 27  
**Lindsay**, L. Jean Watson, 89, Broadway, Va., July 20  
**Manges**, Phyllis Irene Wood, 86, Bremen, Ind., Oct. 19  
**Markle**, Donald Girard, 93, Stuarts Draft, Va., June 25  
**McGary**, Thelma L. Shellenberger, 90, New

- Cumberland, Pa., Jan. 31  
**McGraw**, Patricia Ann Miller, 79, Fayetteville, Pa., Feb. 9  
**Messick**, Walter Carl, Jr., 92, Broadway, Va., May 12, 2021  
**Mummau**, Joseph Eugene, 84, Lancaster, Pa., Feb. 10  
**Petet**, Leora E. Shaulis, 99, Hollsopple, Pa., Feb. 25  
**Pilson**, Roy Lee, 87, Staunton, Va., Aug. 27  
**Reinhold**, John David, 90, Centreville, Md., Feb. 2  
**Remson**, Eldred W. (Skip), Jr., 91, Chambersburg, Pa., Feb. 6  
**Ritchie**, Nellie Sue, 59, Broadway, Va., Dec. 6  
**Ruckman**, Michael Eugene, Jr., 53, Bridgewater, Va., Nov. 2  
**Sampson**, Ruth Norine Kirby, 86, Grottoes, Va., Nov. 5  
**Sauer**, Curtis, 82, Garden City, Kan., Jan. 28  
**Shallenberger**, Helen Kaucher, 96, Baltimore, Md., Dec. 28  
**Sherman**, Geneva Katherine Ours, 95, Martinsburg, W.Va., Sept. 11  
**Silkwood**, Leon George, Sr., 83, Cushing, Okla., Feb. 19  
**Smith**, Edward Stanley, 88, North Manchester, Ind., March 12  
**Stansbury**, Dorothy Yeakle, 94, New Cumberland, Pa., Feb. 18  
**Stevens**, Gary Robert, 73,

- Martinsburg, W.Va., Aug. 7  
**Truban**, Theodore Leo, 99, Cordova, Md., March 6

### Ordained

- Castro**, Nertha, Atl. S. E. Dist. (Ministerio Jehová es mi pastor, Fort Pierce, Fla.), March 15  
**Crumrine**, David, Mid. Pa. Dist. (First, Roaring Spring, Pa.), Feb. 27  
**Pickens**, Mark, Atl. N. E. Dist. (First, Harrisburg, Pa.), Feb. 6

### Licensed

- Iyasere**, C. Franklin, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Providence, Royersford, Pa.), Jan. 30  
**McKinney**, Natasha, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.), Feb. 20

### Placements

- Crumrine**, David, pastor, First, Roaring Spring, Pa., Feb. 27  
**Hinton**, William, Sr., from interim pastor to pastor, Copper Hill, Va., Feb. 1  
**Iyasere**, C. Franklin, pastor, Providence, Royersford, Pa., Jan. 30  
**Wise**, Carol, interim pastor, La Verne, Calif., Feb. 9

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.

# The challenge of change

**P**eople resist change, and can become angry and hostile when faced with the need for it.” These words by Rabbi Jonathan Sacks have given me reason to pause and reflect.

I’ve learned that the anger often stems from loss. Change means something different is happening, which in turn has the potential to eliminate a sense of comfort or a practice of the past. While this loss may be necessary for a



KEVIN KESSLER

system or organization to survive and even thrive, it’s usually not wanted.

Sacks opened my mind to a new understanding—the very *need* to change. But I had to read his words several times to let them sink in. As you ponder his words, do they offer you any insight into the connection between anger and change?

Let me name an example: creation care. Scientists are continually raising our awareness of the dangers to all that lives on this planet if greater efforts are not made to care for creation. Extinction rates will explode, upsetting the balance of ecosystems that depend on equilibrium of species. Ocean levels will increase, inundating populated shorelines and causing mass displacement of people. Weather-related catastrophes will increase in number and intensity, disrupting lives and causing significant economic loss.

The need to change is real, meaning that it’s necessary to adjust the way we live. These modifications may increase the cost of living and require us to learn new ways of doing things. This is not comfortable.

Anger arises when we are required to think beyond our own sphere of existence to the much broader sphere of the whole human race, toward a more expansive scope of concern. This turns individualism upside down: If I


can’t have what I want, well, I’ll detach and sulk and throw a tantrum.

I get this. I enjoy comfort just as much as anyone, and certainly anger is sometimes what I exhibit when I’m forced to change.

Is there an alternative to anger? Yes. We can adapt. Consider gas prices, for example, which have increased dramatically this year. Price increases and fossil fuel concerns cause us to adapt to new methods of energy consumption. We give up some things to have a sustainable future for all.

At an Annual Conference a few years ago, a business item on creation care and the need to reduce fossil fuel consumption turned bitter. Some of the anger came from those whose livelihood was generated from the oil industry. The loss of jobs would be catastrophic, hurting families and the ability to earn a living. The emotion in some of the speeches was palpable.

These concerns are understandable. But where might the conversation have gone if the direction had not been motivated by anger? Could new ideas have emerged? Could there have been discussion of ways to adapt to alternative sources of energy? Could there have been ideas for employees to transition to alternative systems? What new systems might be imagined to accommodate the needs of families in a way that would be more sustainable for the planet and future generations?

Anger comes easily. I find I need to temper my anger by stepping back to reflect more deeply about the change that is needed, to consider alternative ways and thoughts that can help any system I’m a part of to thrive. Then it can be sustainable well into the future, not only for my benefit but for the welfare and advancement of all. 

Kevin Kessler is pastor of Canton (Ill.) Church of the Brethren.

“ Is there an alternative to anger? Yes. We can adapt. ... We give up some things to have a sustainable future for all. ”

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