

MESSENGER

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**The wounds
of war and
a place for
peace**



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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
MESSENGER



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on the cover

Dunker church at Antietam, Joel and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Wendy McFadden

Transformation

Fen is a word I know only because there's one just a few miles from where I live. The Bluff Spring Fen is not very big. From its paths you occasionally hear highway traffic and a passing train, and at certain places you can catch a glimpse of the equipment of the nearby gravel company rising above the trees.

Those signs of industry cause you to marvel all the more at the unusual combination at your feet—kames (gravel hills left by the movement of long-ago glaciers), prairie, bur oak savanna, and fen.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

Within a short distance, one finds prairie wildflowers, woodland trees, and sedges reaching higher than my head.

A fen is a distinctive kind of swampland fed by water seeping up from underground. This particular fen is even rarer because it's calcareous; the water bubbles up through calcium and other minerals to create an alkaline environment that can host only the most adaptable plants. The water emerges at a constant 53 degrees year-round, creating a unique habitat in our northern climate.

Our local fen is home to about a dozen plants that can be found nowhere else in the state. But this was not always the case. Previously, this rare spot of nature had been used for mining and as a dumping ground for construction waste and abandoned cars. During all those years, the water persistently made its way through limestone deposits and up to the surface.

Thirty years ago a group began to haul away the debris and repair the land. Even though I never saw the place in its previous state, I am in wonder at its re-creation. I have visited in spring, summer, and fall, and each time I learn a little more.

How grateful I am for those who can see beneath a wasteland and identify the relentless movement of the deep. They have a clear picture of the outcome, even though the transformation will require years. In a world weighed down by so much, we need those who teach us how to uncover the holy.

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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“Sing to God a thanksgiving hymn, play music on your instruments to God.”

—Psalm 147:7, The Message

“Cultivate **the habit of being grateful** for every good thing that comes to you, and to give thanks continuously. And because all things have contributed to your advancement, you should include all things in your gratitude.”

— American essayist *Ralph Waldo Emerson*

“If the **only prayer you said was thank you**, that would be enough.” — *German theologian Meister Eckhart*

“When we give cheerfully and **accept gratefully**, everyone is blessed.” — *American poet Maya Angelou*

“Let us be **grateful to the people** who make us happy; they are the charming gardeners who make our souls blossom.” — *French novelist Marcel Proust*

“Do not spoil what you have by desiring what you have not; **remember that what you now have** was once among the things you only hoped for.” — *ancient Greek philosopher Epicurus*

“Piglet noticed that even though he had a Very Small Heart, it could hold a rather **large amount of Gratitude**.” — *English author A.A. Milne, Winnie-the-Pooh*

“We must find time to stop and **thank the people who make a difference** in our lives.” — *former US President John F. Kennedy*

GROWING IN GRATEFULNESS

A Harvard Medical School article reviewing research about the positive health effects of being grateful suggested the following “Ways to Cultivate Gratitude”:

- Write a thank you note, or at least thank someone mentally
- Keep a gratitude journal about the gifts you’ve received each day
- Count your blessings—literally
- Pray
- Meditate

THANKSGIVING IN ANY LANGUAGE

Can you match the word or phrase at left with the language in which it means “thank you,” at right? Answers below:

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Dank je | a. Turkish |
| 2. Asante | b. Haitian Creole (Kreyol) |
| 3. Takk skal du ha | c. Dutch |
| 4. Mési | d. Finnish |
| 5. Obrigado | e. Maori (New Zealand) |
| 6. Teşekkür ederim | f. Swahili |
| 7. Kia ora | g. Portuguese |
| 8. Kiitos | h. Norwegian |

ANSWERS: 1-c; 2-f; 3-h; 4-b; 5-g; 6-a; 7-e; 8-d.

DID YOU KNOW?

Abraham Lincoln proclaimed Thanksgiving an official federal holiday in 1863, and it has been an annual observance ever since. It wasn’t officially fixed on the fourth Thursday in November until 1941—after President Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to move it a week earlier in 1939. (Source: Almanac.com)

The Medical Practicum group loading boats on a river in Nicaragua in 2018.



Courtesy of Manchester University

40 years of Manchester's Medical Practicum

don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know: the only ones among you who will be really happy are those who have sought and found how to serve."

—Albert Schweitzer

In 1980, campus pastor Bob Knechel at Manchester College (now Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind.) received a call from Fred La Mar, chaplain at DePauw University. DePauw had begun a program for nursing students to staff clinics in rural areas of Central America during January term. DePauw had many requests from underserved communities. Would Manchester consider doing something similar?

Knechel sent the request to chemistry professor Ed Miller, who noted that the proposed course aptly fulfilled Manchester's mission of faith, learning, and service. He and his wife, Martha, had participated in a workcamp at the Church of the Brethren mission in Ecuador and had other significant international experience, so he felt prepared to direct a January term course for students interested in health care professions. Manchester's Medical Practicum was born.



Courtesy of Manchester University

Ed Miller (at right) celebrating 40 years with current director Jeff Osborne.

The first trip assisted the Episcopal Church in Guatemala. Physician Don Parker, a college classmate of Miller, was instrumental in the success of this first trip and continued to participate. Dentist Rick Myers, a former student of Miller, also joined that first trip and several others.

Miller continued to take students and health care providers to sites in Panama, Honduras, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, and Nicaragua for more than 10 years, always working with local churches and organizations. In Nicaragua, locations moved from Mulukukú to Santa María with directors Terrie Salupo-Bryant for two years and Julie Garber for three years. Jeff Osborne started directing the practicum in 2008, initially at Ciudad Antigua and then moving Nicaraguan locations to the Coco and Bocay rivers. He returned to Guatemala in 2019.

Directors share the goal of providing learning for students while serving people in areas of need. Osborne understands the importance of working with rather than "doing good for." He wants students to "continue seeking ways to serve and how to serve in order to improve the human condition." His orientation materials include this quote from Lilla Watson: "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

Of the 139 health care providers and leaders of the practicum, nearly half have been Brethren. These professionals pay their own way and often take vacation time to participate. Those who have participated the most number of

times include Joel Eikenberry, Rachel Long, Lee Smith, Robert Studebaker, and Norm Waggy (6); Bette Cowan, Lois Johnson, and Don Parker (9); Kathy Long and Mark Shafer (10); Paul Fry-Miller (12); Bill Fike (14); Jeff Osborne (12); and Ed Miller (25).

In 2020, 11 of 16 providers were Brethren and several had connections with the Nigerian church. For example, Eikenberry was born and raised in Nigeria, a son of former mission workers Ivan and Mary Eikenberry; Rhonda Whitten heard stories of Garkida, Nigeria, in the 1930s and '40s from her great uncle; Fry-Miller has traveled to Nigeria to assist those traumatized by Boko Haram; Waggy served in Garkida with the Rural Health Program.

Fike, a physician from Painesville Church of the Brethren, said he values the practicum "to make a difference in another's life. Fifty years from now, no one will remember what kind of car we drove, or who we were, but rather by the difference we make in the life of a patient or student—that is our legacy."

Lori Zimmerman, a physician from Manchester Church of the Brethren, reflected on her experience as a student and as a provider, returning to participate alongside daughter Karly. "In 1990, the medical practicum was the experience that solidified my desire to go into medicine," Zimmerman said. "This experience provides such a unique opportunity for undergraduate students to see health care up close and work side-by-side with physicians. Providing care to underserved communities while working with Manchester students was so rewarding. Having my daughter on the trip was icing on the cake." —Beverly Eikenberry

Zooming into membership

C OVID-19 restrictions did not delay Anita Heatwole in joining Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren. Her move to the newly expanded Bridgewater Retirement Community's Grove apartment complex brought her back to the congregation after years at Waynesboro (Va.) Church of the Brethren. Living in the Bridgewater area during her early childhood provided a foundation of faith for Heatwole, who was baptized in the original College Street meetinghouse because the Moscow Church her family attended lacked a baptistry.

Bridgewater has used YouTube and closed-circuit television to share weekly services since the coronavirus outbreak terminated physical gatherings. Interim pastor Christy Dowdy creatively made use of the technology to welcome Heatwole's membership. The July 12 worship service featured a recorded Zoom meeting with Dowdy, Heatwole, and her daughter and son-in-law Cindy and Mike Fike, who represented the congregation in pledging community support. It provided the opportunity for Heatwole to come, in her own words, "full circle" back to Bridgewater.

At age 85, Heatwole is somewhat awed—and pleasantly impressed—by "Zooming" into the love of the congregation through a touch on her iPad. —Mike Fike



Walt Wiltschek

Bringing smiles in her wake

O ne of the favorite "members" of Easton (Md.) Church of the Brethren is named Sarah. Like many of those who attend, she has gray hair. But unlike most, she has four legs and a tail.

Sarah comes to worship most Sundays with Misti Green, who adopted her in June 2016, and she loves interacting with others in the congregation. She alternates among lying on a pew next to Green, coming up to check out the chancel during songs, and saying hi to those in attendance, bringing a series of smiles in her wake.

She puts those interactive skills to good use in the community, too, accompanying Green on visits to area retirement homes and long-term care facilities through a program called "Pets on Wheels." Green often makes little seasonal costumes for her, to add to the delight for residents. The visits are on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Green is looking forward to their resumption.

"Sarah knows the days (of the visits)," Green says. "I don't know how she does. Tuesdays were our visits to the nursing home, and Sunday is church. Sarah has become a real social butterfly due to Sunday church!"

Sarah declined to comment for the story, but her wagging tail said it all. —Walt Wiltschek

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.

200 years of unique history

Nettle Creek Church of the Brethren in Hagerstown, Ind., celebrated 200 years on Oct. 11. The congregation has a unique history, including hosting the 1864 Annual Meeting of the Brethren—the last where Civil War martyr John Kline served as moderator before he was ambushed and killed on June 15, 1864, as he traveled home to Virginia on horseback. It is thought that he was assassinated by Southern sympathizers because of his outspoken stances against the war and against slavery.

Decades later, Nettle Creek elder L.W. Teeter (1885-1923) served the denomination in many roles including moderator of the Annual Meeting of 1897. He also served in several district roles, was on the Manchester College board, wrote a New Testament commentary, and contributed to the Brethren Bicentennial addresses in 1908.

The congregation's history dates to just four years after Indiana attained statehood, when early German Baptist Brethren settled in the Nettle Creek area in 1820. Some preachers from the Four Mile congregation near Boston, south of Richmond, Ind., came to help begin the church. The early Nettle Creek Brethren met for worship in homes during their first 25 years. In 1845, they

built their first brick church building. It had to be replaced by a second brick building in 1875, built nearby on the same property where it now stands. It was referred to as the “Brick Meetinghouse” or the “Brick Church” on the road that bears its name, “Brick Church Road.”

In the 1850s, Nettle Creek started the White Branch and Locust Grove daughter congregations. They officially separated in 1955, each adding paid, professional ministers, pulpits, stained glass, new or remodeled sanctuaries with baptistries, and parsonages.

The 1950s and 1960s were a time of change, growth, and expansion for the Nettle Creek Church, which dedicated a new sanctuary in 1968. Active membership of the three congregations peaked in the 1970s and 1980s when many area families were involved. But by the end of the 1990s, all three churches had begun to decline numerically.

The past 20 years have seen renewed efforts to serve the community and continue in vibrant worship, including use of new technology. From 2014 to 2019, Nettle Creek and White Branch combined efforts to produce the “Good News Radio Program” featuring the messages from the two churches. Both churches are now streaming worship on Facebook Live. —Brian Mackie



West Green Tree Church of the Brethren

Keep on singing

In the midst of uncertain times due to the coronavirus, West Green Tree Church of the Brethren in Elizabethtown, Pa., formed several mid-week ministries to help the congregation stay connected. One is a Digital Hymn Sing via Facebook Live.

It started when a Facebook friend wrote to organist and choir director Ryan Arndt asking for video posts of piano pieces. He began to think about getting viewers involved and interacting instead of just listening. A hymn sing was a great way to do that.

The first Digital Hymn Sing went “live” the evening of April 20 with an estimated 200-plus participants. Each Monday night since, numbers have been consistent at about 200 live viewers, with hundreds of additional views after the videos post to YouTube.

The congregation sends hymn requests ahead of time, giving Arndt time to practice the accompaniment. Mick Allen, senior pastor, serves as operator of the camera and uploads the lyrics in advance, so the words appear on the screen for participants at home.

Requests of all sorts have come in. The most popular are “How Great Thou Art,” “Great Is Thy Faithfulness,” and “In the Garden.” However, many less traditional hymns also round out the lineup such as gospel songs like “Mansion Over the Hilltop” and “I Know Who Holds Tomorrow.”

People have been participating in 10 or more states and Canada. At least one retirement community has been airing the hymn sing on closed circuit television for residents. What started as a way to encourage congregants during this time has grown into a tremendous outreach. —Ryan Arndt



The wounds of war and a place for peace

by **Wendy McFadden**

The Civil War ended generations ago, but the wounds are still with us. Our country has not healed from the sin of slavery and the resulting violence. That is especially clear right now as the nation convulses in the pain and rage of racism.

What can we learn from the Dunker meetinghouse that became the unwitting center of a theater of war during the Battle of Antietam? How can we be a witness for peace in the battles of today?

This is the 50th year that the Church of the Brethren Mid-Atlantic District has hosted a worship service at the Dunker meetinghouse on the battlefield in Sharpsburg, Md. This year the service was held virtually on Sept. 20.



Joel and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

If you type the book title *Douglass and Lincoln* into the search bar on a popular website, you will get a message that says, “Did you mean *Douglas and Lincoln*”?

When the two names are mentioned together, many people think of Stephen Douglas, Lincoln’s political rival in Illinois. But when pondering the course of events that led to the Civil War and its conclusion, it would be more accurate to think of Frederick Douglass.

This fascinating and dynamic personality was the son of an enslaved Black woman and a white man who was probably his owner. He not only managed to escape to freedom, but he became an influential abolitionist speaker in both the United States and abroad in Ireland and Great Britain. He had the respect of a number of national leaders, most significantly President Abraham Lincoln.

Douglass urged the president to move more quickly on the matter of slavery. As part of his relentless efforts, he pushed for Black men to be able to fight for the Union. He saw this as a critical step toward citizenship. After the war, when Lincoln

described slavery as America’s *national sin*, he was drawing on language that Douglass had published in 1861.

Within days after the Battle at Antietam, in September 1862, Lincoln issued a preliminary Emancipation Proclamation. Before long, the first Black Union regiments came into existence.

One of those regiments, the 2nd Louisiana Native Guard, was assigned to Ship Island, off the coast of Mississippi, where their job was to guard captured Confederate soldiers. This was indeed ironic for formerly enslaved Black people to be guarding white soldiers who had fought to keep slavery intact.

The Black regiments were not treated the same as white soldiers, however. Sometimes they were just the laborers, issued shovels instead of guns. They were given less pay and half the rations of white soldiers. At Port Hudson, Union General Nathaniel Banks called for a truce in order to bury his dead, but didn’t claim the Black soldiers from Louisiana, known as the Native Guards. Even more, when a Confederate officer asked permission to bury those soldiers,

TODAY WE REMEMBER THE BATTLE OF ANTIETAM, THE LIVES LOST THAT DAY, AND THE DUNKER CHURCH THAT SEEMED TO SOME LIKE A LIGHTHOUSE IN THE MIDST OF A RAGING SEA.

“Banks refused, saying that he had no dead in that area.” In a particularly brutal event: After a Black garrison surrendered at Fort Pillow, the soldiers were then massacred while Confederate General Nathan Bedford Forrest looked on (*Native Guard*, p. 48).

I’ve learned the stories of these Black regiments because of Natasha Trethewey, a Pulitzer Prize winner and former US poet laureate. A biracial daughter of the South, she has used poetry to probe the history of the Civil War and the overlooked memories of the Black experience, especially the Native Guards, three Black regiments from Louisiana. Her lengthy poem “Native Guard” is an intricate set of sonnets, each beginning with a date from November 1862 to 1865.

The narrator of the poem is a Black soldier who had been a slave and then was freed. In one of the stanzas, he takes a journal from a Confederate home and uses it as his own. The journal is nearly full, though, so the soldier writes his words in between the lines already written there. He describes it this way: “On every page, his story intersecting with my own.”

Ours is a nation of intersecting stories. The primary narrative has been a white story, but between those lines are written other stories. People like Frederick Douglass and Natasha Trethewey help us reckon with the stories written between the lines—and the deep wound that is our national sin of slavery and white supremacy.

THE WOUNDS OF WAR

For 50 years the Church of the Brethren Mid-Atlantic District has hosted a worship service to commemorate the role of the Dunker church at the Battle of Antietam. The Battle of Antietam was the bloodiest day in the Civil War, and indeed in the history of this nation. We know well the story of the Mumma meetinghouse, a place of worship for the people now known as the Church of the Brethren. The meetinghouse of a people of peace. The meetinghouse that was overtaken by violence almost too awful to describe.

For 50 years, we have gathered to remember and reflect. But this year, 2020, is different. We are in the midst of a pandemic, of course, which means our worship service is virtual. But this year is different in another way, as well: In just a few months’ time, our country has been shaken awake. A majority of people see clearly now that we have a serious problem with

racism. A startling number are marching about racism, reading about racism, talking about racism.

Perhaps there is a connection between the realities that the pandemic has revealed and the 2020 vision through which we are seeing the virus of racism. With new eyes we are seeing a connection between a war that ended in 1865 and a virus that has not yet ended. We are living out the wounds of war.

The prophet Jeremiah said, “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). The prophet was speaking of a different time and a different people, but we can recognize the pain and danger of a wound that is treated carelessly.

But how can we say our national wound was treated *carelessly* when the Civil War was brought to an end and the chains of slavery were broken? Yes, the war came to an official end, but not all the chains have fallen away. Here are some of those chains:

- A period of Reconstruction that turned into a nightmare for Black people and laid the unjust foundation upon which today’s institutions have been built. In a new report, the Equal Justice Initiative describes in detail the reign of terror from 1865 to 1877. *The wound of my people treated carelessly, says the prophet Jeremiah.*

- Jim Crow laws that made it possible to arrest Black people for almost anything—laws that forced those formerly enslaved to return as indentured workers to the very people who had enslaved them. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

- Tactics to keep Black people from voting. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

- Lynching. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

- Redlining to confine Black people to certain neighborhoods and keep banks from lending them money. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

- Inequalities in education, health care, and the environment that shorten the lives of people of color. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

- A criminal justice system that treats people differently depending on the color of their skin and their social caste. *The wound of my people treated carelessly.*

When I studied the Civil War as a fifth grader in California, it felt far away in time and far away in miles. I lived a continent away from the battlefields, and the war had ended more



Joel and Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

than a hundred years before.

Later on, when I moved to Maryland, that geographical distance shrank considerably. In the years since, so has the time frame: The Civil War has begun to seem not that long ago. Not only are the effects present all around me, but our country is still awash in the symbols and the language. Jemar Tisby says, “More than 150 years after Union and Confederate forces laid down their guns, America is still fighting the Civil War” (*The Color of Compromise*, p. 200). Natasha Trethewey describes it as a “contest over memory.”

A PLACE FOR PEACE

Back in 1862, when the war arrived at the homes and farms of the German Baptist Brethren, the Mumma meetinghouse became a place of utility and convenience for the military forces that swept over it. It was a focus for those developing military strategy. It was a hospital, an operating room, a morgue, a cemetery.

Today we remember the Battle of Antietam, the lives lost that day, and the Dunker church that seemed to some like a lighthouse in the midst of a raging sea. We have an annual worship service because of a *place* that meant something in 1862. It was a place for peace.

If our nation is still fighting the Civil War, how can we today be a place for peace? How can we give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death? How can we guide our feet into the way of peace?

First, we can be a hospital. The Dunker church was forced by circumstance to be a hospital, but we can be a hospital by choice.

If a wound in your body has not healed, there is something wrong and you must do something about it. If it's an infection, your doctor might prescribe a strong antibiotic. If it's a bone that has not been set right, you might need to have it rebroken and set again. If it's cancer, you might need a serious course of treatment that actually damages your body—but is considered

better than no treatment. Even when the diagnosis is hard to hear, the church must be a place for healing.

Days before his assassination, Lincoln delivered his second inaugural address. He said, “Let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds; to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just, and a lasting peace, among ourselves, and with all nations.”

During the pandemic, I have done more walking than usual and have become acquainted with many of the forest preserves near me. In one, I saw a strange sight: A tree had grown around a chain-link fence. The fence ran right through the trunk of the tree. No lover of trees would plan for that to happen. The tree dealt with the wound as best it could, but it was disfigured.

Our country can't remove the wounds of a war that scarred us a long time ago. But we can examine those wounds with 2020 vision. We can diagnose and treat those wounds. Yes, we can be a hospital.

But to become a place for peace we must also work to stop the wounding. After Frederick Douglass learned of Lincoln's assassination, he attributed the killer's action to “the concentrated virus the moral poison, accumulated by more than two centuries of human slavery, pouring itself out upon the nation as a vial of wrath in one dreadful and shocking crime” (*Every Drop of Blood*, p. 289).

We now have *four* centuries since slavery began on these shores, and the vial of wrath is still potent. The concentrated virus is still poisoning us today. We must stop the poison from being poured.

When it comes to rejecting the poison, the Church of the Brethren has something to build on. There were the clear antislavery convictions that kept this church from dividing, as Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists did. And there was a



THE HUMBLE BRETHREN OF ANTIETAM WERE PRACTICING NONRESISTANCE IN A TIME OF WAR. WHAT ARE WE CALLED TO TODAY? HOW CAN WE AVOID BEING COMPLICIT, AND HOW CAN WE BE COURAGEOUS?

commitment to peace and nonviolence that gave the Dunker church its long-lasting power as a symbol for the whole country. These are important.


But we also have challenges: For most of our years we have been soaked in the same complicity with white supremacy that is in the American DNA. We have been comfortable with the status quo. Says Jemar Tisby: “Historically speaking, when faced with the choice between racism and equality, the American church has tended to practice a *complicit* Christianity rather than a *courageous* Christianity” (p. 17).

The humble Brethren of Antietam may not have been trying to be courageous, but they certainly weren’t being complicit. They were practicing nonresistance in a time of war. What are we called to today? How can we avoid being complicit, and how can we be courageous?

We can find our instructions in Isaiah 58. These words sound as if they were written for a people still suffering the wounds of a war. They sound like a message *for this very moment*.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?
Is it not to share your bread with the hungry,
And that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;
When you see the naked, that you cover him,
And not hide yourself from your own flesh?
Then your light shall break forth like the morning,
Your healing shall spring forth speedily,
And your righteousness shall go before you;
The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.
Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer;
You shall cry, and He will say, ‘Here I am.’
If you take away the yoke from your midst,

The pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness,
If you extend your soul to the hungry
And satisfy the afflicted soul,
Then your light shall dawn in the darkness,
And your darkness shall be as the noonday.
The Lord will guide you continually,
And satisfy your soul in drought,
And strengthen your bones;
You shall be like a watered garden,
And like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail.
Those from among you
Shall build the old waste places;
You shall raise up the foundations of many generations;
And you shall be called the Repairer of the Breach,
The Restorer of Streets to Dwell In.

The *repairer of the breach*. The one who brings reparation to those who have been divided. That is what God calls us to in 2020—to be a *place for peace* that heals the *wounds of war*. 

This article is adapted from a sermon that Wendy McFadden preached for the annual Dunker Church service that commemorates the meetinghouse that bore witness to the Battle of Antietam. The service can be viewed at youtube.com/churchofthebrethren.

TO LEARN MORE

The Color of Compromise, by Jemar Tisby, Zondervan, 2019.

September Mourn: The Dunker Church of Antietam Battlefield, by Alann Schmidt and Terry Barkley, Savas Beatie, 2018.

Available from Brethren Press, brethrenpress.com.



Kansas Historical Society

Left: Potawatomi at St. Mary's Mission, Kan., in 1862. Below: Chief Crane sitting for a portrait in 1855.



Library of Congress

Complicity and accountability as disciples of Jesus

by Cliff Kindy

Eel River Community Church of the Brethren is 182 years old. The congregation first gathered in Silver Lake near North Manchester, Ind., in 1838. That is a long time ago. I was not around; neither were you.

The Trail of Death also happened in 1838. Potawatomi who were native to the Eel River region of Indiana went to Kansas on a forced march under armed escort.

The Eel River Church was on Potawatomi land. The Brethren were nonresistant so they were not part of that militia escort. But as farmers of the land, they were the beneficiaries of that forced removal.

I first learned about the Trail of Death from Rich Meyer, when we both worked with Christian Peacemaker Teams. It was after becoming a member at Eel River Community Church of the Brethren and about the time of our congregation's 175th anniversary that I made the connection: 1838 was the year of our church's starting point as well as the year of the Trail of Death.

The removal of the Potawatomi happened under the Indian Removal Act of 1830 enacted under the Andrew Jackson administration. It was carried out under the presidency of Martin Van Buren, who strongly admired what Jackson had begun. The militia under military command took more than 800 Potawatomi from their homes in August

1838. More than 40 of that group died along the march route under the extremely physically demanding conditions of a hot, dry march.

The Potawatomi were mostly Catholic. Whiskey, bribery, and force were used to get the Potawatomi chiefs to sign away their land and agree to move to Kansas, where they were falsely promised houses that would be theirs. Negative reports came back from earlier groups who had agreed to go voluntarily. Chief Menominee refused to sign, was taken into custody, and rode in a jail wagon until the caravan of exiles reached Illinois.

How shall we deal with our complicity?

Did the Brethren who first settled in the Eel River area feel that since it was others who carried out the removal, it was not their moral responsibility? Or were they unaware of the actions that made the land available for their meetinghouse and farms?

Our church is on its present site because the original inhabitants were forced to leave. This doesn't sound much like what Jesus would have done, and I don't find any gospel to back it up. "Do to others as you would have them do to you," Jesus preached in Luke 6:31. The Son of Man, sitting on his throne of glory, as written in Matthew 25, said, "Just as you did it (acts of compassion) to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

How shall we in this generation deal with our complicity in the violence against the Potawatomi? Does that event compromise the witness of our congregation today? At this distant remove from those days, what may be an appropriate response?

Exodus 22 offers direction for stolen goods or land encroached upon. Restitution (“making amends for wrong or injury done,” according to *Random House*), should be made for the infraction. “The thief shall make restitution, but if unable to do so, shall be sold for the theft” (Exodus 22:3).

In our country, we have precedence for making right a wrong done in earlier years. Japanese Americans interned in concentration camps during World War II each received \$20,000 compensation for that racial injustice, and President Reagan offered an official apology.

Discussions are ongoing as Congress considers reparations to African Americans for the slavery they endured over centuries in this country. The Black Lives Matter movement has brought this issue to the fore as it advocates for equal treatment of all people and a transformation of the racial violence by police.

But these actions tend to be at the national level. Are there ways that Eel River Community Church of the Brethren can act in the present time to make up for the Potawatomi expulsion that brought benefits for those first Brethren settlers?

A beginning action would invite Church of the Brethren Sunday school classes to learn the history of the Trail of Death. A group from Eel River should arrange to meet and hear the stories of the Potawatomi. What suggestions would they have for us?

A spiritual/physical journey has taken place about every five years to commemorate the forced journey of the Potawatomi from Indiana to Kansas. My friend Rich Meyer has been a facilitator for the commemorative march. The Eel River congregation might sponsor area youth to join that journey.

Should the land on which the church building now sits be returned to the Potawatomi? Should the Church of the Brethren pay some type of reparations, and offer an official, contrite apology to present-day Potawatomi? What about a marker that acknowledges this was once Potawatomi land taken by force?



Historical injustices can cascade

History can cascade out in ways that spread complicity with injustice. For example, in the birthplace of Christianity, a similar struggle is proceeding. The practices and laws of the Israeli government are bulldozing Palestinian homes, removing Bedouin herding families from their farmland, and, in a calculated way, diminishing the influence of Christian and Muslim Palestinians on the politics of Israel. This massive, multi-faceted injustice is taking place in front of us. Are we as Christians supporting again policies like those that enabled the injustice that benefited the early Brethren settlers, without seeing the clear moral implications?

The year 1838 was well before the Conservative/Progressive split among the Brethren that occurred in the late 1800s. Eel River Church thrived. It was a mother church for preaching points and congregations that went on after the split to become Ashland Brethren; Grace Brethren; German Baptist Brethren, Old Order; and German Baptist Brethren, New Order. They all still are represented in this part of Indiana.

Should we be inviting those faith communities to consider how their existence is complicit in this earlier injustice to the Potawatomi? If they have already grappled with this injustice, might they be able to move us more faithfully along the Way of Jesus?

How can we assure accountability?

One way to make amends for a wrong is to make sure such an act never happens again. The “seventh generation” guideline may help set us on that course.

In the case of Eel River Church, it might be fitting to commit as a congregation to adapt our decision-making to a “seventh generation” guideline. Native peoples often condition their actions on the guideline of how those actions will affect the seventh generation. Do my farming practices maintain the land sustainably so that, seven generations into the future, farming will still be a viable occupational choice? Will the water and the air be cleaner than they are presently, seven generations from now? Will our social interactions and legal structures provide the justice and equity required for fairness among different groups, seven generations later?

Choosing to live under a seventh-generation guideline may be an appropriate recognition of the Potawatomi who were here before we were.

If you were in my shoes, how would you respond to this moral conundrum? How would you want your congregation to respond?

Cliff Kindy is a member of Eel River Community Church of the Brethren in Silver Lake, Ind., and an organic farmer in the area of North Manchester, Ind. He received assistance with this article from Andrew Wolfe of Huntington (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. Kindy is a longterm participant in Christian Peacemaker Teams and has worked with CPT in a variety of locations including Iraq and the city of Hebron in the West Bank of Israel and Palestine.



IT IS TIME TO END THE MILITARY DRAFT —ONCE AND FOR ALL

An update on proposed legislation related to Selective Service and the draft

by Maria Santelli and Bill Galvin

When the new Congress convenes in January 2021, there will be no proposed legislation until members introduce new bills. However, there are currently several bills before Congress that relate to the Selective Service System and military draft, and it is likely they will be reintroduced in the new Congress.

Most significantly, a bipartisan bill (HR 5492) was introduced in December 2019 that would repeal the Selective Service Act, end the penalties imposed on those who do not register for the draft, and ensure that the rights of conscientious objectors be protected. This legislation would be the best way to protect the rights of conscientious objectors, and the Center on Conscience and War believes it is worthy of support.

While similar legislation has been proposed in the past (and almost passed in 1999), the military draft is now

receiving more attention in Congress than it has in decades. That's because Congress is now debating whether or not to extend the burden of the draft and draft registration to women. In 2013, the Pentagon ended the “combat exclusion” for women, raising questions about the current validity of a 1981 Supreme Court ruling upholding the male-only draft as constitutional. Women were barred from combat jobs in the military at that time, but with the policy changed, the possibility of drafting women is now on the table.

Like so much in Congress these days, the issue is divisive. In 2016, after failing to agree on a course of action—to draft or not to draft women—Congress created the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service. The commission was charged with conducting “a review of the military selective service process (commonly referred to as ‘the draft’); . . . the commission shall consider the

need for a military selective service process . . . without regard to age or sex” (NDAA, FY 2017).

On March 25 this year, the commission issued its final report, which called for expanding draft registration to include women. Two days later, HR 6415 was introduced by a bipartisan group of eight cosponsors. It is exactly—almost verbatim, section by section—what the commission recommended in its final report. While much of the bill discusses voluntary service programs and civic education initiatives, it also would expand draft registration to include women and require that the Selective Service System implement mobilization exercises to ensure that they are ready to draft large numbers of people. The bill also would require the process of registration to be more active, reflecting the serious nature of the act of registering to become fodder for war. Currently, the vast majority of young men who

register do so passively, through applications for driver's licenses or student financial aid, circumventing the opportunity for personal discernment on issues of conscience and war.

In our communications with the commission during its three-year process, the Center on Conscience and War emphasized many things—above all, of course, protections for conscientious objectors. While the commission rejected most of what we recommended, including a conscientious objector “check-off box” at the time of registration, they did seem to understand our concerns about the extrajudicial, unconstitutional, lifelong penalties imposed upon nonregistrants. The current regulations state that once someone turns 26 years old, they are no longer allowed to register. Current laws passed by Congress and many states prohibit those who haven't registered for the draft from receiving financial aid or a job with a federal executive agency or state agency. Many states also withhold driver's licenses and state IDs. In an effort to remedy this injustice, a provision of HR 6415, based on the commission's recommendation, would allow someone of any age to register in order to have these penalties overturned.

There is one other piece of legislation related to the draft: Rep. Sheila Jackson Lee introduced HR 5945, which would update registration records (i.e. eliminating names of people who have died) and expunge nonviolent offenses of those who are drafted once they are inducted into the military.

There has been no action on any of these bills other than being referred to committee, standard procedure for every bill introduced in Congress. However, Rep. Jackie Speier, chair of the Military Personnel Subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, has promised to hold hearings next year on the issue of drafting women.

While HR 6415 is unlikely to pass as introduced, it is likely that it will be broken up and parts of it may pass, particu-

BURGLAR FOR PEACE

*An excerpt from **Burglar for Peace: Lessons Learned in the Catholic Left's Resistance to the Vietnam War***

by Ted Glick

“The only type of true revolution which will come in this society will be as a result of a change from the bottom of society, not from the top. If I spend two more years in college, more people will continue to go along with things as they are, and more lives will be ruined by service in the armed forces. I must spend the two years helping get men out of the armed forces, changing minds and attitudes and organizing groups to combat what is wrong.”

—Letter to my mother, February 1969

And so I left Grinnell College, never to return to college again as a student.

Somehow a job had been lined up for me to spend eight weeks in the summer traveling through Ohio and Pennsylvania going to Church of the Brethren summer camps for young people as a peace counselor. But before that job began, I attended a national conference of the church in Louisville, Ky.


A week or two before I left my parents' home in upstate New York for Louisville, I received another draft card from my draft board—a 1-A card, meaning I was liable to be inducted at any time. I decided that it would be a good action to burn it at the Louisville conference.

There was a peace grouping within the church, the Brethren Peace Fellowship, and when I arrived in Louisville I told them about my desire to burn the card. To their credit, all of them, young people and older, long-time members of the church, were positive about the idea. And so in front of 2,000 or more people one afternoon in late June 1969, I was brought up onto the stage by one of the BPF members, Dale Brown, who gave over his speaking time to me.

I began by telling those listening what I was planning to do, and invited anybody who wanted to support this action to come and stand with me up on stage. About 60 or 70 did; at least 100, maybe 200 went the other way, walking out of the auditorium to register their opinion about what I was about to do.

After I did the deed, I walked off the stage. I wondered if a law enforcement official was going to come and arrest me, but it didn't happen, not then, not while I was in Louisville, and not after I left and did my peace counselor traveling for the rest of the summer.



larly extending the draft to woman. It is our sincere hope this does not occur. Instead, we think it is time to end the military draft—once and for all. 

Maria Santelli is executive director and Bill Galvin is counseling director for the Center on Conscience and War, a nonprofit organization

that advocates for the rights of conscience, opposes military conscription, and serves conscientious objectors. CCW was started in 1940 by the historic peace churches including the Church of the Brethren. Previously known as NSBRO (National Service Board for Religious Objectors) and NISBCO (National Interreligious Service Board for Conscientious Objectors), CCW is celebrating its 80th anniversary in 2020.

Our origin stories

What culture are we?” my daughter asked in second grade, explaining that she had to dress up as “her culture” for school. I explained that our families had been in the US since before the time of her great-great-grandparents. We wear blue jeans. We have traditions like eating turkey and cranberry sauce at Thanksgiving, decorating a Christmas tree, and celebrating birthdays with cake.



JAN FISCHER BACHMAN

“That’s not a culture,” she said, annoyed. “That’s *normal*.”

When unaware that we do, indeed, have a culture, we conflict with others. I think of the young woman in Mexico I tried to encourage to keep working toward her dream job. “You are so *American*,” she told me in frustration.

“You think anyone can do anything. It’s *not like that!*”

I think of my family’s two years living in The Gambia. We learned enough before going to know that we had a social obligation to hire people, something alien and almost offensive in our “do-it-myself” upbringing. How do you feel hearing that I had a full-time housekeeper and a gardener? Your reaction grows out of your culture and experiences.

Around the corner from our Gambian house, a neighbor sold fried dough balls, “pankeet”; our housekeeper regularly bought some. Yes, she could have brought breakfast from home; it would have been thrifty—but she knew that our neighbor needed to make a living.

In *Native*, author Kaitlin B. Curtice writes of her journey to discover her identity as a Potawatomi woman, having been raised primarily as a white Southern Baptist. She challenges us to examine our own origin stories, the narratives we believe about our country, and the versions of Christianity that we practice—which often have excluded and condemned those who are different.

Her work to decolonize Christianity can be challenging and uncomfortable. For instance, she writes, “In Western

thought, fear and a mentality of scarcity distort our reality. This makes everything an enemy. . . .”

How has a “mentality of scarcity” affected my life, my community of believers, our denomination?

Thanksgiving to Curtice “is a time of confusion and mourning . . . The myths told at Thanksgiving only continue the toxic stereotypes and hateful language that has always been spewed at us.”

These words are hard for me to hear. Thanksgiving is one of my favorite holidays, one of the least-commercialized and purely, to me, about gratitude and sharing. But through listening to her stories, I know that I need to do something different this year, in acknowledgment of this reality. This is part of what Curtice describes as “the hard work of brushing up against the stories of others . . . to ask us difficult questions of ourselves.”

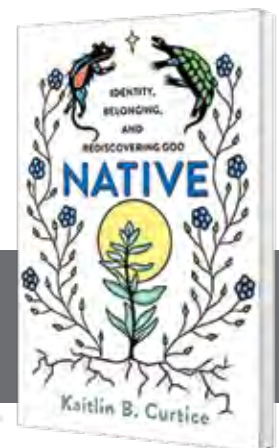
More hard words that many of us face: “Recognizing that the church is both full of beautiful people and yet terribly broken is a truth I have to reckon with.”

Curtice offers gracefully phrased suggestions for action:

What does it look like to return, again and again, to the voice of Mystery in our lives? Perhaps it looks like building relationships with people who are not like us. Perhaps it requires following people on social media who come from different racial or religious backgrounds. Perhaps it means letting the earth speak and taking the time to listen. It always means asking how we can become people who love better.

Curtice concludes with something of a benediction: “As we go, let’s pray into the world what we believe is possible.”

Reading *Native* will challenge and possibly even annoy you. But it also will help you “find a depth of God we could not have known existed.”



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Native: Identity, Belonging, and Rediscovering God*. **Author:** Kaitlin B. Curtice. **Publisher:** Brazos Press, 2020. Available at Brethrenpress.com.

To be a tree

by Ken Gible

*“In the year of drought
a tree planted by the water
is not anxious.”*

—Jeremiah 17:8

I would be that tree, “sending
out roots by the stream.”


This indeed is drought time
—lethargy, fatigue, no sense of purpose.

“Expect a long, slow recuperation,” they warned.
My expectations have been sadly exceeded.

And yet my roots go wide and deep.
Seven decades of living, learning, loving.

Whittier’s words, memorized painlessly
in a hymn learned early, sustain me.

“Dews of quietness . . . coolness, balm”
they pray in me and for me.

“In simple trust,” the poet says.
I would be that tree, anxious free. 

Ken Gible is a writer and retired Church of the
Brethren pastor living in Camp Hill, Pa.

Paths of justice and peace

Two stories

by Gail Erisman Valeta

Where did we find our sense of justice? Who taught us the Christian values that we profess? When I speak with members of my congregation, I learn how others came to value justice and peacemaking.

They don't have any power over you

One such member is Algetha Brown, who grew up in Richmond, Ind., years before Bethany Theological Seminary found its current home there. She moved there after her father passed away, and her mother, a nurse, raised her and her sisters and brother, as well as making a living for the family. Brown found Richmond as a place where neighbors all knew one another and looked out for her and her siblings when her mother was busy at work.

Growing up in this town greatly influenced by Quakers had many benefits, including knowing the police officers as friends. On the other hand, things were not always free of racist treatment.

When racist comments or behaviors occurred, Brown would bring them to her mother, Julia Fluellyn Whitehead,

who would say, "It's only words. Do you believe what they're saying? So, whatcha going to do? They don't have any power over you."



Similarly, I've been reading the compilation of Howard Thurman's writings, *For the Inward Journey: The Writings of Howard Thurman*, published by Friends United Meeting in Richmond. Thurman, who was a mentor to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., was raised by a grandmother who was born a slave and lived until the Civil War on a plantation near Madison, Fla. She knew that the slave owners and their descendants wanted their racism to keep people living in fear and inaction. She knew that Jesus had an alternative: Don't give them the power. "Deception is perhaps the oldest of all the techniques by

which the weak have protected themselves against the strong, by fooling the strong" (p. 152).

When Brown first came to Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., she came as a guest to bring special music. After attending only one time she felt at home, as she had in her church home back in Richmond.

Brown started singing gospel music as a teen in her church, and never stopped. She made a record with other

THAT EVENTUALLY LED TO HER BEING ON STAFF FOR SEVEN YEARS WITH ROBERT SCHULLER, PASTOR OF THE CRYSTAL CATHEDRAL AND TELEVISION EVANGELIST. SHE TRAVELED THE WORLD TO SHARE HER CHRISTIAN VALUES IN HER MUSIC.

AVENT IS NOT DONE YET. THERE IS A NEW POOR PEOPLE'S CAMPAIGN . . . THERE IS THE JOHN LEWIS "GOOD TROUBLE" INITIATIVE STARTING AT HER CONGREGATION. SHE IS CARRYING ON THE JOURNEY TOWARD THE BELOVED COMMUNITY.

gospel singers who helped launch her music career as a traveling artist. She sang in churches across the United States, met her husband, became a wife and a mother living on and singing at military bases, and then sang with the USO to entertain members of the military.

That eventually led to her being on staff for seven years with Robert Schuller, pastor of the Crystal Cathedral and television evangelist. She traveled the world to share her Christian values in her music.

When life brought her to Denver and her friend, Marsha Whitaker, brought Brown as a guest musician to Prince of Peace, we and the Church of the Brethren gained a sister in Christ and a woman who has shown us the way with her message, her wisdom, and her songs.

Carrying on the journey toward the 'Beloved Community'

Barbara Avent is another church member from whom we have gained much. Like Ambassador Andrew Young, who spoke for a recent Moderator's Town Hall, Avent has taught us that the path forward to the "Beloved Community" means addressing the triple evils of poverty, racism, and militarism.

In high school, Avent attended Mt. Bethel Baptist Church in Glen Rock, N.J., during the Civil Rights freedom movement. Her pastor, Rev. James Howell, helped found the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) after he was selected to be one of several Black ministers personally trained by Dr. King. This was in 1968, and she was recruited to be the founding secretary for the SCLC's Glen Rock/Ridgewood Chapter.


Avent said, "Most of my life, I have advocated for social justice issues as a community activist wherever I have lived. My mother Rena and grandmother Essie Jefferson are my role models, for they worked for justice and peace as leaders in the Neighborhood Club, with Black and white folks working to create a better community."

Later on, Rev. Howell organized a bus ride to go to the 1968 Poor People's Campaign in Washington, D.C. The participants attending the march demonstrated to bring awareness to inequity; there was so much "Poverty in the Land of Affluence, USA." This protest included Resurrection City, where poor folks from Appalachia, inner cities, rural towns, Native American reservations, and migrant Latina workers all came to D.C. to participate—putting faces, names, and racial identities to people impacted by poverty. The goal of the march was that the federal government would formulate a plan to help address the unemployment and housing problems of the poor.

Avent's life work has included teaching diversity skills in the corporate world at USWest/Qwest, as well as working at Adams 12 Five Star School District, as adjunct professor at UC Denver, working for the Unitarian Universalist Church to help address racism, and then joining the Church of the Brethren, where she found a justice and peace home.

She was introduced to the Church of the Brethren as a seminary student working at Iliff School of Theology's

Justice and Peace Studies Office. She served a term as a board member for On Earth Peace. She also helped bring "Pizza and Peacemaking" (Agape Satyagraha training from On Earth Peace) into a local high school to help students learn peacemaking skills. She shared her expertise in overcoming racism in a Ventures webinar course in 2019, and then helped lead an insight session at Western Plains District Conference called "Welcoming Racial Diversity in the Church."

Avent is not done yet. There is a new Poor People's Campaign with leadership from co-chairs Liz Theoharis and Rev. Dr. William Barber II. There is the John Lewis "Good Trouble" Initiative starting at her congregation. She is carrying on the journey toward the Beloved Community. 



Gail Erisman Valeta is pastor at Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., and lives in Denver with her spouse, David Valeta. She served for 12 years as associate coordinator of Justice and Peace Studies at Iliff School of Theology in Denver, where Barbara Avent served as student assistant.

THE MAD MORALITY AT 50

Still uncomfortably current

by Frank Ramirez

Vernard Eller (1927-2007), a preacher, dedicated church worker, and professor of religion at La Verne (Calif.) College—now the University of La Verne—also was a prolific author. His thoughtful, sharp, and pointed prose cut an uncomfortable swath through comfortable preconceptions on both the right and the left, entertaining while educating. Titles such as *The Sex Manual for Puritans*, *King Jesus: A Manual of Arms for the Armless*, *The Simple Life: The Christian Stance Toward Possessions*, and *The Most Revealing Book of the Bible: Making Sense out of Revelation*, were arresting, convicting, convincing, charming, at times alarming, and always readable. He had a great influence on Christian thought both within and beyond Brethren circles.

He was also a very funny guy. He understood that humor, far from being frivolous, provides rueful perspective and a lens of truth.

Eller helped us students (full disclosure: I'm a La Verne grad, '76) see the humor in the parables of Jesus, the prophetic utterances, and the narratives of the Hebrew scriptures. One of his best bits was retelling the story of Esther to his Old Testament classes, as a melodrama set in the Old West complete with cheers and boos. It was not only hilarious, but also biblically and historically coherent. Esther is read aloud during the Jewish feast of Purim, and people cheer and boo.

So it should come as no surprise that Eller wrote a book defending the Ten Commandments to late 20th century culture, illustrated by the leading satiric publication of the day, *MAD Magazine*.

MAD Magazine, featuring the iconic Alfred E. Neuman grinning gap-toothed at the reader above his motto, "What, Me Worry?" poked holes in the pretensions of Hollywood,

Broadway, best-sellers, false prophets, liberals, conservatives, politicians, gurus, religious frauds, racists, the culture, the counterculture, the young, the middle-aged, the elderly—everybody.

Eller was a popular leader at Brethren camps in California, Oregon, Washington, and Idaho. According to his spouse, Phyllis Eller, one year "Vernard was asked to be director at Family Camp at Peaceful Pines in northern California." She recalls that year Eller, who normally was popular with all ages, had trouble keeping the attention of the youth. He discovered they were all reading *MAD*. "So he invited them to bring the magazines to the next session. He felt it was a very productive session. He was able to adapt to the interests of the students and engage them in a way they hadn't expected and he hadn't expected."

The book that resulted, which Eller called *The Mad Morality*, almost ended before it began. She described how the windows of the cabins at Peaceful Pines swung out.

Eller was so intent on reading the magazines while he walked around camp that "he nearly killed himself running (into a window). When he got excited, he got excited."

Once the family was back home in La Verne, Eller couldn't be stopped. His daughter Rosanna McFadden, now pastor of Creekside Church of the Brethren in Elkhart, Ind., recalled there were copies of *MAD Magazine* scattered around the house. Around seven years old at the time, she admitted, "I didn't get all of the satire, but that was something to hang out and read."

Her brother Enten Eller, a team pastor at Ambler (Pa.) Church of the Brethren and Living Stream Church of the Brethren and owner/senior consultant at Eller Computer Services, described his father's "editor scissors, cutting out



Vernard Eller in 1979

cartoons that he liked. We kids got to read the leftovers after he trimmed through stuff.”

Having the magazines scattered through the house had a lasting effect on one member of the family. Vernard’s son Sander Eller remembered with laughter and only half-kid-dingly, “I read all the *MAD* Magazines while he was trying to find examples for his book. It corrupted me for the rest of my life.”

In some ways the match between Eller and *MAD Magazine* was a natural. “Dad—and I mean this in the best way possible—definitely had an irreverent side,” McFadden said. “He had an appreciation for satire, and he was interested in redeeming it.”

Eller recognized *MAD*’s severe morality underlying the laughter. In the 1960s hypocrisy was rife on both sides of the cultural divide. In an era when people said anything goes, Eller’s commentary interspersed among the satiric comic strips made it clear that if the Ten Commandments seemed to some like nothing but a series of depressing “no-nos,” they were really creating boundaries that made life richer, healthier, and better. “*MAD Magazine*,” he wrote, “shows at least something of the same understanding of freedom that the Ten Commandments do.” Many so-called freedoms in our society actually led to slavery, Eller insisted. “*MAD*’s satire would not come off as successfully as it does were it not coming close to the truth about the falsity which it ridicules. Satire succeeds only when it carries a good-sized load of truth.”

The Mad Morality was an immediate success. It sold well, was named one of the five paperbacks Protestants were reading in 1970 by the *Christian Herald*, and was praised in a 1983 *Newsweek* article as “one of the magazine’s proudest moments.”

Fifty years later, as I read both the examples from *Mad* and Eller’s commentary, a few things felt dated but much of it seemed uncomfortably current. There is an illustrated Ten Commandments in which “Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain” is illustrated with a photo of white supremacists wielding a sign saying, “God bless, among others, George Wallace, Lester Maddox, and

Strom Thurmond”; “Remember the Sabbath and keep it holy” features a trio of golfers; “Thou shalt not steal” shows a photograph of an IRS Form 1040; and a picture of Senator Joe McCarthy illustrates “Thou shalt not bear witness against thy neighbor.”

Then there’s the brutally cringeworthy comic strip featuring three male teens cruelly body shaming three young women for their facial features and weight. But the tables are turned when the scene shifts to emphasize male double standards. The three boys look the same as the girls.

The book was “certainly his most successful from a publishing perspective,” Enten Eller noted. “It did well because this was his kind of humor. Even if it wasn’t his own, he certainly curated it to make a powerful theological point.” In addition, he continued, “it was so good for him. He really appreciated that popularity and success. He wrote it for the common people. He never reached the popularity shelf, except on this one.”

McFadden chuckled as she recalled, “When Dad passed away in 2007, an article in the local paper highlighted his academic contributions and noted *The Mad Morality*. I think that was appropriate. It ends up being a very effective shorthand for talking about my father and his approach to theology, which was a little unconventional, and his sense of humor and how those things came together in his work.”

This year 2020 is such a tumultuous womper-jog year that some 50th anniversary observances, such as that of the film and album *Let It Be* by the Beatles, have been postponed. In the case of the Golden Anniversary of Vernard Eller’s most successful book, there’s no reason you can’t hunt for a copy in your church library, or maybe your own shelves, and reread it. [Z](#)

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



Honesty

by Kayla Alphonse

This year MESSENGER is focusing its Bible studies on 10 words that rose to the top during church-wide conversations toward a compelling vision. Watch for a new word each month.

“Honesty is more than not lying. It is truth telling, truth speaking, truth living, and truth loving.” —James E. Faust

To be honest, honesty has become harder for me as I’ve grown older. In elementary school, all my teachers would say, “Honesty is the best policy.” My Sunday school teachers every year emphasized the ninth commandment: “Thou shall not bear false witness” (Exodus 20:16 NKJV). This indoctrination’s effect on my childhood was to grant me permission to say what I was thinking and how I felt *all the time* without much regard for the person I was talking to, the tone I used, or the nature of the situation.

Since being honest in all situations was prized in these important institutions as the mark of a person with great integrity, I figured that my abrasive

truth-telling—“just telling it like it is”—meant I was a good person. *I* wasn’t like Pinocchio! (Well, to be truthful, at least most of the time I wasn’t like Pinocchio. If I absolutely had to tell a lie or use deceit, I was thankful that my lies weren’t exposed with an involuntary reaction from my body.)

Around middle school, learning about being nice and using tact took away the bite of the unfiltered candor of my youth. I developed tact over time. I learned how to consider my words and tone, and their appropriateness for the context in which I found myself. This skill enabled me to navigate conversations with diverse groups of people, for which I feel blessed.

But alongside the blessing afforded me with this skill came a problem. The unintentional side effect of tact is its potential to blur the lines of authenticity for the sake of appeasing

others. There were moments when my message got lost while being diplomatic, leaving me to wonder later, “Was that me?”

At school or at work, plenty of interactions involved pieces of authenticity being sacrificed so as not to offend another person. Other encounters encouraged me to present my best self, even if I wasn’t at my best (yet), so that people could relate to me and walk away thinking, “That’s a good person!”

So in light of my own experience, I can understand Ananias and Sapphira. Their story is found in Acts 5. This couple has been imprinted in Bible history as greedy and evil, but I think it’s too easy to caricature them in this way. We miss something important from their lives if we avoid seeing our humanity in their story. The better way to view this couple is to see them as

one of us—to see ourselves as Ananias and Sapphira.

Both Ananias and Sapphira wanted to show their fellow believers their best selves—their most generous selves. Following the example set by Barnabas (Acts 4:37) and others, Ananias sold his land with the intention that he would give money from the sale to the apostles, who would then distribute it for anyone who had need. Before Ananias offered the money from the sale, there was an understanding between him and his wife, Sapphira, that part of the profit would be withheld for themselves.

While we don't know whether this understanding was spoken or implied, we do know that Ananias went along with the pretense that his offering included *all* the profits he received from the sale of his land. But he only laid a portion of the profits from the sale as an offering at the apostles' feet.

Despite Ananias' gesture of deference, Peter called him out for his deceitfulness. Pay attention to this: Ananias wasn't rebuked for how much he gave or withheld. Peter called Ananias out for the deceptive front he put on before the assembly. Peter reminded Ananias that nobody forced him to sell his land; he chose to do it. No one demanded that he give all his profits to the apostles; he was free to stand by his choice to withhold a portion of the profits for his household. Peter asked Ananias why he would be deceitful and informed him that he lied to God when he chose to lie to his fellow believers.

When Peter later asked Sapphira about the offering, Sapphira continued the pretense by saying that the money offered was indeed all the profits from

the sale of the land.

Ananias and Sapphira each fell down and died after they were confronted with their deceit. Again, their sin was not in keeping a portion of their profits. Their sin was that they weren't honest. They withheld honesty before God to gain approval from their peers. God, who hates deceit (Proverbs 6:17), would have been honored with their honest offering even if fellow believers would have been less than impressed because they didn't give everything. The natural desire for a favorable assessment from our peers can rob us of experiencing the freedom of being genuine before God every time we lean toward deceit.

When we lie, we die. Not literally, perhaps, but when authenticity is sacrificed a part of us is struck dead, even if we're not caught in our deceit. The Spirit of God is quenched within us because God hates lies, even well-intentioned ones. Though there are biblical stories in which deceit seems to be interpreted in a favorable light, God—who is righteous—declares hatred toward lying. That's part of the nature of God we all inherited, because we hate lies, too—except perhaps when they benefit us through approval or material gain.

If we're honest, we know we need God's grace every day to be authentic in our living. None of us wants to assume a reputation of holiness without living the reality of it. We desire honesty because honesty leads us to the truth that sets us free: You're a mess, and so am I. Don't be offended; I'm just telling it like it is! 1 John 1 reminds us we must be honest about ourselves. If we claim to be without fault (sin), we deceive ourselves, and

the truth is not in us (v. 8).


Yet it is by grace that we are saved, and this is not from ourselves, it is the gift of God (Ephesians 2:8). Thanks be to God! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, we can live honest lives and overcome the lure to aggrandize ourselves or appease others. By remaining honest about ourselves before God, we can stand firm in our authenticity before others.

If Ananias and Sapphira were honest, they would have acknowledged that their offering was what they were willing and able to give cheerfully. Their offering would still be acceptable before God and others, even if it didn't measure up to Barnabas' level of generosity. Their lives would not have been cut short and infamized in scandal.

Consider these words from Francesca Battistelli's song "If we're honest":

*Truth is harder than a lie
The dark seems safer than the light
And everyone has a heart that loves
to hide . . .*

*Bring your brokenness, and
I'll bring mine . . .
'Cause love can heal what hurt divides
And mercy's waiting on the other side
If we're honest
If we're honest*

May we learn from Ananias and Sapphira and renew our commitment to live honestly before God and humanity. 

Kayla Alphonse is pastor of Miami First Church of the Brethren in Atlantic Southeast District, a member of Annual Conference Standing Committee, and serves on the Church of the Brethren's Compelling Vision Process Team. She and her husband, Ilexene, have also done work with L'Eglise des Freres Haitiens (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti).

**YOU'RE A MESS, AND SO AM I. DON'T BE OFFENDED; I'M JUST TELLING IT LIKE IT IS!
1 JOHN 1 REMINDS US WE MUST BE HONEST ABOUT OURSELVES. IF WE CLAIM TO
BE WITHOUT FAULT, WE DECEIVE OURSELVES AND THE TRUTH IS NOT IN US.**



Bless the creation and its creatures

by Frances Townsend

Some folks in Onekama (Mich.) Church of the Brethren still remember Dirk and the day he came to worship a good 50 years back. When Johnny Green came to Sunday school, Dirk would always hang around outside the church to wait for him. But one day, pastor Dick Ward invited him inside. Dirk went all the way to the front, right up beside the pulpit, and listened contentedly to the sermon on faithfulness. That chubby mongrel rescued from the pound did enjoy good preaching.


They usually do not make their way into the church building, let alone into the church records, but animals are very much a part of the lives of many congregations. For congregations holding Zoom meetings during this pandemic, it is more apparent than ever. One person's cat jumps up into camera range and then there is a "time out" as everyone else shows their cat or dog to the group.

We rejoice when people get a new pet and sympathize when one dies. Sometimes the Sunday morning prayer requests include sick animal companions. As pastor, I once accompanied a member of the church to the veterinarian when she had to have her beloved dog put to sleep. The dog may not have needed prayer, but the woman certainly did.

All of us have heard stories about dogs or cats who sense when their human is sick or troubled and do what they can to comfort their person. Dogs bark when strangers approach the house, and although cats are not so obviously protective, some owners report their cats will alert them as well.

Last fall, Elaine Foster from the Onekama congregation had the difficult task of leaving the home her father had built and moving downstate to a condo to be closer to her children. But what to do with the cat, especially since extended family members are allergic to cats? Pleas were made in church for many Sundays asking if someone could make a home for him. One Sunday morning, the thought came to me that she was going to need the cat, and this is why re-homing was not happening. God knew the need better than we did. When the pandemic lockdown started in March, Elaine was so glad the cat had made the move with her and was there to keep her company.

There are passages of scripture such as Psalm 148 and Job 38-41 that show God has a relationship with animals that does not depend on their utility to humans. Romans 8:19 speaks of the creation waiting for the children of God to be revealed and bring healing to creation itself. Maybe this means that as we become more Christ-like, we will tend and bless the creation and its animals and plants and other living beings as God did, loving every creature while walking in the Garden of Eden in the cool of the evening.

More and more churches now hold an annual pet blessing Sunday. And why not? The animals have blessed us, so we also ought to seek God's blessing for them. 

Frances Townsend is a pastor in Michigan serving Onekama Church of the Brethren and Marilla Church of the Brethren.

MAYBE THIS MEANS THAT AS WE BECOME MORE CHRIST-LIKE, WE WILL TEND AND BLESS THE CREATION AND ITS ANIMALS AND PLANTS AND OTHER LIVING BEINGS AS GOD DID.

Pastors receive letter of support

The Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee in early October sent a letter of encouragement to pastors and credentialed ministers across the Church of the Brethren.

Citing Isaiah 40:28-31, the letter listed many of the reasons people may become weary or discouraged during the pandemic and a time of conflict in the church, but praised God for each ministering person. The letter raised the ministers up in prayer and included helpful information for those facing serious financial hardships.

“We praise God for the love and care that each ministering person has brought to her or his calling in these past few months,” the letter said, in part. “We raise our prayers for you, trusting that God will strengthen you when you feel powerless, sustain you when you are overwhelmed, and lead you as you shepherd God’s people.”

The committee includes Beth Cage, Ray Flagg, Daniel Rudy, Deb Oskin, Terry Grove, and Nancy Sollenberger Heishman as director of the Office of Ministry.

Global Mission and Service Ministries split in two

The Church of the Brethren’s Global Mission and Service Department has been separated into two departments: Global Mission and Service Ministries.

Roy Winter, who had been associate executive director of Global Mission and Service and Brethren Disaster Ministries, will provide oversight for Service Ministries as executive director. The following will be shifted under the new area: Brethren Disaster Ministries, Brethren Volunteer Service, Children’s Disaster Services, the Emergency Disaster Fund, Material Resources, and the Workcamp Ministry.

Carol and Norm Waggy continue as interim directors of Global Mission while applicants are interviewed for the fulltime position.

Children’s Disaster Services exceeds goal

Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) has exceeded its goal of 2,500 Individual Kits of Comfort to provide to children affected by disasters this year.

After an appeal for donations of 2,500 kits by the end of September, CDS associate director Lisa Crouch announced that donors exceeded that goal by several hundred.

CDS has deployed the kits through a partnership with the Red Cross. Recipients have included children and families affected by storms in the Gulf, flooding in Missouri, and multiple wildfires in northern California.

The Red Cross also connected CDS with Partnership with Native Americans (PWNA), which is receiving 1,000 kits. This supports children living on Native American reservations in the western US that have been badly affected by COVID-19.



Volunteers at Mount Morris (Ill.) Church of the Brethren complete Individual Kits of Comfort for Children's Disaster Services.

Jan Dierckx

Major grants start hurricane rebuilding in Carolinas, aid Beirut

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed recent major grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to hurricane rebuilding in North Carolina and relief work following the port explosion in Beirut, Lebanon.

A grant of \$32,500 financed the start of a new Brethren Disaster Ministries rebuilding project follow-

ing Hurricane Florence, which hit North Carolina on Sept. 14, 2018. The rebuilding site is in Pamlico County, where more than 200 families have not yet completely recovered.

A grant of \$25,000 supported the work of the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development (LSESD) following the massive port explosion in Beirut on Aug. 4. The

grant will help pay for housing and medical care for about 40 families whose homes were destroyed; food vouchers for about 1,000 households; non-food items for about 1,250 households; emergency hygiene kits for about 1,000 households affected by the blast and 4,000 households at risk due to the pandemic; and psychosocial support for traumatized children.

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courtesy of David Nyozemba

Bananas arrive at THARS' Farming in God's Way Festival.

Global Food Initiative aids Brethren groups

The Global Food Initiative (GFI) has aided Brethren groups in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi, and a former Brethren mission organization in Ecuador, among grants given since mid-year.

A GFI grant of \$7,500 supported the Seed Projects of Eglise des Freres du Congo (the Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo or DRC)—the result of a series of Transformation Tree trainings provided to the deacons of the church by World Relief. The trainings challenged participants to start small outreach projects to serve the needs of the most vulnerable in their communities.

A grant of \$7,500 supported farmer training in Burundi carried out by THARS, a Brethren-related organization. As of August, THARS reported that 552 farmers with an average of 7 people in each household, representing at least 3,864 people, are benefitting.

A grant of \$11,000 supported the agricultural work of La Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU—the United and Brethren Foundation) in Ecuador. The grant will help purchase two heifers to increase milk production in the small dairy herd on the farm, and formation of a micro-company oriented to production of organic fruits and vegetables.

EYN Pastor's Manual translated into Kiswahili

When the global Brethren event was held last November in Nigeria, leaders from Eglise des Freres au Congo (the Church of the Brethren in the Democratic Republic of Congo or DRC) came across the *EYN Pastor's Manual*.

The manual was in English and not usable by most Congo pastors. The Congolese Brethren requested assistance for translating the book into the Kiswahili (Swahili) language in February when Chris Elliott and Galen Hackman traveled from the United States to the DRC.

Lewis Ponga Umbe of the Congo church translated the manual. Pastor Bwambale Sedrack of the Kiswahili-speaking Brethren in Uganda evaluated the translation and had it printed. Copies are going to pastors in Uganda and the DRC. A few will go to the Brethren in Burundi and Rwanda where, although Kiswahili is not the primary language, they are familiar enough with it for the book to be useful. Southern Pennsylvania District provided funds for translation, printing, and shipping.



courtesy of Chris Elliott

Lewis Ponga Umbe (left), who translated the EYN Pastor's Manual into Kiswahili, celebrates the new book with pastor Ron Lubungo of Eglise des Freres au Congo.

Personnel notes

Marty Barlow will fill the unexpired term of **John Mueller** on the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board. Mueller has resigned from the board for personal reasons. Barlow was appointed to serve through Annual Conference 2021. She is a member of Montezuma Church of the Brethren in Dayton, Va., and is district moderator for Shenandoah District. She is retired as a professional counselor.

Richard Rose has been named to the board of trustees of Bethany Seminary to serve a five-year term as an at-large member. He is department chair and program director for the Ecumenical Center for Black Church Studies at the University of La Verne, Calif. **John Flora** is serving a second five-year term as an at-large member. **Chris Bowman** is extending his service by another year, pending election at Annual Conference 2021. Under normal circumstances, these board members

would have been elected or affirmed by the 2020 Annual Conference.

Naomi Yilma has begun as associate in the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C., through Brethren Volunteer Service. She is a graduate of Manchester (Ind.) University originally from Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich has been appointed program director for Camp Pine Lake in Northern Plains District. She is a lifelong member and ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren with extensive experience at various Brethren camps. On the denominational level, she has become known for leading the work toward a compelling vision.

Ron Wedel has been named Church Services Agent for the Mutual Aid Agency, a Church of the Brethren-related insurance agency. He will work with the agency's commercial church-related accounts.

That song just sings itself (or does it?)

That song just sings itself.” During her more than 50 years as a choir director and public-school music teacher, my mother often observed this about a particular hymn or choral piece of music. Some songs indeed just sing themselves and bring deep joy to the singers and hearers.

However, these days many singers find themselves



NANCY
SOLLENBERGER
HEISHMAN

unable to sing beloved songs written by composers whose abusive behavior has come to light, calling into question the appropriateness of further use of their works. Such is the case of well-known composer David Haas, recently accused by more than 40 women of sexually abusive behavior over decades.

Many Brethren have appreciated Haas’ hymn “Blest are they” as a testament to the treasured qualities of the vulnerable described in the Beatitudes. Qualities such as meekness, mercy, peacemaking, righteousness, and purity of heart are heralded in Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Tragically, though, statistics reveal that in a typical congregation the vulnerable among us—one out of every five women and girls—will have suffered some form of sexual violence during her life. Out of respect for them and the pain that would be triggered by singing a song composed by an alleged abuser, I won’t be using this song in worship anymore.

It is understandable that much debate surrounds this important question. Worship planners struggle with the dilemma of such a complex decision while acknowledging that preferential consideration must be shown to survivors.

The recent publication “Show Strength: How to Respond When Worship Materials Are Implicated in Abuse” comments:


Because both sexual trauma and worship are deeply ingrained in the human body, songs and prayers with connections to abuse or perpetrators may retraumatize people. Experiencing such songs or prayers in worship can cause survivors to relive violent memories—mentally, emotionally, and physically. Continuing to

worship with these songs and prayers may also demonstrate that the violence is not understood or cared for by your community. Ignoring the reality of sexual violence unintentionally forms communities that enable abuse. . . . Renegotiating your relationship to these songs will help minimize survivors’ suffering and disrupt cycles of violence.

Ensuring protection from harm and caring for the traumatized is clearly the church’s overarching mandate in the midst of the complexity. One of the most challenging aspects of my role as director of the Office of Ministry pertains to cases involving potentially unethical behavior of ministers. Cases may include instances such as financial impropriety, sexual abuse, plagiarism, or inappropriate boundaries with laity. Ensuring a fair process for both the accused and the aggrieved is essential in the ecclesiastical process within ministerial ethics polity.

When guilt is determined, it is important that the aggrieved victim find protection, healing, and restoration and that the accused, when determined to be guilty, not continue in ministry that would cause future harm.

Can we sing this song again? It is the critical commitment to not add additional pain to survivors that addresses this simple question. My sense is that songs like “Blest are they” will never be sung again by many who are aware of the incredible harm allegedly done to victims by the accused composer.

But as the church moves forward seeking to be a healing and safe community for all, in order not to cause harm, we can practice diligent protection and prevention and truth-telling that brings justice. We can sing new songs. We can sing songs that celebrate the sacrifice we freely make in order to not cause harm within the worshiping community. And we can sing songs that offer solidarity to those on the path of healing, who long for the church to live faithfully in Jesus’ name. 

“Show Strength: How to Respond When Worship Materials Are Implicated in Abuse” can be found at Voicestogetherhymnal.org under resources.

THANK YOU FOR THIS MEANINGFUL WAY TO HIGHLIGHT THE MINISTRIES OF THE DENOMINATION. THEY CONNECTED US IN AN UNUSUAL MANNER TO THE DENOMINATIONAL PROGRAMS AND MISSIONS.

Unique opportunity

It was a unique opportunity for many across the brotherhood to view the 50th annual service at the

Dunker Church on the Antietam Battlefield. Having been a Marylander, I have been privileged to attend past meetings in person and it is so good that we were able to virtually

meet this year.

Wendy McFadden's sermon was so appropriate for the times. And the "Back Row Singers," a group of men from the choir at Hagerstown (Md.) Church of the Brethren who were taped in the sanctuary there, added just the right finishing touch.

If you missed it, you are still able to view it at [Youtube.com/churchofthe-brethren](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC...).

Mary L. Rosborough
Boonsboro, Md.



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Connected

Thank you for the postcards that were included with our copy of MESSENGER this month. In this time of social distancing I used them to write a message to each of the deacons in our congregation. I picked cards depicting ministries I felt they were supporting and engaging with in our community and congregation.

The one picturing the Rose Walk at Lake Junaluska I sent to a couple who have not attended NOAC but I encouraged them to do so next fall. They both would love the singing and daily inspiration.

The one picturing the Haitian church I sent to one of the deacons who always has strongly supported this ministry in Haiti.

Another card that pictured service I sent to two different deacons who have given unselfishly to help in two ministries, our local thrift shop and the Salvation Army.

Each of the remaining cards were sent to other deacons with a note about how they were extending the ministries of the denomination to our local church and community in various ways.


Again, thank you for this meaningful way to highlight the ministries of the denomination. They connected us in an unusual manner to the denominational programs and missions.

Karen S. Shiflet
Dayton, Va.


Re-imagine

I really appreciated Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford's "redefine resilience" Potluck. I am seeing the day when we get to re-imagine policing, church, and so many things I never expected to see in my lifetime. And we get to redefine words! That is a helpful tool for our toolkit.

Gail Erisman Valeta
Denver, Colo.



When Boko Haram attacked
We Bear It in Tears: Stories from Nigeria




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FOR ME, THINGS ARE CHANGING IN WAYS I HAVE NEVER EXPERIENCED BEFORE. THE CHANGES PRESENT ME WITH BOTH CHALLENGES AND BLESSINGS.

Things are changing

I turned 90 not too long ago. For me, things are changing in ways I have never experienced before. The changes present me with both challenges and blessings.

The challenges are not difficult to name. Here are a few:

- Decrease in physical strength, balance, endurance, and ability to recall names. Increase in taking numerous naps during the day, which makes

going to sleep at night difficult.

- Resisting the temptation to spend my idle time reading “shoot em up” novels that tell me how to be a real man.
- Assuming my share of household responsibilities such as cleaning, cooking, washing dishes, etc.
- Learning how to relax and let the younger generation take over.
- Learning to ask “how” questions rather than so many “why” questions.

The blessings of growing old are too numerous to name, but here are a few:

Christian Citizenship Seminar 2021



Economic JUSTICE

—Luke 1: 51-53

April 24 – 28, 2021
(Online, 7–9 p.m. Eastern, daily)

\$75

Registration opens December 1, 2020
www.brethren.org/ccs

Christian Citizenship Seminar (CCS) provides youth in high school and the first year of college (or age equivalent) the chance to explore the relationship between faith and a particular political issue, and then act from a faith perspective regarding that issue.



An online form is now available to submit information for Turning Points. Go to www.brethren.org/turningpoints.

Or send information to Diane Stroyeck at dstroyeck@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Information must be complete in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

Centenarians

Adkins, Ellen, 100, New Oxford, Pa., Sept. 6

Hillgoss, Betty, 100, Columbia City, Ind., Oct. 17

Sherman, Ruby, 100, Columbia City, Ind., Sept. 6

Becker, Andrew Bowman, Natalie DeRita, Dean Gladfelter, Todd Lillich, Muriel Myers, Jon Swanson
Lower Miami, Dayton, Ohio: Maureen Cole, Sally Dayson Grant

Mill Creek, Port Republic, Va.: Kathryn Landes, Taryn Landes, Joel Perkins, Parker Siever

New members

Bethany, New Paris, Ind.: Angie Bole, Jeff Bole, Libby Haab

Columbia City, Ind.: Mark Frey

Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.: Edward Gibson, Jr.

First, Harrisburg, Pa.: Alyssa Parker

Geiger, Friedens, Pa.: Marshall Dickey, Grayson Yutzy

Grossnickle, Myersville, Md.: Brandy Lewis, Steve

Loiacono, Dennis Webb, Ruby Webb

Hanover, Pa.: Kenneth

Prince of Peace, Littleton, Colo.: Kathy Bankert, Celia Joseph, Donna Lucero, Elizabeth-Anne Newberry, Lia Tempel, Chris Valento, Loli Valento

Trotwood, Ohio: Anna Wible

Anniversaries

Blickensderfer, Terry and Norma, Homeworth, Ohio, 60

Bradley, Larry and Dorothy, Dellroy, Ohio, 60

Brode, Robert and Marian,

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- Time to reflect upon God's glorious creation and what a blessing it is to be a child of a Creator who is like a loving parent.
- Time to be with children and grandchildren who never cease to be a delight. Time to take walks through my retirement community and greet my neighbors with a smile and a friendly hello.
- IRAs and pensions that enable me to share with the hungry and suffering people of the world.
- A mate whom I love dearly and who loves me.
- Faith in a loving God who will take care of the details when I die.

Growing old is not so bad. I would rather be 90 than 9.

Bill Kidwell
Greenville, Ohio

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TURNINGPOINTS

Mechanicsburg, Pa., 65
Copp, Jeff and Connie, Columbia City, Ind., 50
Focht, Steve and Kathy, Lititz, Pa., 50
Heffner, Lawrence and Oneida, Knoxville, Md., 68
Heisey, Larry and Joyce, Troy, Ohio, 55
Latham, Tom and Kay, Homeworth, Ohio, 60
Palutke, Al and Janet, Stephens City, Va., 50
Patches, James and Jean, Myerstown, Pa., 55
Pfeiffer, Bob and Carol, Columbia City, Ind., 50
Rohr, Timothy and Jean, Sharpsburg, Md., 50
Sternner, Ike and Carol, Somerset, Pa., 60

Deaths

Adolph, Lyle Jerome, 92, Worthington, Minn., July 16
Bushell, Francis B. (Bud), Jr., 79, North Manchester, Ind., June 30
Cover, Shawna L. Wentz, 60, Spring Grove, Pa., June 17
Cowan, Frances P. Yoder, 91, Lewistown, Pa., June 25

Deter, Dale Devon, 89, North Manchester, Ind., Aug. 11
Flora, Galen Dee, 94, Boones Mill, Va., July 6
Foley, Carlton E., 86, Waynesboro, Va., Sept. 2
Ford, Anna Catherine Varner, 84, Hagerstown, Md., Aug. 27
Fowler, Bonita J. (Bonnie), 88, Ashland, Ohio, Aug. 28
Gardner, Rebecca A. Yingling, 77, Hanover, Pa., Feb. 16
George, Dawna F. Myers Evans, 85, Somerset, Pa., April 27
Geyer, June, 95, Nappanee, Ind., July 7
Glasmire, Grace Snavelly, 97, Lancaster, Pa., Aug. 27
Gress, Ruth, 97, Trotwood, Ohio, May 2
Heffley, Bob, 81, Landisville, Pa., Sept. 2
Heffley, Sylvia, 81, Landisville, Pa., Aug. 24
Heinlein, Carol A. Craig, 63, Boswell, Pa., Aug. 11
Horner, Mearl, 78, Davidsville, Pa., April 8
Hovis, Paul Michael, Jr., 79, Smithsburg, Md., Aug. 27

Huffman, Murl, 100, Centerville, Ohio, Aug. 28
Johnson, Darrell, 67, Lima, Ohio, Aug. 18
King, Clay James, 96, Grove City, Ohio, Aug. 10
Klingaman, Richard Stewart Fleming, 94, Waterloo, Iowa, May 3
Lape, Dolores M. Stahl, 88, Davidsville, Pa., July 28
Lehman, Roman, 64, Nappanee, Ind., Aug. 4
Long, Sharon Kae Leidy, 74, New Oxford, Pa., April 9
Magness, Isabel Saylor, 96, York, Pa., May 30
Martz, Marian I. Gary, 97, Bremen, Ind., Jan. 31
Maurer, Donna M. Queer, 78, Friedens, Pa., Aug. 29
Melhorn, J. Jack, 99, Wichita, Kan., May 19
Miller, Velma, 93, Nappanee, Ind., April 27
Molison, Irene M. Rodgers, 80, Hanover, Pa., April 23
Mossie, Barbara Anne Gebhardt, 86, Phoenixville, Pa., Sept. 9
Mowrer, Frances A. Grim, 92, Mount Wolf, Pa., July 23

Oswalt, Dallas Leon, 92, Plymouth, Mich., Aug. 14
Pittman, Pollyanna S., 87, Macomb, Ill., Sept. 2
Racey, Melvin M., 84, Woodstock, Va., Aug. 22
Roop, Lois E. Berkebile, 103, North Manchester, Ind., Dec. 16
Ross, Ronald Eugene, 65, Newark, Ohio, June 21
Rousselow, Leroy A., 98, Waterloo, Iowa, May 16
Sine, Thelma Alberta Baker, 94, Maurertown, Va., Aug. 8
Sizemore, Audry C. Morgan, 86, Clayton, Ohio, May 24
Smith, Miriam C. Daywalt, 92, Phoenixville, Pa., Aug. 30
Stevens, Sandra Elaine Kellerberg, 71, Martinsburg, W.Va., Aug. 6
Trusty, Patricia Kimmel, 59, Lima, Ohio, June 17
Wenger, Ruth Naomi Wenzel, 94, Myerstown, Pa., Aug. 6

Ordained

Knoll, John, W. Pa. Dist. (Middlecreek, Rockwood, Pa.), July 19

Parfitt, Stephen, W. Pa. Dist. (Greensburg, Pa.), Aug. 23
Wink, William, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Richland, Pa.), Aug. 23

Licensed

Crowe, Alicia, W. Marva Dist. (Westport, Md.), July 5
Luckenbill, Craig, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.), Aug. 30
McPeck, Scott, N. Ohio Dist. (Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio), Aug. 23
Rajaniemi, Eric, Virlina Dist. (Lake Side, Bedford, Va.), Sept. 6

Placements

Cassell, Karen, pastor, Lynchburg, Va., Sept. 1
Crowe, Alicia, pastor, Westernport, Md., Aug. 24
Layman, Brian, interim pastor, Reading, Homeworth, Ohio, Aug. 30
McPeck, Scott, from interim pastor to pastor, Zion Hill, Columbiana, Ohio, Aug. 24
Varner, J. Michael, interim pastor, Green Hill, Salem, Va., Sept. 1

Broken brilliance

by Walt Wiltschek

Earlier this fall I drove up to Pennsylvania for a masked porch visit with my great-aunt, in celebration of her 94th birthday. During the conversation I happened to notice through the window an unusual teddy bear sitting on her couch—shining with a patchwork of iridescent colors like Joseph’s dreamcoat.

I remarked to her how much I liked it and said I had never seen anything quite like it. Her response surprised me. She said it had been made out of fabric from her late husband’s neckties and was now a way to remember him. And suddenly it seemed that much more beautiful.

We humans have a remarkable ability to take the broken pieces of life and make something new and dazzling out of them. This year unfortunately has included numerous opportunities to put that ability to the test, as a global COVID-19 pandemic, the national reckoning with issues of racial justice, and a series of natural disasters have pushed many of us to the breaking point.

In the midst of all that, we have been starkly reminded of the polarization and deep divides that exist among us on political and religious lines—lines that have, sadly, become increasingly intertwined. More and more we seem to mirror Northern Ireland of a few decades ago, when “Protestant” and “Catholic” were merely labels to cover strongly opposed political beliefs—now “Conservative Christian” and “Progressive Christian” in the US.

The 2020 US election season, with its sometimes demagogic rhetoric, has deepened the chasms in our country. Sometimes pitting neighbor against neighbor, it has shone a bright spotlight on the dangers of extremism and the fragility of democracy. Social media and tightly focused broadcast channels quickly and readily entrench our views, creating hard-to-break feedback loops and exploiting our existing fractures.

Reflections of those dynamics appear in the specific brokenness of our denomination, as the emergence of the Covenant Brethren Church (CBC) has sparked perhaps the most painful split in our faith community since the 1880s. The CBC has been accused of overtly enticing congregations to leave and causing painful ruptures for a number of districts and within strained congregations.

A September update from the Leadership Team of the Church of the Brethren observed that “discord and division are arising within our church body” because of those actions


and called for greater integrity in our behavior toward one another. The CBC, meanwhile, described that update as “angry and punitive and strangely hypocritical” while also calling on its own members to act with respect and follow polity—suggesting that some individuals, and not the organization, were fanning the flames.

One looks around the splintered church at times and wonders if we have forgotten that we are all following Jesus. We are neither peaceful nor together.

What do we do with all these jagged fragments of faith and life? Perhaps this reality informs the popularity of stained glass as a glistening adornment in many of our churches over the centuries, like the thick lumps of color embedded in the stone walls of the Church of the Brethren General Offices’ chapel. On a sunlit day, they are stunningly visible reminders of divine brilliance somehow continuing to shine through our broken pieces.

Author Jan Richardson, in her poem “Blessing When the World Is Ending,” begins by saying, “Look, the world / is always ending / somewhere,” and then goes on to describe the holy blessings that can come in the midst of such endings.

*This blessing . . . will simply
sit itself beside you
among the shards
and gently turn your face
toward the direction
from which the light
will come,
gathering itself
about you
as the world begins
again.*

While nursing our own wounds, some of them self-inflicted, we as people of faith are called to be part of that process of luminous renewal. We can’t—and shouldn’t—seamlessly reassemble the pieces to look just as they did before. But with the grace of God and a commitment to the Light, we can stitch that which remains into something beautiful in its own way. 

“Blessing When the World Is Ending” © Jan Richardson from *Circle of Grace: A Book of Blessings for the Seasons*. Used by permission. janrichardson.com

ON A SUNLIT DAY, THEY ARE STUNNINGLY VISIBLE REMINDERS OF DIVINE BRILLIANCE SOMEHOW CONTINUING TO SHINE THROUGH OUR BROKEN PIECES.



Photos courtesy of Rev. Nkosi, by Sammy Deacon, LaDonna Nkosi, and Jeff Boshart
Photos courtesy of Ruch Matos and Santos Terrero

“With all my heart I glorify the Lord! In the depths of who I am I rejoice in God my savior. ~Luke 1:46-47, CEB

God has done wonderful things among us through the ministries of the Church of the Brethren, and we will rejoice!
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