

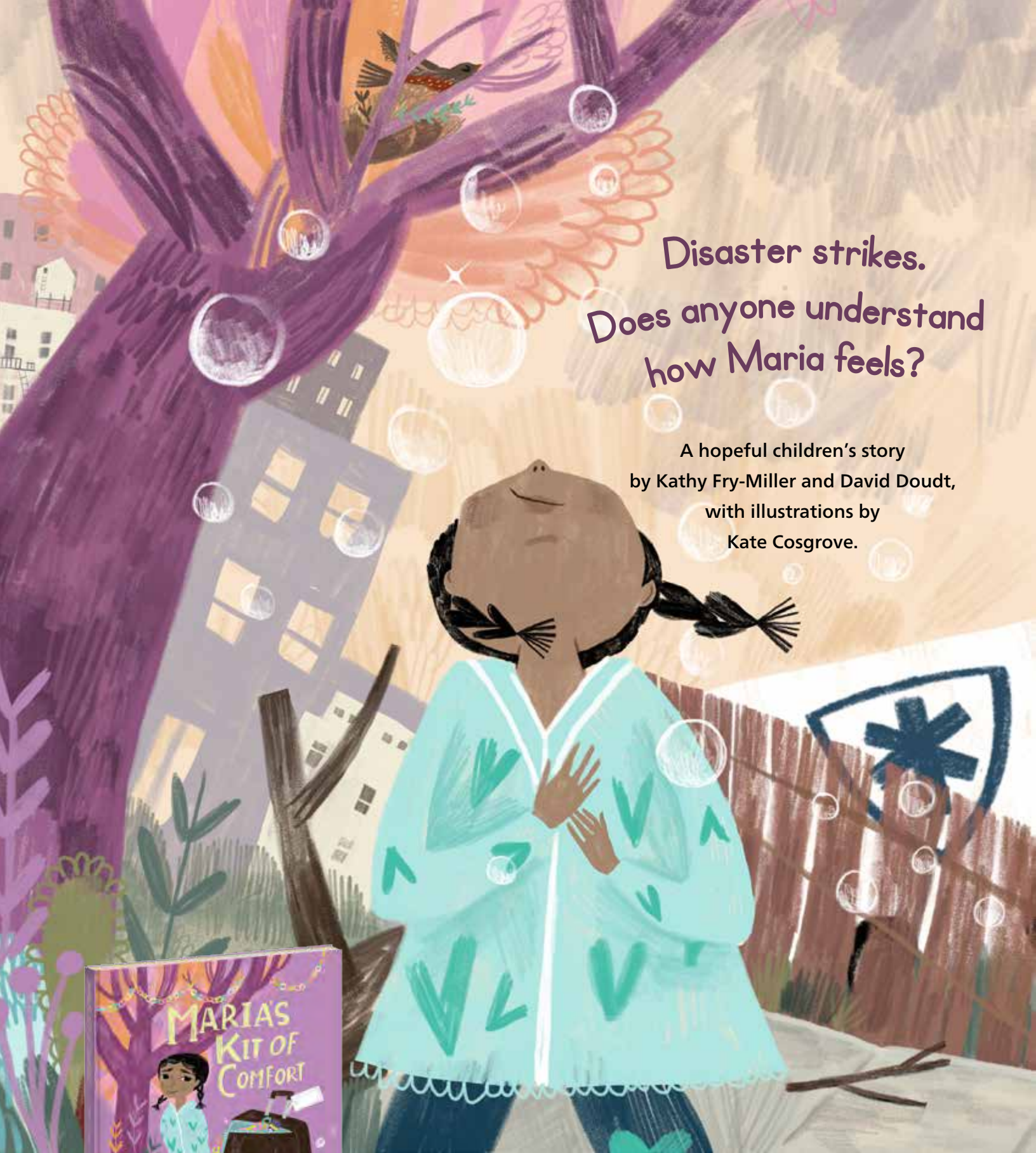


CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

NOVEMBER 2021 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

table



Disaster strikes.
Does anyone understand
how Maria feels?

A hopeful children's story
by Kathy Fry-Miller and David Doudt,
with illustrations by
Kate Cosgrove.



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Jesus in the neighborhood

The church's new compelling vision urges Brethren to move out into the neighborhood with Jesus Christ. MESSENGER has always told stories from congregational life, and right now we are focusing especially on how congregations are embodying this vision.

courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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Cover photo by Kath Watson

Every living creature

don't understand why climate change is a partisan issue. This is like having ideas about car brakes, for example, that are based on politics rather than engineering. Everybody agrees that brakes are good and that cars should be required to have brakes. No one thinks brakes take away our individual freedom, or



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

aren't worth the money, or should be phased in over a decade or two. Whether we are drivers or pedestrians, brakes are essential if we want to live.

Maybe dealing with climate change is more like critical building repairs proposed to the members of a condominium association. It's too expensive, I might say. My unit seems just fine. Let's wait. Maybe I'll be gone when the bill comes due.

Our planet is more than steel and concrete, however. It is alive, says Genesis 1. It is fashioned with plants yielding seed, with swarming creatures in the sea, flying birds, cattle and creeping things, and wild animals—all animated with the life of the Creator. These living things are given life by God's pronouncement. And in an intricately designed system, our very

being as humans depends on the existence of these living creatures.

If the car mechanic or the building inspector is ignored, we know the results might be tragic. Collectively, we are responsible for much more than roads and buildings. All the evidence around us says we cannot ignore the warnings about the potential demise of the place we live.

In a sense, we are all condominium dwellers. Whether we live in apartments or houses, trailers or mansions, we don't actually own very much. The effects of climate change testify that individually we don't control the land, air, or water around us. We are part of a community that must act together to protect our global home. My unit may feel like my own, like an individual space, but it's ultimately dependent on the same foundation and structure as all my neighbors.

Surely we don't intend to harm what God has declared good. Let us worship the Creator by guarding and protecting the garden—and every living creature.

Wendy McFadden

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“I will give thanks to you, O Lord, among the peoples; I will sing praises to you among the nations.” —Psalm 57:9

“The thankful receiver bears a plentiful harvest.” —English poet William Blake

“To give thanks in solitude is enough. Thanksgiving has wings and goes where it must go. Your prayer knows much more about it than you do.” —French poet and novelist Victor Hugo

“The more I come to recognize my story’s place in God’s grander Story, my once-bewildered questions are turning to psalms of thanksgiving at the wonder that I have been included in what (God) is doing.” —singer Gloria Gaither

“I am grateful for what I am and have. My thanksgiving is perpetual.” —naturalist and author Henry David Thoreau

TUCKED-AWAY TABLES In this month’s issue, MESSENGER considers what it means to gather around the “table.” Can you come up with a word or short phrase containing the word “table” for each of the clues given here? Answers are below.

1. Carrots, broccoli, cabbage
2. Oxygen, hydrogen, potassium, barium
3. Three teaspoons
4. A British police officer
5. Jesus was born here
6. At ease
7. Generous and giving
8. Trains coming and going
9. Apple device
10. No way around it
11. Fair to all
12. Tasty and delicious
13. Bridgewater’s regional youth conference
14. See page 1



Thought for the day: “Vegetables are a must on a diet. I suggest carrot cake, zucchini bread, and pumpkin pie.”

—cartoonist Jim Davis

DID YOU KNOW?

- **President Thomas Jefferson** refused to recognize a day of thanksgiving. According to History.com, Jefferson “believed in ‘a wall of separation between Church and State’ and believed that endorsing such celebrations as president would amount to a state-sponsored religious worship.”
- **The National Football League** played its first Thanksgiving game in 1934, when Detroit hosted Chicago. The Detroit Lions and Dallas Cowboys each play a game on Thanksgiving annually. But the very first Thanksgiving football game was a college game between Yale and Princeton back in 1876.
- **The first Macy’s Thanksgiving Parade** giant balloons debuted in 1927.



ANSWERS: 1. Vegetable; 2. Periodic table; 3. Tablespoon; 4. Constable; 5. Stable; 6. Comfortable; 7. Chartable; 8. Timetable; 9. Timetable; 10. Invertible; 11. Equitable; 12. Delectable; 13. Roundtable; 14. Table of contents



Peace day celebrations ...at Franklin Grove and Dixon

Two Illinois congregations— Franklin Grove and Dixon—honored the International Day of Peace this year on Sept. 21 by stationing members at Casey’s General Store in Franklin Grove and at Oliver’s Corner Market in Dixon with giveaways including ice cream and

bookmarks featuring scriptures of peace and church contact information. This year, the day had special meaning. Church member and Dixon businessman Ken Novak, who died in July, had asked as one of his last wishes that the church do more to promote peace. —Diana Verhulst

...in Virlina District

Virlina District planned its annual Prayer for Peace Service for Sept. 19 at

Hollins Road Church of the Brethren, in the picnic shelter. The theme was “Weltschmerz,” a German word meaning “world pain.” Said an announcement: “Participants will gain a better understanding of how Jesus leads us to peace even in the midst of grief over world events and difficult circumstances.”

...at Timbercrest

A peace campfire and rededication of a peace pole were highlights of Timbercrest Senior Living Community’s celebration of Peace Week. The community is in North Manchester, Ind. The campfire on Sept. 21 included songs, stories,

and s’mores. The peace pole program on Sept. 24 included readings, prayers, and music, followed by triad discussion groups. Being in “outbreak mode” because of COVID-19, readers and leaders stood at the chapel door and were videotaped to YouTube for showing on the community’s internal TV channel. —Marie Willoughby and Marilyn Groves



Pandemic surge shifts district events

The recent COVID-19 surge caused several districts to change plans for district conferences and other events.

Atlantic Southeast went virtual “after wrestling back and forth for several months about this issue,” said an announcement. The district conference will be held virtually on Nov. 6. The theme is “The Multi-Colored Wisdom of God” (Ephesians 3:10). Ray Hileman is moderator.

Middle Pennsylvania canceled dis-

trict conference. Said an announcement: “We believe that our planned conference theme for this year, ‘Bearing Fruit, Being Disciples,’ is lived out in our tender care and love for each other’s spiritual and physical wellbeing.” Some business items will be handled via postal mail.

Shenandoah announced that its district conference is going “back to barn roots” and will be for delegates only. The event is set for the display barn at the Rockingham County (Va.) Fairgrounds on Nov. 6.

Southern Ohio and Kentucky held

its conference online on Oct. 8-9. Delegates considered a query on racial justice, among other business.

West Marva canceled all district events in September and October. “I hope that each and every one are praying daily that this pandemic can be removed from our world, and that we are praying for families affected by this disease and for everyone in the medical field that are tirelessly working as they struggle through this pandemic,” said the announcement. “Please stay safe!”

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.



'Re-leafing' at Mountville

Mountville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren in August focused worship services on what the Bible has to say about trees, and how the church is called to care for God's great creation. Each week, a collection was taken to support New Community Project's mission to plant one million trees during the next decade. Trees help eliminate carbon dioxide and prevent erosion. They also create a habitat for birds and animals.

To track progress, the congregation added a leaf to a bare tree for each \$5 raised. At the end of the month, the tree was overwhelmed with leaves! Including an anonymous donor partial match from New Community Project, the congregation contributed enough money to plant 78,790 trees, primarily in Myanmar, South Sudan, and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mountville members also assembled 300-plus school kits for Church World Service. Each kit was packaged in a bag that was handmade and unique.

—Angela Finet

Common good

Common Good: The Story of the York Center Co-operative, a documentary about the York Center Co-op in Lombard, Ill., has debuted on YouTube. The hour-long film is made by Tim Frakes Productions and the Lombard Historical Society.

The housing cooperative was founded by a group of Brethren people and, when Bethany Theological Seminary was located nearby, included some seminary faculty and staff. A description noted the co-op as a "pioneering, faith-based effort" to provide fair housing and opportunity "in an era of white flight, redlining, and restrictive covenants that effectively prevented non-white Americans from fully participating in the American dream." See www.frakesproductions.com.

College news

Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., has named its Academic Center in honor of the school's first African American students, Martha and Joseph Cunningham. Siblings who grew up near Kokomo, Ind., the Cunninghams graduated in 1903. "Mattie" Cunningham Dolby worked for the church for many years, working with Black families in the segregated South and then working to establish congregations in the South and Midwest. In 1911, she became the first woman to be installed as a Brethren minister. Her brother moved to Chicago and became a physician. Dedication of the Martha Cunningham and Joseph Cunningham Academic Center is planned for spring 2022.

Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., earned its highest-ever ranking, 75th in national liberal arts colleges, in the most recent *US News Top Colleges*. The college also saw a considerable rise in its ranking from *Washington Monthly's Best Liberal Arts Colleges*, ranked 36 in the nation, up from 73 in 2020.

McPherson (Kan.) College for the sixth year was recognized in the *US News* rankings in the "Best Colleges" list for Regional Colleges in the Midwest. It was ranked in the "Best Value Schools" and "Top Performers on Social Mobility" lists.

McPherson announced recipients of its 2021-2022 Teaching Awards. **Shane Kirchner**, professor and chair of teacher education, received the tenured award. **Matt Porter**, assistant professor of business, received the non-tenured award.

Anniversaries

Lafayette (Ind.) Church of the Brethren held a 75th anniversary weekend Oct. 9-10. Saturday's event—a slide show with popcorn—looked "back with gratitude" for the congregation's blessings since its start in September 1946. Sunday events looked "ahead with hope," including worship with guests from Bethel AME Church and their pastor Pamela Horne as preacher.

Missouri and Arkansas District held its 30th district conference on Sept. 24-26. The event was hybrid, both online and at Cabool Church of the Brethren. The guest speaker was Chris Douglas, former director of Annual Conference. The agenda included a time for remembering 30 years as a district, led by moderator-elect Lisa Irle, with anniversary cake for those attending in person.

Notable

Mikayla Davis of Mohrsville (Pa.) Church of the Brethren was crowned Pennsylvania State Dairy Princess on Sept. 25 at the Blair County Convention Center in Altoona. She is a junior at Penn State.

Dr. Elizabeth Struble of North Manchester, Ind., has been elected president of the Indiana State Medical Association. She is a family practice physician employed by the Lutheran Health Network and medical director for the Kosciusko Medical Group in Warsaw, Ind.

Walt Wiltschek is taking on a new role as part-time chaplain at Illinois Wesleyan University, alongside his part-time position as executive for Illinois and Wisconsin District. He continues as at-large editor for MESSENGER.



courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren

A culture of connection Lancaster's International Fun Day looks outward

by Walt Wiltschek

On one particular late-summer Saturday, you could see France, the United Kingdom, Venezuela, Ethiopia, Nigeria, and more from Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. More importantly, the day allowed local residents to see the church.

"We wanted the neighborhood to know, 'We love you and this is your place. We're part of your neighborhood and we're here for you,'" lead pastor Misty Wintsch said. "What can we do to draw them in so they can see we're fun-loving people and not scary people your parents told you not to associate with?"

Wintsch said the idea for the "International Fun Day" came about from a small committee brainstorming fresh ways to do outreach. She and members Karen Graeff and Dee Zimmerman bandied about some possibilities, figuring some were too

crazy or beyond what they could do until it turned to, "Maybe we could do this."

That eventually grew into the Aug. 21 celebration that saw 14 international-themed booths fill the area around the church in what pastor of worship Don Fitzkee called "a beehive of activity."

In addition to a "Tour de France" bicycle course (complete with free helmets from the local police department) and a bounce house with towers that stood in for Russia,

visitors could enjoy international cuisine such as German gingerbread cookies, fried Nigerian chin-chin cookies, and a British-style tea party that began with a prayer for the queen. Traditional Ethiopian food prepared by a congregation that shares Lancaster's church space added to the feast.

A neighbor who runs an Irish dance school brought a dance company to perform, local musician Stu Huggens sang, and Lancaster member Jerry

courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren



courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren



courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren



“ We’re trying to show our neighbors that we are yours and you are ours and we are all God’s. ”

Brown brought smiles while strolling around with his pet Capuchin monkey, Django. As a bonus, kids who had their “passports” stamped at each of the international tables received a goodie bag as a prize.

“It takes an entire church to pull something like that off,” Wintch said of the cultural celebration. “I firmly believe everyone can do something. Some of our older members just sat and smiled and greeted people, while others helped to set up or helped with parking. It takes the entire church. A three-person committee can only come up with ideas.”

Fitzkee estimated that “a few hundred” people attended the unique event. He said a special invitation was made to families with children in a local “Leap into Language” program, a community partnership that works to enhance language skills of refugee children whose resettlement was

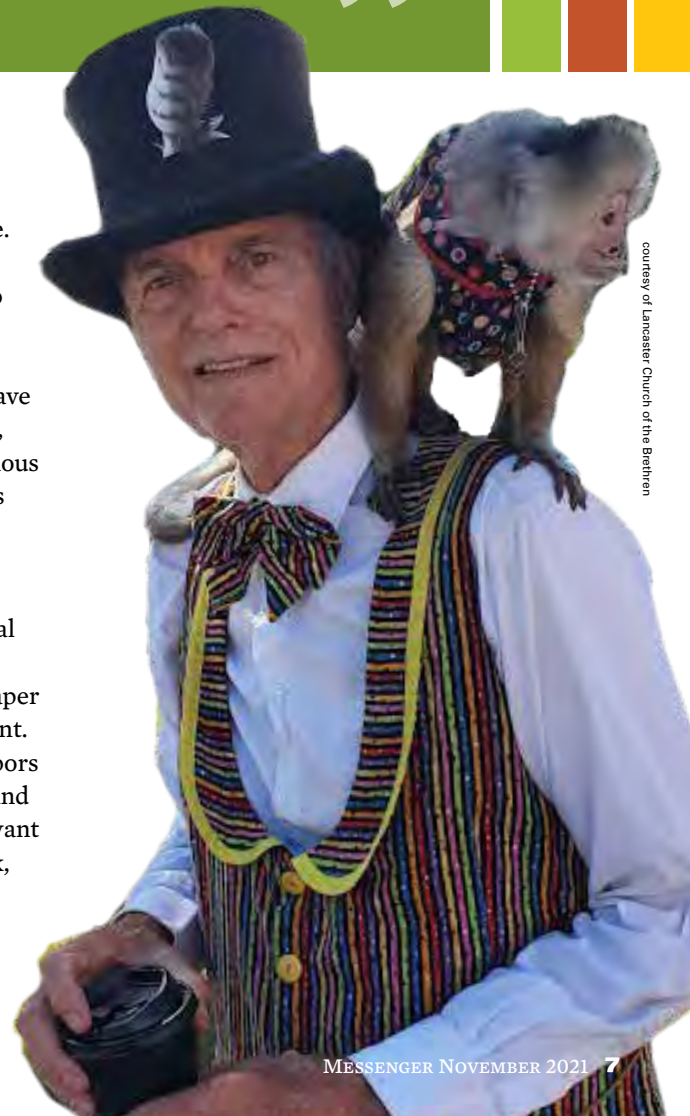
sponsored by Church World Service.

Wintch said she took inspiration from a 2004 Annual Conference logo that she ran across, with the theme “Loving God and Neighbor.” Logo designer Rosanna Eller McFadden gave Lancaster permission to use the logo, which now adorns a church van, various pieces of church literature, and items they distribute to the neighborhood.

Some of those fliers were given out to visitors at the international celebration, and Wintch said several families have started attending the church as a result. The local newspaper also did a colorful spread on the event.

“We’re trying to show our neighbors that we are yours and you are ours and we are all God’s,” Wintch said. “I want people in our neighborhood to think, ‘This church had a party for us.’ ”

Don Fitzkee contributed to this report.



courtesy of Lancaster Church of the Brethren

Creating Community and Sacred space online

NOAC 2021 worked hard to deliver a pixel-perfect experience

by Christy Waltersdorff

We had two choices: Cancel the 2021 Church of the Brethren National Older Adult Conference or convert it to a totally online event.

When the NOAC planning team met via Zoom in October 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic was raging, vaccines were just a dream, and we were at the point of no return for approaching deadlines.

The team decided that our priority was to keep our participants safe and hold the September conference on our computer screens. Then came the hard part. Who would have guessed that planning an in-person conference for nearly 900 people would be easier than planning one that folks could watch from the safety and comfort of

their own homes?

With a great deal of creativity, a talented web technician, and a lot of pre-recording and editing, we knew we would be able to provide meaningful Bible studies, keynote presentations, workshops, field trips, and worship. The two most difficult pieces were how to foster a sense of community and the “sacred space” that we enjoy at Lake Junaluska, N.C. When asked why they attend NOAC, most respondents list “community” as their number one reason. The setting at Lake Junaluska is always in the top five. NOAC participants enjoy seeing old friends and making new ones, walking side by side along the rose walk by the lake, eating meals and ice cream together,

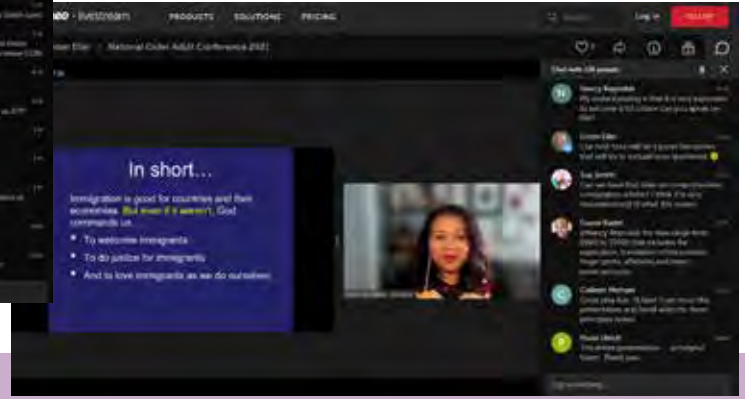
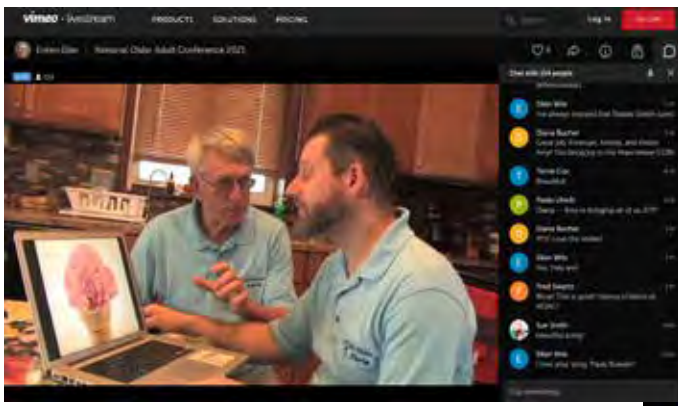
and singing in harmony in worship in Stuart Auditorium.

We knew it was not possible to replicate the physical closeness on the screen, so we attempted to make each session as personal as possible. We held camp reunions, school ice cream socials, workshops, and virtual field trips on the Zoom platform so that people would be able to see and talk with each other. Two of our keynote speakers, Lisa Sharon Harper and Karen González, shared with us live from their homes. Their presentations were followed by live panel discussions with panelists from across the country. NOAC participants were invited to type questions into the chat box and in that way, they were also part of the discussion.

Ken Medema and Ted Swartz recorded their keynote presentation in front of a live audience at Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren. Over 100 people were able to safely enjoy Ken and Ted’s music and humor while also spending time together.

The NOAC News team, always popular when we meet at Lake Junaluska, still managed to produce their trademark humorous “news” clips throughout the week. Dave Sollenberger, Larry





“ NOAC 2021 provided us with many challenges, but it provided even more blessings. ”

Glick, and Chris Brown highlighted the ups and downs of an online conference and gave us the opportunity to laugh at them and at ourselves.

We encouraged people to have “COVID-safe” viewing parties in their homes, church buildings, or retirement communities. The folks at The Cedars in McPherson, Kan., took this suggestion to the next level and held their own “mini NOAC.” Participants came from four states and enjoyed big-screen viewing, shared meals and conversation, ice cream socials with real (not virtual!) ice cream, and lively fellowship. Sixty people participated in “Cedarluska,” as they dubbed it. Several other retirement communities also held their own viewing parties. We are hoping that this experience will encourage the retirement communities to be partners with us in NOACs to come so all their residents may benefit.

The post-NOAC survey showed that although most participants appreciated the online experience, the lack of community was what people missed the most about the virtual conference. The majority of respondents watched NOAC alone or with one other person. This just proves, once again, how important the gathered


community is to us as Brethren and as Christians. We like being together.

One plus for online NOAC was that those who are usually unable to attend in person due to health, schedule, family responsibilities, or financial concerns were able to participate fully. In recent years NOAC has streamed the keynote presentations and worship services to a small online audience. In future years it appears that we will be providing a fuller hybrid experience for those unable to travel to Lake Junaluska. One blessing of this time of physical separation is that through online activities we can include more people in our ministries, especially people at a great distance.

Fortunately, by the time we held NOAC many folks had already spent over a year becoming accustomed to experiencing worship, meetings, family visits, and fellowship time on their computers. We were pleasantly surprised to find out just how tech-savvy our older adults have become. Only a couple of people commented in the survey that they had problems with the technology.

Our worship team worked hard to include readers, worship leaders, and musicians from across the denomination. It is hard to calculate the number

of hours they put into planning, organizing, and managing the logistics of five very different worship services. Many worship participants recorded their portion of the service in their home congregations, giving us a glimpse into sanctuaries we wouldn't normally get to see. NOAC participants were delighted by the involvement of people of all ages, and especially two spirited little girls who read scripture with gusto.

NOAC 2021 provided us with many challenges, but it provided even more blessings. Survey comments expressed appreciation for an online experience that was meaningful, inspirational, and spiritually fulfilling. Participants were gracious and understanding when technical glitches happened or when time zone differences were inconvenient. I am grateful for all who, so generously, contributed their gifts and talents to a most unique 2021 NOAC. 

Christy Waltersdorff, pastor of York Center Church of the Brethren in Lombard, Ill., served as coordinator of NOAC 2021. Other members of the NOAC planning team were Glenn Bollinger, Karen Dillon, Jim Martinez, Rex Miller, Pat Roberts, and Paula Ulrich, along with Discipleship Ministries co-coordinators Josh Brockway and Stan Dueck.



Table

“

There are stories etched in its
well-worn wood that I will never know of

”




flckr.com / Muzza Buck

THE TABLE

by Ken Gibble

I merely suggested that we replace it.
Creaky, clunky, pitted with scratches,
it stands in our dining room, at odds
with the surroundings in our new house.

My beloved gave me a look that would
have made Ivan the Terrible tremble.
I grew up with it was all she said.
All she needed to say. She can still
see her father carving the turkey at
the Christmas feast, hear the laughter
at one of her brother's jokes, catch
the venomous glances of her sister,
two years her senior, during one
of their periodic spats. What to me
is a piece of furniture, overdue for disposal,
is, to her, something altogether different.
There are stories etched in its
well-worn wood that I will never know of,
memories happy and sad and holy.

We decided to keep the table. 

Ken Gibble is a retired Church of the Brethren
pastor and a writer and poet.



A WOMAN FILLED

by Debbie Eisenbise

after "Table" by Edip Cansever, trans. Richard Tillinghast

A woman filled with the gladness of living
put a goblet—clear and empty—
on a table. She considered its lines,
the way the sun shone through it, light
dancing on the surface of the table,
polished to a shine. She could almost see
herself reflected in it, a mirror,
from countless coats of Simonize—
not the usual choice
for polishing a table, but cheap,
and with effort, even humble pine shines.
The gloss.
The light.
The glass.
Filling the goblet would force
an agenda: pressing the lips
to draw close in and sip,
draining back to empty. No need
to enslave it to its function.
The light flows through, ribbons
pooling on the surface.
The goblet empty,
the table still,
the woman filled. ❧

Debbie Eisenbise is interim pastor at Middlebury (Ind.) Church of the Brethren, a spiritual director, and an end-of-life doula.

A SMALL TABLE

by Claire Flowers


If there are no chairs
even small tables expand
room to let in love

Our family eats at a small table with short legs. This style of table is recognizable in many Japanese homes. This dining practice began when my son, Otto, was a toddler. We sought furniture low to the ground so Otto could participate in meals fully as a family member. We discovered we loved the practice of eating at our low table and decided to continue.

Every night what seems a small coffee table transforms into a buffet table full of food. If the table is small, it is always full. It's an optical illusion with tremendous health benefits. There are nights when our table holds more food and friends than we can imagine. If we move our table into the middle of the dining

room, we can easily seat eight people. I can move the table around inside and outside of our apartment without any help.

Most nights it's two of us sitting at the table together on a giant bean bag chair. This seating arrangement creates a closeness that we might not otherwise have ever enjoyed. There are nights when Otto has reclined in my arms while I read him stories and feed him grapes. There are other nights when I've been unexpectedly poked with forks. At some point, Otto will claim his own space and I will cede the bean bag. I will assume (with subdued gratitude) my new seating position facing him.

Tonight we could not finish our dinner. We are beyond wealthy. 

Claire Flowers earned a master of divinity from Bethany Theological Seminary in 2014, and is currently homeschool teacher to seven-year-old Otto Waggener.



Claire Flowers

“ If the table is small, it is always full. ”

table

“When I think of the table,
it speaks of the heart of God”



A PLACE OF COMMUNION


by Samuel K. Sarpiya

When I think of the table, it speaks of the heart of God for humankind, and it is where we build relationships. It is a place of communion with God. But, above all, at the table relationships are made with good food.

“In *Transcendence at the Table*, Dr. Julia Hurlow masterfully champions a trinitarian theology of the table marked by love and belonging. She holds space for each of us to reclaim a sense of the *Imago Dei* in ourselves and others with clarity and conviction.”

The table is where my family spends quality time with one another and with Jesus.

Jesus' fellowship table is a way to connect with the hungry, physically and spiritually.

Unfortunately, however, we live in a culture where the essence of the table is misplaced, but there is a longing for table time. 

Samuel K. Sarpiya is a former moderator of the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference, and has served as a pastor and church planter. He holds a doctorate in conflict transformation and leadership development.






JESUS PROVIDED A TABLE

by Mary Varner Rosborough

Jesus provided a table for
all of his 12 disciples including
Peter, who denied him,
and Judas, who betrayed him.

Today we are offered a place at that same table,
with all of our sins, including
denial and betrayal.

Our mission as Christians is to follow him
with open hearts, to encourage others
to join us at his table. 

Mary Varner Rosborough is a resident at Fahrney Keedy Retirement Village in Boonsboro, Md.

Table watercolor by John Sgro



Summer flashback! FaithX tweets

The two Brethren Volunteer Service workers who were assistant coordinators for FaithX in 2021, Alton Hipps and Chad Whitzel, tweeted out from many of the FaithX short-term service events this past summer.

“As our team developed a theme for the summer, we landed on ‘Step Out: Seeking New Paths,’ based on Isaiah 43:19,” Hipps reported. “The verse and theme seemed apt for the new trials, questions, and stumblings in a world we thought we knew. As the year moved along, we created COVID-19 guidelines and opened all FaithX experiences to anyone who had completed sixth grade.

“Over the summer, FaithX participants were able to serve at their local homeless shelters, food pantries, and clothing distribution centers helping their neighbors directly and tangibly. Participants also worked in community gardens growing food for people in need, and at their local parks, nature centers, and summer camps helping steward our special spaces. While the excitement of travel was off the table this year, local service made clear the connection between each individual and their own community. Participants were able to see the needs they were often previously blind to in their own backyards.”





Science as a practice of faith

by Tim Van Deelen

On a Monday in August, the International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released the sixth assessment report and by that Monday evening, the news cycle was ramping up with its dire content.

The findings were not news to anybody who follows this issue. In a sentence: the climate crisis is happening now; the human-caused drivers have not

abated and may be accelerating; the associated damage and injustice is increasing and we (especially we wealthy western countries) need to act with boldness and urgency to mitigate the worst of it. The sixth assessment is notable for the added urgency it communicates for the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, move away from fossil fuels, and work towards mitigation.

I read the report in between the stuff I need to do for promises I've made (like blog posts). But this is a déjà vu experience. Every time a report like this is released, it's lagged by a chorus of voices essentially trying to diminish the science and scientists behind the report. I am not a climate scientist, but I know

(continued on p. 22)

“ If nature is the “second book” whereby the Creator is revealed, then science is the set of eyeglasses which gives clarity to the text. ”



Finding our way back to the garden

by Hannah Shultz

When I think about the Church of the Brethren, one of the first words that comes to mind is “service.” Motivated by Christ’s example, and his command to love God and neighbor, we understand that caring for one another is an important part of being people of faith.

Lately, I’ve been thinking about one particular act of service that is critical for us to engage in. Creation care, the act of bringing restoration to the earth and healing to communities affected by the climate crisis, is a critical component of advancing God’s kingdom.

From the very beginning of scripture, we are commissioned to tend the

natural world. We are beings made from the dust and dirt of the earth and filled with God’s breath of life, and our first calling is to work in the garden of Eden and take care of it (Genesis 2:15). In fact, the Hebrew word translated to “farm” in the Common English Bible is used elsewhere in scripture to mean “serve.” Working on the land is not just a job—it is a spiritual act to be done with nurture and care.

But we have done a poor job tending the garden. We’ve contaminated the ground with our need for expansion, more electricity, faster food, and an obsession with consumerism and single-use products. This is not how we were meant to live upon the earth

God gave us.

Caring for creation has never been only about caring for the garden, either. We are not truly serving and loving one another if we allow our neighbors and communities to suffer from climate-related disasters.

The climate crisis is one of the biggest threats to humanity today. In recent years, we have seen hurricanes devastate coastal communities, wildfires scorch the West, and record-breaking heat waves drive public health emergencies. These weather events are getting more frequent and more intense.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released a report in

“ There are many effective actions that Brethren can take to help mitigate the worst climate impacts, and we must begin now. ”

August that presents humbling statistics about rapidly increasing global surface temperatures, rising sea levels, and the impact of climate-related disasters around the world. The UN chief called the report “a code red for humanity.” Despite this, the scientists also predicted that it is not too late to mitigate the worst effects of climate change. However, we must act quickly.

Communities of faith are uniquely called to address the climate crisis. By incorporating environmentally friendly practices, congregations can lower their carbon footprint, inspire members to live more sustainable lifestyles, and serve as models for their communities. There are many effective actions that Brethren can take to help mitigate the worst climate impacts, and we must begin now.

Each congregation should establish a **Green Team or an environmental committee** to help guide climate work

in the congregation.

One of the biggest drivers of global warming is greenhouse gas emissions. Congregations can get **energy audits** to assess their current energy use and receive recommendations for reducing carbon consumption. Making significant cuts to a congregation’s energy use will lower their reliance on fossil fuel energy.

The inefficient use of electricity and natural gas in buildings makes up more than 30 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. **Energy efficiency retrofits** are among the solutions that congregations can implement onsite. These include switching to LED lights, installing wifi thermostats, and improving insulation. These will reduce carbon footprints and also save money.

Congregations can explore **solar panel installation** to further reduce carbon emissions. Fossil fuels not only produce dangerous levels of greenhouse gas emissions, they also drive

environmental and public health disasters in communities where coal and natural gas is sourced.

Congregations that want to go further can install **electric vehicle (EV) charging stations** in their parking lots. Gas- and diesel-powered vehicles are among the greatest sources of carbon emissions. Electric vehicles offer lower emissions and local air quality improvements. By installing charging stations, congregations can expand EV infrastructure into their communities.

Another major producer of greenhouse gas emissions is the agricultural sector. Throughout scripture, agricultural rules dictate justice for the land and for people. In Leviticus, the land was to lie fallow every seventh year so that it could rest, and farmers were to leave food on the edges of their fields so that widows and orphans could glean. Today, the disconnection many of us have from our food allows us to ignore the effect that large-scale



agriculture and the production and transportation of food has on the earth.

Communities of faith can support local, sustainable food and address food inequality through **community gardens**. By turning an empty plot of land into a fruitful garden, congregations can be faithful stewards of creation. Gardens provide a way for people to access locally sourced food. They also help restore the earth by returning nutrients to the soil and sequestering carbon from the atmosphere through rich plant life.

In addition to planting gardens, communities of faith can work to preserve natural areas, plant trees, and help maintain local parks and forest reserves. This expands **natural “carbon sinks,”** which help draw carbon out of the atmosphere.

Congregations can conduct a **waste audit** to evaluate the waste they are generating and where it is going. According to the EPA, food waste made up nearly 25 percent of what ended up in landfills in 2018. When organic materials such as food decompose in landfills, methane—a potent greenhouse gas—is released.

When food is composted, however, it breaks down into a nutrient-rich fertilizer that can be used in gardens

and on farms. Congregations that have the space can **start composting**. A church’s compost pile can even serve as a community drop-off site to encourage community members to compost.


Or congregations can contract with a commercial composting company. Many commercial companies accept meat and dairy waste, which you can’t compost on your own. This is an easy way that faith communities can reduce their carbon footprints and divert from landfills the waste from church coffee hours, potlucks, and other events.

Food is not the only waste stream congregations can assess. All communities of faith generate waste in their worship services, office administration, and other activities. Although recycling is good, **reducing waste** is even better. Congregations can write sustainability policies that consider the environmental impact of the products and services they purchase and set forth guidelines for reusing products so that less waste is produced. For example, congregations can replace disposable paper or Styrofoam coffee cups and plates with ceramic dishes that are washed and reused.

While there are many individual and communal actions Brethren can take, some issues call for change at a larger

scale. One of the best ways to improve life for generations to come is to engage in **policy work**. As justice-seekers, it is our moral responsibility to speak to decision-makers who can establish systems that will protect people and prevent further climate disasters.

Communities of faith can raise a prophetic voice by advocating for legislation that reduces carbon emissions, supports clean energy, and advances environmental justice. Congregations are encouraged to set up meetings with legislators, host letter-writing campaigns, and work with the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy.

We are invited to find our way back to the garden before it’s too late. The biblical call to serve others reminds us to be active players in the inbreaking of God’s kingdom, a kingdom where justice reigns and the earth flourishes. As divinely commissioned caretakers, it is our job to restore human relationships and the earth. The IPCC report urgently awakens us and demands that we ask ourselves: What is it that we are called to do? 

Hannah Shultz is program associate for Georgia Interfaith Power and Light, working out of Atlanta. She formerly worked for FaithX and Brethren Volunteer Service.





(continued from p. 18)

a few of them and I use their science and have lived professionally with them in the world of academic and government-sponsored science for more than 25 years.

Science twitter was abuzz with despair, anger, lament, and exasperation. I am feeling all of it. I am especially raw because in my own circle this summer I have needed to confront anti-science ideas about young-earth creationism, climate crisis denial, and anti-vaccine nonsense.

If, as commonly taught in Christian circles, nature is the “second book” whereby the Creator is revealed, then science is the set of eyeglasses which gives clarity to the text. Let me say this plainly: doing and understanding science rigorously and taking it seriously is a practice of faith.

Science is a profoundly conservative enterprise. Its goal is to identify new knowledge reliably. Armies of scientists labor, mostly in obscurity, pushing mightily at the boundaries to identify potential new incremental bits of knowledge. Once found, a new bit of

knowledge must be submitted to a skeptical group of peer experts who demand transparency on the data, the study design, and the analysis supporting it. Even having passed peer review, the new bit is only tentatively accepted as new knowledge. Other scientists test its veracity and reliability in different contexts and with competing explanations all with their own peer review.

It’s only when the new bit survives this long process that it can be admitted into the hard-won canon of what scientists consider reliable knowledge. It relies on a consensus by skeptical people whom other scientists recognize as experts in the field—often one’s competitors. There are layers of safeguards and the system places a premium on shunting unreliable knowledge to the dustbin. Bad science gets published and even promoted for a time, to be sure, but it also gets moved to the margins rapidly.

Consequently, the idea of an independent under-appreciated genius contrarian who knows or discovers something that other specialists are unaware of is mostly a Hollywood myth. Even game-changers like Charles Darwin or Watson and Crick had competitors who

“were nearly there” in terms of getting to the discoveries that made the famous scientists famous. Moreover, their work depended heavily on the work of other scientists as starting points—and had to survive the process outlined above.

Reliable scientific knowledge resides in peer-reviewed scientific journals and is communicated to the public sphere reliably only by people (e.g., in climate science: Dr. Katherine Hayhoe, Bill McKibbin) and public press aggregators (I like *The Guardian*) who understand and respect the process. Hence if your favorite contrarian is presenting themselves as a put-upon “outside-the-mainstream” scientist and is making their argument “against the establishment” and outside of peer review, it’s likely nonsense. It doesn’t matter if you found them opining on YouTube, Facebook, the *New York Times*, the *National Enquirer*, or the Hoover Institute.

And if you cherry-pick your contrarians to make a public policy point about creationism, climate crisis, the value of masks, the nature of the pandemic, vaccinations, chronic wasting disease, the population biology of wolves, etc., it says more about your own confirmation

“ The IPCC report is an extreme and sober example of rigor in this process, designed to recognize the urgency of the climate crisis in all its dimensions. ”



bias, your ignorance about (and disrespect for) how science works, and your desire to make a science-based question into an ideological battle.

The IPCC report is an extreme and sober example of rigor in this process, designed to recognize the urgency of the climate crisis in all its dimensions, to faithfully evaluate the entire body

of research on these questions, and then to communicate responsibly what that collective body of research says and means. The sixth assessment builds on the fifth which builds on the fourth and so on, illustrating how scientific knowledge is both iterative and cumulative. Hundreds of scientists from around the world volunteer their

time to do a complete review of the scientific literature with layers of peer and public review built in.

If you intend to care for creation, you should pay attention. **W**

Tim Van Deelen is professor of forest and wildlife ecology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He writes for the *Reformed Journal*, where this article first appeared. It is reprinted with permission.



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The Bible studies this year come from *Shine: Living in God's Light*, the Sunday school curriculum published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia. Each month, MESSENGER is publishing two of the Bible essays that help teachers prepare. These essays are written by Christina Bucher. The illustrations are by Brian Dumm.

Elijah and the widow

1 Kings 17:1-16

The books of **First and Second Kings** highlight the activities of the prophets Elijah and Elisha. Elijah's story begins in 1 Kings 17 and continues through 2 Kings 2, which tells of his death and ascension to heaven.

We know little about Elijah's background. His hometown is Tishbe, a village located in a mountainous region east of the Jordan River known as Gilead. In ancient times, Gilead was an agricultural center, where olives, grapes, and grain were produced. In this story, a drought threatens the lives and livelihood of the people.

Our story begins rather abruptly. Elijah tells Ahab, King of Israel, of a drought that will soon occur in Israel. Following the prophetic announcement, God tells the prophet to go to the Wadi Cherith, located in Gilead.

Wadi is an Arabic word for a stream

This woman was at the end of her rope. We may not experience what she went through, but we can all understand trying situations. How can you reach out to your children or youth and others who are suffering through difficult times?

Great and tender God, just as you guided Elijah, guide us to places of rest and provision. Help us to see the needs of those around us and respond as we are able. Amen.




or stream bed; it is a translation of the Hebrew word *nahal*. During the dry season in Palestine, a wadi is usually dry, but during the rainy season, the wadi's dry stream bed fills up with water. Elijah obeys God's command and settles somewhere near the Wadi Cherith, where ravens bring him meat and bread. He gets water to drink from the wadi.

One day, however, the wadi dries up. Yahweh then tells Elijah to travel west again, all the way to the town of Zarephath, located along the Mediterranean Sea. Zarephath is located outside of the kingdom of Israel, in Phoenician territory (modern Lebanon). Elijah obeys and meets the widow who Yahweh says will provide him with food.

We may be surprised that Yahweh sends Elijah to a widow, because widows in the ancient world generally were not wealthy. Due to the structure of ancient society, a widow often found herself in desperate straits without the protection and support of her husband. In the Bible, widows are often men-

tioned in association with two other groups in need of special protection: orphans and sojourners (resident aliens). The laws in the Pentateuch, for example, prescribe special protection for widows, orphans, and resident aliens (see Deuteronomy 24:17). The prophets, too, express concern for widows, orphans, and resident aliens. Jeremiah, for example, warns the people not to oppress the alien, the orphan, or the widow (Jeremiah 7:6).

Indeed, the widow of Zarephath appears to need special protection. She has only a little meal and a little oil, and she expects that she and her son will soon die. Elijah reassures her by saying, "Do not be afraid," and then tells her to make him a little cake. He says that she will not lack meal or oil as long as the drought lasts. Without a word, the widow does as Elijah says. She feeds the prophet, and she and her household have food for many days. God has provided for both Elijah and the widow. 



Elisha and the Shunammite woman

2 Kings 4:8-37

Elisha, whose name means “God is deliverance,” first appears in 1 Kings 19:19–21, where we can read about his calling. He reappears in 2 Kings 2, which reports on the passing of prophetic leadership from Elijah to Elisha. His story continues through 2 Kings 13.

Like Elijah, Elisha lived in the ninth century BCE, during the period of the two kingdoms, with Israel to the north and Judah to the south. Both Elijah and Elisha carried out their prophetic ministries primarily in the north.

The biblical accounts about Elisha fall primarily into two types: stories about his interaction with Israelite kings and stories about miracles he performs. Miracle stories involving Elisha emphasize the powerful way in which


God works through the prophet. Many of the stories are about his miraculous efforts to help the poor and needy. Elisha heals people and feeds the hungry. He also helps childless couples.

On the one hand, the prophet Elisha dominates this narrative. On the other, it is an unnamed woman who acts boldly in relation to God’s prophet, and it is her confidence that contributes to the outcome. This woman is known to us only as “the Shunammite woman.”

The Shunammite woman lives in Shunem, a village located in the Jezreel Valley. She is perceptive, observing to her husband that she thinks the traveler who frequently passes through town is a “holy man of God.” She adds a room to her house and furnishes it so that she and her husband can host this man of God whenever he passes their way. She asks nothing of Elisha in return. Nevertheless, the prophet announces that she and her husband will become parents of a son.

Sometime later, the son becomes ill and dies. Rather than weep for her son or bemoan her fate, the woman immediately rides off in search of Elisha. Elisha tries to send his servant Gehazi to help. The woman, however, is adamant: she will not leave until Elisha comes with her. Because of her bold actions and her confidence that the

man of God has the power to heal, her son is brought back to life.

Many of the women in the Bible go unnamed and consequently are often overlooked. Despite her anonymity, the Shunammite woman exhibits several admirable qualities. She offers hospitality to Elisha by offering him food and shelter, with no expectation of a reward in return. She acts assertively and confidently on behalf of her son. Finally, she shows persistence in her actions, and that persistence results in the restoration of life to her son. When we think about the prophet Elisha, we would do well to remember also the courageous and determined Shunammite woman. 

The woman welcomed Elisha into her home and life. What are ways that you welcome others into your home, friend group, or other spaces? Think about ways to make your meeting space welcoming this week.

God, be present in the places I inhabit and in the space of my soul. May my heart and my life be places of welcome for you. Amen.

SHINE
LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

Read along

- Nov. 7** King Solomon
1 Kings 3–11
- Nov. 14** Elijah and the widow
1 Kings 17:1-16
- Nov. 21** Elisha and the Shunammite woman
2 Kings 4:8-37
- Nov. 28** Prepare the way
Isaiah 2:1-5



Patricia Challenger

Disaster work in Nebraska

Brethren Disaster Ministries and volunteers from midwestern districts carried out a short-term flood response in King's Lake, Neb. A grant of \$7,500 from the Emergency Disaster Fund supported the two-week response on Oct. 3-16.

Jill Borgelt of the Douglas County Long Term Recovery Group remarked, "It's a great team and they're accomplishing a lot, more than we would have hoped for!"

In early 2019, Nebraska suffered record-breaking damage from severe winter weather, straight-line winds, and devastating flooding.

Grants help congregations help their communities

The most recent Brethren Faith in Action Fund (www.brethren.org/faith-in-action) grants have gone to three congregations:

Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., received \$5,000 for its support of a family from Guatemala that has been granted asylum in the US.

Myerstown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren received \$5,000 to upgrade audio and video equipment, recognizing that worship attendance patterns are changing because of the pandemic.

Potsdam (Ohio) Church of the Brethren received \$2,350 to restart its Kids Club, a weekly program for children in grades 1-12 providing a meal and Bible-based activities.

Collaboration aids Afghan evacuees

A new joint effort with Church World Service

(CWS) for resettlement of Afghan evacuees has received support from the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board and a grant of \$52,000 from the Emergency Disaster Fund.

"The Humanitarian Parolee status allows people fleeing a compelling emergency . . . admission to the US, but they don't qualify for many of the resettlement services the US government provides to immigrants with regular refugee status," explained the grant request. "These government services are mostly provided through nine refugee resettlement agencies, including CWS, meaning that many of the 75,000 Afghan evacuees won't have access to health insurance, food programs, housing assistance, or cash assistance."

The initiative appeals to con-

gregations to help. Resources are at www.brethren.org/bdm/afghanistan-2021.

CDS aids Afghan children

As part of the airlift of Afghan evacuees, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) helped children and families arriving at Dulles International Airport in Virginia and at a nearby expo center for eight days in September. Through a partnership with Save the Children, the Dulles CDS volunteer team worked with 100 to 200 children at a time while they awaited transportation to their next stop.

CDS teams also deployed to Fort Bliss, Texas, where nearly 10,000 Afghan evacuees, including more than 3,000 children, were being housed while awaiting resettlement. CDS teams saw between 100 to 300 child contacts per day. CDS planned to continue providing support at Fort Bliss through October.



Nancy Miner

Material Resources in early October announced that "donations from the Midwest area have filled the trailer located at the General Offices in Elgin, Ill." Drivers Ed Palsgrove and Miller Davis picked up the full trailer, leaving an empty trailer to be filled with more donations. Also in early October, 1,080 Church World Service cleanup buckets were shipped to New Orleans following Hurricane Ida. In September, the program received a boxcar from Lutheran World Relief "filled with about 50,000 pounds of quilts, school kits, personal care kits, and fabric kits," said director Loretta Wolf. Material Resources warehouses and ships relief goods out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.



Doris Abdullah with Rodney Leon, architect of the African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan, at a discussion of the memorial for people of African descent.

Brethren attend UN General Assembly

Doris Abdullah, Church of the Brethren representative to the United Nations and a minister at First Church of the Brethren in Brooklyn, N.Y., attended a number of events during the UN General Assembly in late September.

The assembly, in its 76th year, commemorated achievements and programs aimed at healing racism, Abdullah reported. Among them was the Durban Declaration and Program of Action first adopted in 2001 at the world conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia, and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa.

“The trans-Atlantic slave trade, apartheid, and colonialism were recognized as sources of much modern-day racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, and related intolerance,” Abdullah reported. She noted, however, that “little attention was given to the continuous exploitation of the African continent for its natural resources and to the people of African descent in the diaspora for their cheap labor. Just as sugar, cotton, and tobacco drove the slave trade and provided racism ideology for 400 years—while creating the wealth of Europe and the United States—today the mining of minerals such as tantalum (coltan) with cheap labor fuels racist ideologies while creating wealth for multinational corporations and western nations.”

Personnel

Linetta Ballew has been hired as acting director of Brethren Woods and Retreat Center in Shenandoah District, through Aug. 31, 2022. Ballew most recently has been assistant director at Brethren Woods. From 2013-2018 she was co-executive director of Camp Swatara.

Nicholas (Nick) Beam began Oct. 1 as interim associate district executive minister for Southern Ohio and Kentucky District, serving beside retiring district executive David Shetler until Jan. 1, 2022, when he will become interim district executive. Beam has been a pastor in the district for 23 years.

Scott Douglas retires Jan. 31, 2022, after 13 years at Brethren Benefit Trust (BBT). He first began working with the Church of the Brethren when employed by the former General Board in September 1997. From November 1998 to May 2005 he worked for the former Association of Brethren Caregivers. In January 2009, he began at BBT as director of the Brethren Pension Plan and Employee Financial Services. In January 2014 he was called to

head Client Relations, now named Relationships and Growth.

Joshua Sati began Sept. 15 as academic/operations manager for Bethany Seminary's Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking in Jos, Nigeria. He is ordained by ECWA (Evangelical Church Winning All), holds a degree from the ECWA seminary and a master's in ethics and philosophy from the University of Jos, and is enrolled in a doctoral program in theology through the University of South Africa.

Paul Shaver began Sept. 1 as coordinator of Seminary Computer Services for Bethany Seminary and Earlham School of Religion in Richmond, Ind. He holds a bachelor's in computer science from Bridgewater (Va.) College, has more than 10 years of experience in technology support, and more than 5 years in ministry contexts.

Beth Sollenberger retires Dec. 31 as district executive minister of South Central Indiana District, after nearly 11 years in the position since February 2011. Concurrently, she was interim district executive for

Michigan District in 2018. She has served on the Council of District Executives, Ministry Advisory Council, and Ministry Issues Committee, and has been a district executive representative to the boards of On Earth Peace, BBT, and Bethany Seminary. Previously, she was employed on the denominational staff as director of Stewardship Education and Congregational Life Team coordinator for Area 2. She has pastored in Atlantic Southeast, Southern Ohio and Kentucky, Mid-Atlantic, and Northern Indiana Districts.

David Vasquez of Nuevo Amanecer Church of the Brethren has been hired by Atlantic Northeast District as church video streaming specialist.

Lee-Lani Wright of Springfield (Ore.) Church of the Brethren, began Sept. 19 as a member of the Pacific Northwest District executive team.

Debbie Roberts is retiring from the team after serving since 2019. Wright will be the district contact for the Office of Ministry and will maintain district files and records.

Finding grace on a gray carpet

by Robyn Reals



My eyes widened with dilation as I was herded into the ophthalmologist's waiting room, where I joined a COVID-spaced group of pupil-enlarged patients. Unable to read very well, we waited in a muted trance, staring down at dull gray carpet squares. I always thought it a cruel joke to place magazines in these rooms. But the well-worn stacks were now history due to the pandemic.

A pleasant lady sat a safe distance to my left. I wondered if she questioned the use of a lengthy pole someone propped next to her chair, probably before she arrived. The thought entered and exited my head like a March wind. She began conversing quietly with me behind her mask.

I am a 74-year-old grandmom. One knee doesn't mind going uphill, but gets crabby when going down. My snazzy appliances work hard, but I have pesky hearing loss and miss a lot (especially in a cloth-muffled world where lip-reading is a useless art). Not wanting to interrupt her stream of thought, I caught words such as macular and that her mother's age was 91. I reacted as best I could and apologized for asking her to repeat things. We exchanged polite masked smiles and went back to staring at the gray nubby sea beneath our feet.

Abruptly, the lady lurched forward from her waist and started feeling the well-trod carpet. Her hands moved in rapid circles. It turned out my chair neighbor had dropped her good pair of glasses.

The more years I accrue, the less I worry about being embarrassed. Comically stiff, I slid down on all fours and hoped for a quick retrieval. It occurred to me I might need to summon a volunteer to help set me upright again.

What a vision we must have made! Luckily for us a young lady, across the gray acreage, spotted the glasses under the lady's chair. Greatly relieved, my chair neighbor sat back and took a deep breath. I managed to get all four limbs up and into my seat without breaking any distance

regulations from those who might have tried to sympathetically hoist me.


My brain pieced together her bend-from-the-waist search, the conversation containing the words macular degeneration, and the pole. Of course! This was her walking stick to guide her sight-challenged navigation. marveling it took me this long to put the puzzle together, we were all taken by surprise when the doctor's assistant appeared to speak to our group.

My back was to the entrance of the room, and I could not see the assistant as she gave us a few words of importance. Unable to eyeball her lips I froze, trying to discern her words as best I could. I heard something about a delay and decided to try to read others' reactions before determining my next move.

Suddenly my chair neighbor me looked me straight in the eyes, and at a high decibel, unabashedly repeated the entire message. There had been a computer glitch that caused a delay, etc. I was blown away by this lady's generosity and thoughtfully loud repetition of the news.

Again, what a vision we must have made! A couple of health-challenged strangers benefiting from a few moments together, reacting without shyness or hesitation to each other's needs.

God has blessed me every day and his grace has visited me more often than I deserve. There have been cool breezes on sweltering days, a loving soulmate and children who fill the pockets of my heart, grandchildren to free my silliness and make me giggle, treasured friends, years of challenging and satisfying work, and a warm church family to put me to good use.

This day Grace found me on all fours, on a tired gray carpet in a doctor's waiting room. Go figure. Go God. Amen. 

Robyn Reals of Arlington (Va.) Church of the Brethren is a retiree from the business/education worlds and creates plays and skits for the church's drama group, bringing Bible stories to life.

“A couple of health-challenged strangers reacting without shyness or hesitation to each other's needs.”

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I would like to thank the churches and pastors of South/Central Indiana and Northern Indiana Districts for their continual support of our daily devotional program at Timbercrest retirement community. We also have a good community of support from members of many denominations in North Manchester and Wabash County. We couldn't do it without them.

Many pastors, Sunday school teachers, and lay preachers come long distances to share a 20- to 25-minute devotion or Sunday morning message. Due to the pandemic, many of the messages have been an "act of faith," sharing with a nearly

empty chapel as the message is carried over our in-house TV channel. When Timbercrest has COVID-related restrictions, these wonderful people have to stand just outside the chapel, rain or shine.

We have a strong team of volunteers on the Timbercrest campus who schedule and remind these wonderful people. They are dedicated to the spiritual wellbeing of our community and have worked through many frustrations with technological problems, last-minute restriction changes, and much more.

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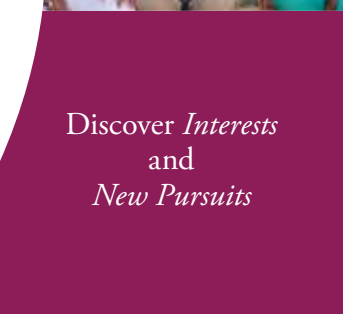


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preventing the spread of the virus. The pandemic has demonstrated what we've always known: human beings are holistic beings, with social, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs, as well as the physical needs presented by COVID prevention.

I want to thank the members of these two districts for their ongoing

prayers, for sharing their pastors and other members, for the many cards, notes, phone calls, bulletins, online services, and so much more. It has helped Timbercrest stay grounded through this very difficult time.

Brian Daniels

Director of Program and Services at Timbercrest North Manchester, Ind.

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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

Centenarians

Adkins, Ellen, 101, Cross Keys, Pa., Sept. 6

New members

Garden City, Kan.: Sharolyn Funk

Gettysburg, Pa.: Blake Haines, Zoey Haines

Hagerstown, Md.: Chris Bricker, Kristal Bricker, Daemon Conrad, Rebecca Henry, Nicole Hood, Don Maas, Roberta Maas, Beverly McConnaughey, Steven McConnaughey, Gene Ogilvie, Kay Ogilvie, Judy Williams, Patricia Young

Middlecreek, Rockwood, Pa.: Joe Ladosky, Ronda Ladosky, Ron Pryal, Sandy Pryal

Mohrsville, Pa.: Susan Schlenker, Matt Stein, Nita Stein

Peace, Portland, Ore.: Pam Enberg, Ben Garst, Del Mawson, David Rossi

Pleasant Chapel, Ashley, Ind.:

Onie Brown, Karen Pfefferkorn

Uniontown, Pa.: Jani DiMarco, Charles Franks, Kimberly Franks, Abram Garcia, Hyjurick Michael, Bonnie Swetz

Wedding anniversaries

Behney, Jack and Alma, Fredericksburg, Pa., 50

Bohn, Richard and Joyce, Lititz, Pa., 60

Bollinger, Benjamin and Loretta, Hanover, Pa., 60

Brode, Robert and Marian, Mechanicsburg, Pa., 66

Brown, Maurice and Jane Phyllis, Parkville, Md., 70

Draper, Glen and Vicki, Eldora, Iowa, 50

Ebersole, Paul and Dixie, New Enterprise, Pa., 55

Eshelman, James and Jane, New Enterprise, Pa., 55

Heffner, Lawrence and Oneida, Knoxville, Md., 69

Keefer, George and Debbie,

Williamsport, Md., 50

Payne, Maurice and Betty, Knoxville, Md., 70

Rollman, Roy and Barbara, York, Pa., 65

Wilcox, Lee and Donna, Richland, Mich., 50

Witman, C. Eugene and Bonnie, Pine Grove, Pa., 50

Deaths

Bell, Betty Jane Ament, 91, Elizabethtown, Pa., Aug. 29

Boettner, Henry E., 95, Freeport, Ill., July 28

Boyd, Lyle Eugene, 78, Ligonier, Pa., Sept. 7

Clapper, Marion Russell, 99, North Port, Fla., Aug. 19

Clay, Richard F. (Sonny), 92, Keyser, W.Va., Aug. 2

Daywalt, Gerald Marvin, Sr., 75, Oaks, Pa., June 5

Driver, Anna Jeanne May, 88, Blue Ridge, Va., Nov. 5, 2020

Eaton, Jerry, 78, Lafayette, Ind., Oct. 7, 2020

Elmore, Kendal Wilson, 74, Falling Waters, W.Va., July 31

Fessler, Nancy Anne, 82, West Milton, Ohio, Sept. 11

Flory, Emma Jean Houser, 97, Bridgewater, Va., Sept. 10

Forsha, James T., 91, Lititz, Pa., Aug. 1

Green, Virginia, 76, Garden City, Kan., Aug. 3

Hartman, Betty Jane, 86, Myerstown, Pa., Sept. 16

Heffner, Oneida Haines, 90, Knoxville, Md., Sept. 9

Kreider, Lloyd, 91, Elizabethtown, Pa., Sept. 13

Laird, Timothy James, 64, New Enterprise, Pa., Sept. 7

Lednum, Gene G., 93, Easton, Md., Aug. 30

Miller, Dolores Irene (Dolly) Blocher, 82, Dixon, Ill., July 26

Mitchell, Kathleen Hull, 94, Martinsburg, Pa., Sept. 4

Myers, Martha J. Edwards, 96, Greensburg, Pa., Aug. 14

Novak, Kenneth J., 73, Dixon, Ill., July 18

Renner, Ruby Ethel Schleinitz, 89, Pleasant Hill, Ohio, Sept. 1

Rivera, Jaime L., 81, Vega Baja, Puerto Rico, Aug. 1

Rummel, Dale Eugene, 85, Grampian, Pa., Aug. 8

Smith, Alice Ann (Sis), 96, Frederick, Pa., Aug. 16

Starr, Norman, 87, Champaign, Ill., Aug. 18

Thomas, Paul Douglas, 66, Eldora, Iowa, Sept. 11

Thompson, Betty Ann Lease, 94, Frederick, Md., Aug. 10

Williams, Flora Leona, 84, Lafayette, Ind., Sept. 3

Yeatman, Brenda Windsor, 74, Cambridge, Md., Aug. 4

Ordained

Polzin, Katherine, N. Ohio Dist. (Poplar Ridge, Defiance, Ohio), April 11

Stultz, Adam, Virlina Dist. (Summerdean, Roanoke, Va.), Aug. 8

Licensed

Graybill, Timothy, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Coventry, Pottstown, Pa.), Aug. 15

Placements

Ansley, David, pastor, Fraternity, Winston Salem, N.C., Aug. 16

Colan, Julio, team pastor, Lorida Iglesia de los Hermanos, Fla., Aug. 15

Kenney, Michael, from pastor, Welty, Smithsburg, Md., to pastor, Locust Grove, Johnstown, Pa., Aug. 16

Orndorff, Jan, pastor, Sugar Grove, Wardensville, W.Va., to pastor, Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va., Aug. 15

Sanchez, Aida, team pastor, Lorida Iglesia de los Hermanos, Fla., Aug. 15

Sgro, John, II, interim pastor, Prince of Peace, Kettering, Ohio, Aug. 16

Sturgis, Tracy, pastor, Lower Miami, Dayton, Ohio, Aug. 22

Waggy, Linda, from interim pastor to pastor, Pine Grove, Rockingham, Va., July 1

Rethinking thriftiness

by Jan Fischer Bachman



*“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have”
(Hebrews 13:16).*

The coffee bus comes to my neighborhood on Wednesday mornings. “Maybelle” is a restored 1974 red British double-decker bus; customers order coffee and pastries from a side window and, when there’s not a pandemic, they can sit on the top floor to enjoy treats and visit with neighbors.

I brew tasty coffee myself. I grind whole beans that are shade-grown, bird-friendly, fair-trade, and sometimes organic—“adjective coffee,” according to my daughters.

It took me three tries at the coffee bus to find something I liked to drink as well as the coffee I make. It would cost less to stick to my own kitchen. However, I like the idea of a coffee bus in my neighborhood. I enjoy seeing people sitting in the nearby park gazebo, paper cups in hand. I want to support small, local businesses, especially this one, whose description online starts out, “We care about you. . . . You are so much more than espresso and milk, and we’d love to hear about it!”

Holsinger’s *History of the Tinkers* describes Anabaptists as “industrious, sober, and thrifty people.” I did not grow up in the Church of the Brethren, but this feels familiar to me. Right now there is a bag of banana peels in my freezer waiting to be made into a cake; according to *Cooking with Scraps*, this is possible, although I haven’t tried the recipe yet. At Oakton Church of the Brethren, the boiler lasted more than 50 years; the furnishings in the General Offices in Elgin are architecturally significant, because quality chairs and sofas from 1959 are still being used. We Brethren might be too nonviolent to pinch pennies, but we certainly know how to hold them tightly!

Does the Bible support stewardship based on thriftiness and frugality? In searching the scriptures, I could not find

many references to *not* spending. From a temple filled with gold to a woman anointing Jesus with expensive perfume, there seems rather to be an emphasis on *right* spending: don’t be lazy or greedy, be content, and give generously. The Bible also says that we should not oppress our neighbors, and that workers deserve to be paid promptly and treated justly. Leviticus 19 directs us to “not reap to the very edges of your field” and leave fallen grapes “for the poor and the alien.”

How can those of us who are not farmers “leave fallen grapes”?


When buying supplies for Church World Service kits, I confess to looking for the cheapest items, to fill the largest number of kits for the money received. It seems logical to equate “making good use of donations” with “buying things as cheaply as possible.”

However, dollar stores may stifle local businesses and are listed in the “17 worst companies to work for.” Walmart has been accused of predatory pricing that puts local stores out of business, primarily buying products from countries with poor environmental and labor practices, and treating and paying workers inadequately. Amazon allegedly abuses employees and contract workers, and squeezes small companies out of business.

Sometimes we might need to spend more—or look for alternatives—to be faithful stewards.

For the most recent batch of CWS kits, I picked up 5-gallon buckets at a local sandwich shop. (Yes, it was an effort to scrub them enough to get rid of the pickle smell.) I ordered trash bags made with recycled plastic.

The holiday season offers us gifts of choice: What foods will I serve? Where will I buy them? How can I find alternatives to mass-produced items from uncaring enterprises?

Let’s look for ways to “leave the edges of our fields” for people outside our immediate circles. Let’s open our hands and let the pennies roll. 

“ How can those of us who are not farmers “leave fallen grapes”? ”



We're thanking God for you!

"How can we thank God enough for you in return for all the joy that we feel before our God because of you?" ~1 Thessalonians 3:9

This Giving Tuesday, November 30, we will give thanks for you and celebrate the work we do together.

www.brethren.org/givingtuesday



Photos courtesy of Brethren Disaster Ministries, Global Food Initiative, and Discipleship Ministries, and by Crystal Baker

**Thank you for your generosity.
Thank you partnership in the ministries of the
Church of the Brethren. We are so thankful for you!**

Have a very blessed Thanksgiving.



Church of the Brethren
Your gifts do great things!

Office of Mission Advancement
www.brethren.org/greatthings



Homes for Haiti

Building on a firm Foundation

Saut Mathurine, Haiti, devastated by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on August 14, 2021, continues to stand on **God's strong foundation** with a vibrant, growing church that is ministering to the whole community.

Join us in support for our sisters and brothers in Haiti!
Help us build upon God's strong foundation!

Give to the
Emergency Disaster Fund-Haiti Earthquake Response
1451 Dundee Ave.
Elgin, IL 60120
www.brethren.org/give-haiti-earthquake



For more information, contact Brethren Disaster Ministries at bdm@brethren.org or 800-451-4407



Photos by Jenn Dorsch-Messler

Homes built after Hurricane Matthew stand strong after the earthquake. This joint Haitian Church of the Brethren/BDM project led to a new Church of the Brethren in the community.

Haiti Earthquake Response

The earthquake destroyed up to 90% of the homes in parts of the southern peninsula which is still recovering from powerful Hurricane Matthew (2016). U.S. and Haitian Brethren Relief and Response programming is already underway in the community of Saut Mathurine.

Emergency Relief

food, water filtration systems, tarps, household supplies, medical clinics, other emergency needs

Home Rebuilding

A major program will help rebuild dozens of homes over several years.

Jesus said that those who hear his words and do them "are like a man building a house, who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When a flood came, the torrent struck that house but could not shake it, because it was well built."

—Luke 6:48 (NIV)