

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

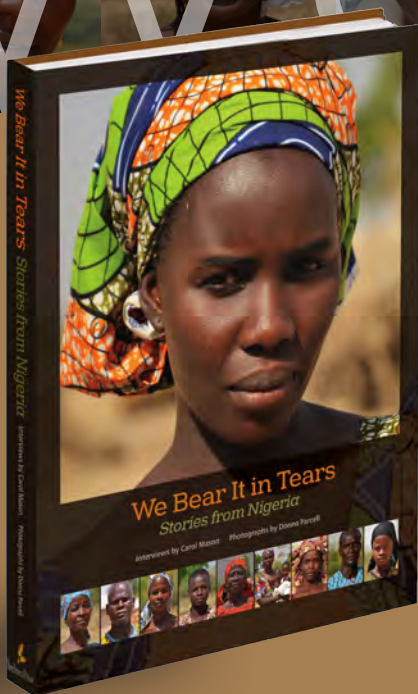
MARCH 2021 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



A season for awakening



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



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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

March 2021 Vol. 170 No. 2 Brethren.org/messenger

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

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Getting out of a pandemic

remember that my parents would wash the cartons that went into the refrigerator—and also the bananas. They sterilized motel rooms before we were allowed to touch anything. Long before hand sanitizer was a thing, they kept a bottle of rubbing alcohol in the car so we could clean our hands before entering restaurants. Most embarrassing was when they distributed their hand-made disinfecting wipes after the family was seated at the restaurant table.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

But more than once during this pandemic, I've said, "My parents were right. About everything!"

I get it now. They were youngsters during the flu pandemic a century ago (in hard-hit Kansas, no less), and surely the devastation changed their families' lives. I wish I had asked what that was like.

When our pandemic is over, how will we be changed? Surely we'll think differently about crowded spaces, door handles, and whether it's admirable to show up at work when you're sick. There will be new learnings about health care, education, and technology.

By the time this article is printed, our country will have passed the grim milestone of 500,000 lives lost to COVID-19—a number almost too large to fathom. Experts call this phenomenon "psychic numbing": While we can have deep empathy for one person, our emotional connection goes down as the number of victims goes up. One of our learnings, then, needs to be how to care even when our compassion has been numbed.

In a moderator's town hall earlier this year, Brethren epidemiologist Kate Jacobsen fielded questions about the vaccine. The answer I remember best was not about physical health—it was about emotional health. Churches not only haven't been able to process deaths from COVID, she said, but we haven't been able to process *any* deaths. In fact, we haven't been able to honor life transitions of all sorts, both negative and positive.

"Churches need to figure out how to pause and mark those occasions," Jacobsen said. "We're going to have a lot to work through. Now is a good time to plan for that."

It takes as long to get out of a pandemic as it does to get into it, she added, and the healing is psychological, social, emotional—not just physical. "We will have months of collectively working through what we have experienced."

No one can fully comprehend half a million lives, but each of us can cherish the individual stories we know. That's one way we can work at our collective healing.

Wendy McFadden

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Subscription rates:

\$17.50 individual rate
- \$32 for 2 years
\$14.50 gift rate
\$14.50 church club rate
- \$27 for 2 years
\$ 1.25 student (per month)

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For digital MESSENGER go to www.brethren.org/accessmessenger.

Visit MESSENGER online at www.brethren.org/messenger.

MESSENGER is the official publication of the Church of the Brethren. Member of the Associated Church Press. Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the New Revised Standard Version. Copyright © March 2021, Church of the Brethren.

MESSENGER (ISSN 0026-0355) is published 10 times a year by Brethren Press, Church of the Brethren. Periodicals postage paid at Elgin, Ill., and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to MESSENGER, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120-1694.



Printed on recycled paper
(20% post consumer)



“The deep roots never doubt spring will come.”

—author Marty Rubin

Spring is in the air

“You can cut all the flowers, but you cannot keep spring from coming.”

—poet Pablo Neruda

“It is spring again. The earth is like a child that knows poems by heart.”

—poet Rainer Maria Rilke

“Despite the forecast, live like it’s spring.” —designer Lilly Pulitzer

FAITH BY THE NUMBERS

According to the Pew Research Center’s Religious Landscape Study (2017), just over 70 percent of Americans identify as Christian, including 25.4 percent as Evangelical Protestants, 20.8 percent as Catholic, 14.7 percent as Mainline Protestant, and 6.5 percent as Historically Black Protestant. Another 7.4 percent say they are members of a non-Christian faith or other faith groups, and 22.8 percent claimed no faith.

Women were significantly more likely to state a belief in God or say that religion was very important in their life. Forty percent of women and 31 percent of men said they attended religious services at least once a week. Similar numbers said they read scripture at least weekly. Among those age 29 and under, only 17 percent said they attended a religious service at least once a week.

About 75 percent of Black Americans said religion was very important in their life, versus 59 percent of Latino Americans and only 49 percent of white Americans. Black Americans were also more likely to pray or participate in a Bible study.

Learn more about Church of the Brethren denominational statistics on page 20.

A BOUQUET OF FLOWERS

Can you find the following flowers in the puzzle below? Answers can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, backwards or forwards.

DAFFODIL	PETUNIA	VIOLET	ASTER
TULIP	ROSE	BLUEBELL	DAISY
PANSY	CROCUS	IRIS	LILY
PEONY	HYACINTH	LILAC	

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

DID YOU KNOW?

The term “Lent” derives from an Old English word, *lencten*, which referred to springtime and the lengthening of days associated with that season. On the Christian church calendar, the season begins on Ash Wednesday and runs through Easter—40 days, not including Sundays. It mirrors Jesus’ 40 days of fasting in the wilderness. Many people traditionally abstain from something during the Lenten season.



Art as ministry

Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren has started a new Community Arts Ministry. Jessie Houff, community arts minister, has created an online gallery and blog highlighting all the artists, creators, and makers in the congregation.

“This is a place folks can go to see all the talents we have in our church and celebrate their accomplishments as a creator for God,” Houff said. “We’ve made it accessible so that folks who may not consider themselves an artist can still be highlighted by calling them creators and/or makers. For example, we are highlighting not just visual artists but writers, bakers, musicians, and more.”



Artists recently featured: musician Jacob Crouse, baker Adriana Perez Barrios, and card maker Joy Kraybill.

The gallery displays photos of works accompanied by a blog to get to know each artist. The blog posts reflect on their creative process, especially during the pandemic. Houff plans to post a new artist every other week, beginning with the Washington City congregation and then branching out to other artists and makers in the wider Church of the Brethren community. Find the gallery and blog at Washingtoncitycob.org/art.

Thanksgiving carry-out

Luray (Va.) Church of the Brethren enjoys meals together. Fellowship while breaking bread nourishes the church body as well as our physical bodies.

This year, however, concern for the spread of COVID-19 meant missing fellowship meals. First to be canceled were the weekly Lenten worship and suppers. The big Easter breakfast was postponed. Summer came and went without a catch-up celebration, and without the annual picnic. October’s Homecoming feast, set to include a centennial celebration, likewise had to wait.

With Thanksgiving looming, the congregation’s Leadership Team planned a carry-out dinner instead. The deacons made calls to learn who wanted to participate. Timmy Williams, Frank Riley, and Carl Corney roasted five turkeys. Other volunteer cooks provided dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, cranberry sauce, and rolls. A woman from another community church, who has a baking business, was excited to



hear about the project and baked pumpkin cookies with brown sugar icing.

Pastor Leah Hileman wrote a devotional to feed the soul, to accompany each meal. She also took meals to surprise several neighbors near the church.

When it came time for people to pick up their meals from the church, Amy Chu and Lizzy Chu, a mother and daughter team, along with Leadership Team member Christopher Riley greeted drivers as they arrived. Other volunteers filled the carry-out dishes and delivered meals.

About 98 meals were served. —JuliAnne Bowser Sloughfy

Educating about racism

Virlina District has formed a Race Education Team “with the objective of understanding how racism affects our congregations and communities. Jesus’ command for us to love one another serves as our guide star as we explore how racial inequities have influenced our history and contemporary society.”

The team includes Eric Anspaugh and Jennie Waering from the Roanoke Central congregation, Dava Hensley of Roanoke First, Anne Mitchell of the Lighthouse Church, and Ellen Phillips of Roanoke Oak Grove.

35 years of peacemaking

Christian Peacemaker Teams, which was started by the Historic Peace Churches including the Church of the Brethren, is holding a series of celebrations for its 35th anniversary in 2021. “Every month we will focus on a different aspect of our peacemaking work, and we would love if you could join us.” The opening celebration invited supporters to take the “Water Is Life” pledge.

The old-fashioned Christmas basket, reimagined for a pandemic. Deacons at First Church of the Brethren in Eden, N.C., put together “baskets” of oranges, apples, candy, and raisins. Everyone in the congregation was invited to pick one up with their Christmas cards from the church. —Regina Holmes



Regina Holmes



Chibok girls escaped in February. *Some of the Chibok girls who were still held captive by Boko Haram have escaped nearly seven years after they were abducted in 2014. CNN and other news outlets reported the father of one of the girls, Halima Ali Maiyanga, received a call from his daughter to say she and others had fled Boko Haram and were being looked after by the Nigerian army. It is not clear how many of the more than 100 young women who are still missing have managed to escape, CNN said. (Artwork by Bryan Meyer)*

Church members in the news

Christopher Crater, a board member at Chicago (Ill.) First Church of the Brethren, was named among 2020's "40 Game Changers of Chicago." He is serving on the Obama Foundation. The ceremony honoring Crater and other city game changers took place Jan. 15.

Tim Joseph (below left with Randall Westfall) was awarded Volunteer of the Year by the Outdoor Ministries Association of the Church of the Brethren in recognition of his 50 years of dedicated service to Camp Brethren Heights in Michigan.



The board of the camp heard the announcement on a Zoom meeting with camp director Westfall. In a normal year, the award would have been made during Annual Conference.

Libby and Jim Kinsey have been featured by the *Ionia Sentinel* in Standard-Ionia, Mich., for their project to raise funds to bring diverse stories to the Lakewood Public Schools, where Libby is retired from teaching. The project is called "Stories from America's Landscape." As of late January, it has raised more than \$31,000. The Kinseys anticipate distributing the books in April.

Karlene Tyler of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren has joined the steering committee of the Global Women's Project. She is retired from a 42-year tenure at McPherson College. Her international experience has included travel to 33 countries, and she hopes to visit each continent in her lifetime.

College round-up

McPherson (Kan.) College is reporting a **high rate of success for its 2020 graduating class**. "Since commencement in May, 95 percent of the class has secured employment or further education," said a release that noted this success was achieved during a pandemic year. President Michael Schneider explained, "We can account for nearly every graduate when we track our outcomes. Most colleges can account for only 10 to 20 percent of any graduating class. When we report 95 percent of a class has secured employment or further education, we are talking about the entire class not just a portion of the class."

Also at McPherson, a **Carolyn Beach Endowed Scholarship Fund** will provide approximately 10 health science scholarships. The estate gift of nearly \$1.7 million creates a permanent fund to award scholarships annually to students—especially women—pursuing careers in the health science field. Beach attended McPherson from 1958 to 1960, and fondly remembered several science professors, specifically, Dr. John Burkholder and Dr. Wesley DeCoursey, who laid a solid foundation for her career in health care. She passed away Aug. 20, 2020.

At Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., a \$1.5 million estate gift has established the **John L. and Esther L. Rinehart Hamer Professorship in Music**. During their time with the Church of the Brethren mission in Nigeria, 1953 to 1969, Esther Rinehart Hamer and her husband, the late Dr. John Hamer, made a lasting mark in medicine for their role in identifying Lassa fever. Both enjoyed the college music program, John singing in the Chapel Choir and Esther singing in the A Cappella Choir and playing violin in the Manchester Symphony and Strings Orchestra. John was a member of the class of 1948 and Esther is a member of the class of 1950.

Bethany seeks international students

Bethany Theological Seminary is recruiting international students who have graduated from or have been attending the church-related colleges and universities (Bridgewater College, Elizabethtown College, Manchester University, McPherson College, Juniata College, and the University of La Verne).

These students, who must meet certain academic and financial requirements, can now apply for the Residency Scholarship program that makes it possible for students to earn a Bethany degree as residential students without taking on additional student or commercial debt. Contact admissions@bethanyseminary.edu.

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.

Bringing history to life



Alexander Mack and John Kline ride again, thanks to the ministry of Larry Glick

Interview by Dave Sollenberger

You might know Larry Glick, a member of Harrisonburg (Va.) First Church of the Brethren, from a variety of settings. He's often working behind the video camera at Brethren conferences and events, he's been involved in leadership in Shenandoah District, and he's helped to create laughs with the "NOAC News" team at the denomination's biennial National Older Adult Conference.

Among his most visible and endearing roles, though, have been his portrayals of two beloved Brethren

forebears: Alexander Mack, who launched the Brethren movement in the early 18th century in Europe (often lovingly known as "A. Mack" in Glick's rendering), and John Kline, the 19th century minister and leader from Virginia who helped carry the denomination through the Civil War.

Dave Sollenberger, the current Annual Conference moderator-elect and long-time partner with Glick in videography work and "NOAC News" antics, recently asked him to talk about that experience of bringing history to life for today's Brethren:

When did you get the idea of portraying Alexander Mack and John Kline?

I don't recall ever sitting down one day and thinking, "I believe I'll start portraying Mack and Kline." Like most calls to ministry, it came from the suggestions and encouragement of people who invited me to develop and present these stories. My first Mack portrayal was in the summer of 1991 as

part of a Brethren heritage program at my congregation in Harrisonburg. During the 1997 bicentennial celebration of John Kline's birth at the Linville Creek congregation (Broadway, Va.), I had several suggestions to add a Kline portrayal, and that began at the 2000 Atlantic Southeast District Conference.

What do you want people to know about these two leaders?

Our Brethren heritage is filled with the lives of so many women and men who have followed Christ's call in such special ways. Taking the time to read or hear about them can inform our own calls to ministry.

As leader of the Brethren movement in 18th century Germany, Mack and his early group confronted the challenges and risks of civil and religious intolerance and oppression. "Seeking the mind of Christ," they made a decision to enter the Eder River to be baptized as adult believers and commit to a new "covenant of good conscience with God."



Kline's multi-faceted ministry included witnessing to Christ's peace during the Civil War, and leading the church's opposition to secession, slavery, and military service. He took great personal risks during the war to maintain unity of the Brethren from the North and the South. It is estimated that during his 30 years of ministry, he traveled nearly 100,000 miles, many of those miles on his trustworthy companion and favorite horse, Nell.

How is the Church of the Brethren served by becoming more familiar with their lives?

I firmly believe that our Brethren heritage is a valuable resource for instructing and inspiring our lives as disciples of Christ today. When I read and study our denomination's proposed compelling vision statement, I am impressed by some of the words and phrases that have been embodied by Mack, Kline, and other Brethren historical saints. "Radical transformation" could certainly be applied to Mack and the original group of eight as their baptism initiated the Brethren movement through serious Bible study, devout prayer, and unwavering belief in the teachings of Jesus. John Kline was "innovative" in his efforts to advance educational opportunities for youth in his "neighborhood"; he was "adaptable" with his alternative medical practice; and he was "fearless" in his witness for peace. [For more on the compelling vision statement, see Brethren.org/ac/compelling-vision.]



(NOT) STAYING IN SCHWARZENAU

"What happens in Schwarzenau stays in Schwarzenau." That was the line—originally about Las Vegas—that we videotaped Larry Glick, as Alexander Mack, uttering under a streetlamp in Schwarzenau in 2008. It was during the 300th anniversary celebration of the Brethren movement, and we taped it confident that someday, some place, we would find a way to use it.

And sure enough, nine years later it fit perfectly into a NOAC News skit about what NOAC News hosts Chris Stover-Brown and Larry had done during the two years we said they had spent in Schwarzenau since the previous National Older Adult Conference.

While the line had some comedic value, it really expresses the complete opposite of what has happened in the 300 years since Mack lived in that town—thanks in large part to Larry's portrayals. Bringing Alexander Mack and John Kline into a 21st century context has helped ensure that the words, biblical insights, and actions of both men didn't stay in Schwarzenau or the Shenandoah Valley, but are being used to inspire and guide the Brethren today. —Dave Sollenberger

Why do you spend so much time and energy researching, writing, and memorizing these presentations?

I have had invitations to bring messages from Mack or Kline at a variety of occasions. Mack or Kline have also shared special times with folks like "Brethren Boy" and "Anna Mow," and there have recently been Mack presentations via Zoom. Sometimes there is a lighter side of Mack or Kline that may appear at places like National Junior High Conference, National Youth Conference, and NOAC.

Whatever the request and wherever the location, I consider the presentations as part of my ministry. It is important that I prepare in a serious way and make every effort to present

the stories with sensitivity and integrity.

Our church has been so blessed by the writings and teachings of many talented Brethren historians, past and present. I hope my portrayals can just serve as another option for those seeking to learn about Mack and Kline in a different way.

Do you ever change or alter the portrayals to fit the setting of the presentation?

I always try to keep in mind the setting for the portrayals and the audience. Because we still have a large portion of Elder Kline's diary, when I'm invited to a congregation or area that he visited I will include something like, "I so fondly remember being with your church during my visit in 1859." I find it helps to make a good initial connection with the group.

The Mack portrayal has had some changes over time. The first script included a reference to Anabaptism and Pietism, but I came to feel it wasn't enough. The current script includes a much larger block of time on how the overlapping of these two religious streams influenced and shaped the faith values of the early Brethren. Of course, when I'm with children, I try to share



WHEN I RECEIVE COMMENTS FROM LISTENERS WHO HAVE BOTH FOUND MEANING AS WELL AS FELT EMOTIONS FROM THE STORIES, I KNOW GOD'S SPIRIT HAS BEEN IN THE MIDST OF OUR TIME TOGETHER.

things from Mack's and Kline's childhoods to which kids can relate

Have you done portrayals at places that were especially meaningful to you?

This ministry has been such a rich blessing for me personally in the many people I've met and the places I have visited. One of the very special gifts was to attend the 300th anniversary celebration in Schwarzenau in 2008. In addition to sharing the portrayal several times outside the Mack Museum, I also had the opportunity to walk from the Hüttental where the early Brethren lived, down to the town and the river. Taking that walk, standing by the Eder and reflecting on that first baptism remains one of the very sacred experiences of my life.

Because of John Kline's opposition to slavery and war, he began to receive death threats from Confederate loyalists. In June 1864, while returning home from caring for a sick parishioner, he was ambushed and killed. A memorial marker sits in a pasture field at the place of his death. Visitors come to that place as a tribute

to Kline and his legacy. On several occasions, as a pre-arranged surprise to the group, I will emerge from the nearby woods and present the Kline portrayal. That setting invokes a special inspiration for me.

Have there been moments shared by your audience when you felt like something you said struck a chord?

While I certainly want to share Mack's and Kline's contributions to our Brethren heritage, I also want listeners to see these men as people who shared some of the same joys and sorrows that we experience. Both Mack and Kline endured family-related tragedies which are very intentionally included in the portrayals. When I receive comments from listeners who have both found meaning as well as felt emotions from the stories, I know God's spirit has been in the midst of our time together.

How else do people respond to your portrayals?


Occasionally someone will come up to me at a Brethren gathering and greet me with, "Hello A. Mack, or is it

Alexander, or is it Elder Kline, or is it John? By the way, what is your real name?" I tend to play along by responding: "Well, it's Larry, but I do experience an identity crisis from time to time." Thanks to the technical and creative talents of my partners on the NOAC News team, we once created a segment featuring Mack, Kline, and Larry all on the same screen discussing the conference theme. That was quite a "Back to the Future" moment!

What do you see as contributions from Mack and Kline for the Church of the Brethren today?

Brethren historian William Willoughby wrote what I consider to be such a fitting summary of Mack's life and legacy: "Alexander Mack was a truly humble man, and out of his humility he fashioned the most precious gift he could leave his spiritual progeny: a vision of life always open to new guidance by God through Christ, to new understandings of truth, and to new expressions of faith."

John Kline was a preacher, missionary, moderator, farmer, doctor, peacemaker, and martyr. In all things he lived and taught that God loves everyone and that we, as Christ's disciples, are called to love our neighbors, near and far. About 170 years ago he preached a sermon based on the text from 1 Peter 1:22: "See that you love one another with a pure heart fervently" (KJV). *The Message* translation reads, "Love one another as if your lives depended on it."

We face many challenges as Christ's disciples living in the 21st century. Perhaps both Alexander Mack and John Kline would strongly encourage us to "love one another as if our very lives depended on it." 

FORERUNNERS

Brethren Press recently debuted a re-imagined version of the long-time Brethren card game "Forerunners." Featuring the artwork of Mitch Miller (who also illustrated the Brethren Press book *25 Days to Jesus*), the game highlights 13 Brethren leaders from the past three centuries, including Mack and Kline, as well as Sarah Major, Samuel Weir, Dan West, Anna Mow, and others.

Along the lines of "Authors" or "Go Fish," players try to collect sets of four cards highlighting aspects of each Brethren leader's ministry.

"Forerunners" is available from Brethrenpress.com for \$15. More details on the personalities can be found at Brethren.org/bp/forerunners.



An unexpected connection

Bluegrass star Mac Wiseman had Brethren roots

by Karen Shelly Smucker

Sometimes connections happen in unexpected ways. Making a connection to the Church of the Brethren while listening to a bluegrass music album by a Bluegrass Music and Country Music Hall of Fame performer certainly falls into that category. But that is what happened when I listened to Wiseman's CD *I Sang the Song (Life of the Voice with a Heart)* (Mountain Fever Records, 2017).

First, some background: Mac Wiseman was born in Crimora, Va. (near Waynesboro), on May 23, 1925, to Howard Bell Wiseman and Mira Ruth (Humphreys) Wiseman. His mother was the organist in the Pleasant Hill Church of the Brethren. Mac was baptized at the age of 13. There was often music in his home. His family was severely impacted by the Great Depression, and he was also diagnosed with polio at the age of six months. As a result, he had weak ankles and walked on his toes. It also meant that he had time to learn to play the guitar. You can hear about this in the song "The Guitar" (by Wiseman, Peter Cooper, and Thomm Jutz.)


Mac Wiseman's parents are buried in the graveyard of the church. And although he went on to a great career as a radio broadcaster, singer, and businessman in Nashville and elsewhere, he never forgot his roots in Augusta County, Va. He died on Feb. 25, 2019, in Nashville.

The song that caught my ear, "Crimora Church of the Brethren" (also by Wiseman, Cooper, and Jutz) comes from those roots. It arose out of conversations Cooper and Jutz had with Wiseman over a number of Sunday visits. They were just spending time with one of their musical heroes. But as they

listened, they realized that what they were hearing was special, and sounded like songs. They began writing songs using Wiseman's own words telling stories about his life.

"Crimora Church of the Brethren" starts out talking about, "The picture on the wall behind me, that's the Pleasant Hill Church where we prayed." It mentions remembering the voices singing as his mother played the pump organ. About 30 or 40 attended the church. The "freewill offering" that was taken to help the poor would only be about three or four dollars, and it came from the pockets of those who were already struggling in the Depression. The song also talks about driving in a surrey to attend nighttime revival meetings. Wiseman believed that without the faith of the congregation, they would not have been able to continue through the hardships.

But I think what really grabbed my attention was the part about his attending a Church of the Brethren, "where a man washed another man's feet." It also talks about using unleavened bread and grape juice for communion, "for there was no wine." Those are both things that I related to being raised in an Anabaptist church.

Even if you are not a fan of bluegrass or roots music, listening to these songs paints a picture of what it was like for a young man growing up in a rural community hard hit by the Great Depression. You can find the music on YouTube, or on other online musical sites. Or, better yet, buy the CD; it is worth listening to over and over. 

Karen S. Smucker grew up in the Mennonite Church in the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia and now attends Boise Valley Church of the Brethren (Meridian, Idaho).



ABOUT MAC WISEMAN

Mac Wiseman started his musical career as a disc jockey for a radio station in Harrisonburg, Va., before catching on as an upright bass player with the Cumberland Mountain Folks. He later joined the Foggy Mountain Boys and, later, Bill Monroe's Bluegrass Boys. He released his first solo single in 1951. His best known songs include a version of "The Ballad of Davy Crockett" and "Jimmy Brown the Newsboy." A disc jockey nicknamed Wiseman "The Voice with a Heart." He also helped to co-found several major music associations.

Corinna Rose Logston of the group High Fidelity shared this remembrance of Wiseman in an interview with *Bluegrass Today* shortly after Wiseman's death:

"Every time I saw Mac, it was memorable, like being in some bluegrass dream just getting to be around him. I had seen Mac perform when I was younger, but the first time I was around him in his home setting, I was struck by the fact that he must be Santa Claus. He just had that sweet demeanor — always had a twinkle in his eye and an infectious joy emanated from him."

And country star Ricky Skaggs told the same publication:

"It's hard to say the name Mac Wiseman and not hear his voice in your head. It was one of the most unique voices in bluegrass and country music. . . . I loved his voice and his ease of singing, but the one thing I will remember most about Mac was his kindness toward everyone. He was a blessed man, with a blessed voice."

—Walt Wiltschek



courtesy of Cliff Kindy

Resurrection peacemaking

by Cliff Kindy

A collection of guns, with a young man loading the bullets and pulling the triggers, killed 50 people and injured 50 more in Christchurch, New Zealand. One wonders if it was fear or self-image that caused the gun manufacturer or the shooter to desire such a result.

Was the manufacturer afraid, or was the young man afraid? Was it fear that caused the operators of the com-

pany to sell such a product, to assuage the fear of being poor? Was it the young man's fear that required him to kill people, in this case all of them Muslims? Was he afraid of Muslims? Did killing them end his fear of them or other humans?

Did the killings somehow make him or the gun manufacturer whole? Do human beings need to kill to feel okay in their own bodies? When I

need another's death to somehow complete my wholeness, am I missing something? In war, does killing provide a positive future for me? Does the death of another person, or the ability to manipulate a gun in an effective manner, give me personal psychological affirmation?

When two of us from Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) joined the village of Rio Nuevo Ité in Colombia,

Kindy meets with Pastor Daniel Mulunda, director of the gun buyback program in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

THESE “PLANTING” EVENTS PROVIDED HOPE AND SECURITY FOR THEM. THESE ACTIONS PLOWSHARED WHAT HAD BEEN VIOLENCE AND INJUSTICE INTO PEACE-BUILDING EVENTS (ISAIAH 2:4 AND MICAH 4:3).

the community had just returned from the mountains in which they had taken refuge from violence. Upon return, the first things the community did were to plant bananas, set the hens to hatch eggs, and clean up the ransacked schoolroom for the children. These actions opened a future for them. These “planting” events provided hope and security for them. These actions plowshared what had been violence and injustice into peace-building events (Isaiah 2:4 and Micah 4:3). Using plowshare as a verb highlights the active nature of this transformational process.

It was an armed incursion into their village that had sent the community fleeing into the mountains for refuge. Those same armed actors, military and paramilitary, were still operating in the region. Yet the community of Rio Nuevo Ité did not feel a need to arm itself to be whole or shield its fear. I suspect the villagers felt some uneasiness, but why did they not feel they needed to obtain guns for safety when the gun manufacturers and young man in New Zealand did?

Alternatively, is it the need to make money that is the driving force in gun manufacture and use? Did the young man somehow gain value by killing people? Do those who encourage war do it for money? Does that justify the action somehow in the minds of politicians? Does our economic system, capitalism, require wars to survive? The push to export weapons for the “good” of the economy would seem to verify that presumption. What if maximizing wealth or economic power were not our society’s objectives?

Today, mercenaries—bought gunners and private contractors—are one of the primary sources of US military fighters.

RESURRECTION POWER

Resurrection power is the renewable energy of nonviolent peace-making. Nonviolence depends on the tools we each carry in our own hands, hearts, and minds. Nonviolence depends upon courage, creativity, and imagination undergirded with a deep spirituality. Resurrection nonviolence can be understood as the resulting compost from plowsharing the tools of violence and injustice. Using nonviolence to resolve our differences and problems doesn’t break the bank or destroy our world.

So, here are some plowsharing observations that have come from my work with Christian Peacemaker Teams: 1) War does not work. 2) A nonviolent alternative stares us in the face. 3) War has been the basis for the massive transfer of public wealth and value to corporate wealth. 4) The tax monies and investments used for war could be used instead to solve the big problems looming over our world. 5) Nonviolence is democratic and builds justice for all the world. 6) Today we are observing the end of war.

What I have experienced in the dramas of Christian Peacemaker Teams is more than hope. In situation after situation the tools of war have crumbled before the committed, persistent plowsharing of nonviolent actors. The powers of empire and violent resistance want us to think that our peacemaking efforts are useless, and we should not even make any attempt at change. The reality is that those power players do not hold the strong cards. We, as committed nonviolent activists, do hold the strong cards.

Miracle plays on our team. So, hook up your plow to any renewable, spiritually undergirded energy source, and begin turning the compost from wartime residue into the rich soil of our future!



courtesy of Cliff Kindy

Kindy tends mason Gambo with mud and blocks as they work on building a meeting house for the displaced Chibok families in Pegi, on the outskirts of Abuja, Nigeria.

If they had other, non-killing options to make a living, would they choose not to join the military? Or are they afraid? Or are they not feeling whole or good in themselves? How do we alleviate that fear without killing others? How can we enable others or ourselves to be whole without resorting to violence?

Clearly killing does not end the fear. If war or massacres ended fear, war and massacres would not be cyclic. They would not need to be repeated.

Let's go deeper.



For me, Jesus' resurrection is the event that ignites the spirit of peacemakers and turns on its head that cycle of fear, wars, and massacres. In

Jesus' resurrection from the grave, the powers of death were defeated with nonviolent power. Death was swallowed up (1 Corinthians 15:54) by the victory of peacemaking power. This is resurrection peacemaking in the flesh.

I would term this peacemaking practice "theology with feet." My assignments with CPT required me to travel, and specifically to travel into war zones. My theology expected me to put skin in the game. My feet led the way and my body and heart had to follow. When theology is just words, it can be easy to simply hold a belief as a good idea. When theology embodies action—when I put my feet on the ground—there is risk involved.

In New Testament times, the

Roman Empire was the power that set up the cross on Golgotha. Rome's soldiers carried out the execution for crimes of treason. The emperor's seal was on the stone that closed the tomb. It was Rome's soldiers that guarded the tomb and then reported the problem of the missing, resurrected body.

Rome was all-powerful militarily, but God acted with a different power that rendered as nothing the might of Rome. Love does that. The God-love that Jesus lived and talked about throughout his life is also what he invited his disciples to model in their living. That love is displayed in the tools of nonviolence, which plowshare the machines of resistance to empire as well as machines of empire. The

WHAT IS A CONSTRUCTIVE PROGRAM?

A constructive program is the plan or the steps taken to resist, repair, or replace what is not wanted. It is framed with an objective or later goal in mind.

When we moved to Joyfield Farm in 1983, there was an abundance of trash scattered all around the many buildings and on the land surrounding the buildings. Every time we would walk outside, we would carry containers into which we could gather broken glass, rusty metal pieces from equipment, plastic bags, and aluminum pull tabs. Picking up the trash was a step in improving the appearance of the farm and making the land usable.

Many of the buildings were dilapidated. Building a new chimney and replacing the roof of the farmhouse gave us a warm dry place to live. Building barn doors and replacing missing corner posts secured the barn for our use.

Starting compost piles and setting a plan for enriching the soil helped renew the earth, which was quite depleted from years of heavy use. Then planting flowers and trees began the slow process of transforming the appearance of the place and making it inviting to visitors and passersby. Each of these steps at the farm were small pieces of what we could term the constructive program at Joyfield Farm.

In a similar fashion we could imagine a constructive program in a setting of violence or injustice. It might start with public protests against some sexual, racial, or group violence or grievance. Including the aggrieved parties among the protesters affirms the recognition of the wrong done and empowers their own action of change. Then steps of accompaniment, or sessions of training for the group faced with violence, can help strengthen their resolve for a change away from the violence. Making the violence visible in the media might bring allies into the effort to change the injustice. Enabling economic skills may provide a new self-image that relieves the negative pressure of violence or transforms the earlier relationships.

The goal in these constructive programs is to transform a situation of violence or injustice. The goal is to empower individuals who have been treated wrongly or placed in an inferior role. It enables them to act on their own behalf and find allies for that effort. It takes violating power away from those who have done the violence or injustice but in a way that allows them to hang onto their self-worth. Constructive programs want each person or group to be themselves without destroying or harming others. It replaces something that is unjust with a new, just reality.



FOR ME, FOR YOU, FOR THE ENTIRE HUMAN RACE, AND ALL THE CREATED WORLD, GOD THROWS OUT A LIFELINE OF LOVE. IT IS A RESURRECTION LOVE THAT WE ARE INVITED TO EMULATE IN OUR INTERACTIONS WITH OTHERS.

instruments of love allow all users of tools of violence to concede their weakness without being obliterated.

My experience is that the tools of nonviolence plowshare the tools of war in ways that provide an opening for a future that builds humanity and honors God's good creation. At the same time, the persistence of the equipment of violence, if not replaced by a non-violent resistance, will continue to destroy humanity and God's creation.



For 30 years I have been immersed in the work of Christian Peacemaker Teams and similar efforts in many of the war zones of the world. Those journeys were team efforts with CPT in places like Gaza, the West Bank, Chiapas, Iraq, First Nation settings, Colombia, conflict sites here in the United States, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Nigeria, and Vieques in Puerto Rico. They were times that we in CPT learned about nonviolence, using old and new instruments of peacemaking.

In 1989, the Church of the Brethren asked me to represent the denomination on the steering committee of CPT. At that time, I would have said we were kindergartners in peacemaking. Maybe we have graduated into first or second grade by now. Already though, in non-violence we have the means to end any war—if we are willing to take the risks and utilize our imaginations.



My family has been an integral part of this committed experiment as disciples following in the steps of Jesus, the Prince of Peace. Arlene and our daughters, Erin and Miriam, have each been volunteers with CPT dele-

gations and teams. They have helped host CPT Congresses, gone on speaking tours, and attended meetings. They also have given me critical encouragement to push ahead on often-long tours away from our home at Joyfield Farm.




I am out for my early morning walk, a bit earlier than usual. Arlene is still gone, cooking for the volunteers rebuilding in North Carolina with Brethren Disaster Ministries. I am alone. During my 20-minute walk along Wabash County Road 1400 North, not a single car passes me, though I spot one set of car lights on a parallel road a mile away. One plane cuts cross-ways through the night sky. I hear a freight train warming the tracks heading west along the rails that pass through Sydney about five miles to the north. I am all alone with the night.

But the sky! The Big Dipper, Ursa Major—Harriet Tubman's guide star through the busy nights on the underground railroad out of slavery—is still marking our route toward the now-melting North Pole. The Dipper is joined this early morning by a billion other lights crowding the sky above my head, especially along the band called the Milky Way, the galaxy in which we on Earth are but a minute part.

As I walk, the awesome sky reminds me of Dale Aukerman's comments during a visit with him and his wife, Ruth, while he and I were on the steering committee of CPT. He was reading and commenting on a passage from Genesis 11—that God looked *down* on the huge tower that humanity had constructed *way up* into the sky.

I suspect God looks down today at

our feeble efforts of war and peace. God looks down at our cracking of the atom, our sleuthing in the ocean depths, and our drilling deep under the crust of the Earth's mantle. God looks down at our attempts to understand the human psyche to cure PTSD, frequently caused by our inhumanity to each other. God looks down at my tiny book thrown into the mix of violence and love. How insignificant are humanity's moves upon this planet in the tiny solar system thrown into our one galaxy, which is but a tiny piece of a chaotically patterned universe on a screen where there may be other parallel universes. What is humanity that God should even care a whit? (Psalm 8:4 and Hebrews 2:6).

However, the biblical record is clear: God has immense love for this tiny speck flung through space. God has endless love for this tiny you and tiny me gravitationally glued to this speck. For me, for you, for the entire human race, and all the created world, God throws out a lifeline of love. It is a resurrection love that we are invited to emulate in our interactions with others. It is a love from which we are seemingly unable to extract ourselves in the grand scheme of creation. That resurrection makes possible any task of plowsharing we may contemplate. 

Cliff Kindy has worked for 30 years with Christian Peacemaker Teams, an organization created 35 years ago by members of the historic peace churches—Church of the Brethren, Mennonites, and Quakers—to be a presence in the conflict zones of the world. Kindy is a member of Eel River Church of the Brethren in Silver Lake, Ind. This article is excerpted from his new book *Resurrection Peacemaking: Plowsharing the Tools of War* (Wipf and Stock), which is available through Brethren Press at Brethrenpress.com.



Economic peacemaking

Flourishing communities and just systems

by Nate Hosler and Naomi Yilma


Nate: We had chores to do. Some of these earned me money. We would tally the chore on a little chart on the refrigerator: 50 cents per yard for mowing (there were three yards), 25 cents for taking out the trash. These were mostly done on Saturday mornings. Through the week we fed the pets and washed dishes—these were “unpaid.”

At one point there was an option for extra income: I could pick up rocks from the garden. I didn’t really do this, since the rate of 10 cents a bucket didn’t seem like a good deal. I wasn’t really focused on the money, so wouldn’t get around to cashing out the chore card all that often. That made it more satisfying. On one occasion I got

around \$35 at one shot.

While in high school I assumed people went to college primarily so they could make a lot of money, which wasn’t too inspiring for me. Later, I would joke that I was too Brethren to think that was a good idea.

Eventually, at Bible college in Chicago, I read both the Bible and



ISSUES OF RACIAL JUSTICE, CLIMATE JUSTICE, FOOD SUPPLY CHAINS ARE CLOSELY CONNECTED TO ECONOMICS. SO ARE THE LONGTIME BROTHERS THEMES OF SIMPLE LIVING, MUTUAL CARE, SERVICE, AND PEACEMAKING.

social analysis and began to recognize systemic violence that showed up in poverty and homelessness. I always saw my call to ministry, which most specifically was a calling to peacemaking, in light of broader systems, human need, and care for creation.

All of these intersect with economics—how we live with and move money, who has access and why, and who has control. I understand our call to peacemaking in broad terms of reconciliation to one another, the rest of creation, and God. This includes questions of justice and equity, and is both personal and systemic.

Naomi: I went to school for business and economics because, back home, the only way to make a lot of money was to either own a business or get a high-level job at an NGO. It seemed that true freedom could be achieved only through financial freedom—through having the choice to spend my money without much stress. Whether it was for expensive but useless things or to use to help others in need, it was having the choice that mattered. I felt like you could have the biggest of hearts, but change could only be made when you were backed

by the biggest of pockets. It was a pessimistic way to view the world, but money was a way to gain control over my life and make the difference that I wanted to make.

The past two summers I served as a student research assistant doing literature review for a professor who was writing a book. The book, titled *The Political Economy of Digital Automation*, was about the clash between our consumer and producer identities. It was about how our interests as producers (workers, employees, businesspeople) were in direct conflict with our interests as consumers (buyers). As I gained a greater understanding of economic systems and trade, I began to see that my previous perspective was rather counterproductive. If, in order to make money and help people, I must first participate in the exploitation of the very same people, then maybe a re-evaluation of such thinking is called for.

Economic peacemaking and the global pandemic

In the midst of the global pandemic and the related economic devastation, the two of us felt the need to explore

and engage the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in issues directly relating to economics. This topic can be daunting and off-putting. It is one that people usually avoid and instead leave to economists and politicians. Talk of monetary policy, fiscal policy, money supply, interest rates, and reserve requirements can seem too academic or technical for everyday relevance.

However, if there is one thing that people take from an economics degree, it is that there are real-world applications to all these concepts. They affect not only the banks and big corporations but also small business owners, factory workers, and farmers.

Issues of racial justice, climate justice, food supply chains are closely connected to economics. So are the longtime Brethren themes of simple living, mutual care, service, and peacemaking. The economic urgency of the early days of the pandemic was more than evident, as staggering job loss numbers pinged on news sites every Thursday and experts called it “the worst recession” since the Great Depression.

We also heard the projection that the gains to reduce global extreme poverty and hunger of the last 25



IF OUR COMMITMENT TO PEACEMAKING INCLUDES ECONOMIC PEACEMAKING, THEN ADVOCACY TOWARD JUST AND EQUITABLE ECONOMIC POLICIES THAT CENTER THE NEEDS OF THE MANY IS A NECESSARY ELEMENT.

years were lost and that in the US the impact was falling disproportionately on people of color. While economic calculations are important, the real crisis is borne out in individual lives.

By calling this *economic peacemaking*, we are saying that issues of economics are part of the long-affirmed Brethren commitment to peacemaking and to our efforts to concretely address the needs of our neighbors. This is part of working toward the biblical vision of God's *shalom*.

Economic policy and advocacy

One area of advocacy for macroeconomic policies that directly affects everyday life is the release of *Special Drawing Rights* (SDRs) from the International Monetary Fund. SDRs are units of account for the IMF that member countries can exchange in return for currency. In times of emergency, countries can cash in their SDRs and use the money to supplement the economy by adding more money into circulation, import medicine and other necessities, and so on. One notable use was the release of over 180 billion in SDRs in the wake of the global financial crisis.

When there are unprecedented situations like the pandemic, the release of SDRs would allow for trade and spending to continue between countries. Farmers in rural America would still be able to export their goods and

make money because SDRs would provide countries that import American goods money to spend. This is essentially a stimulus. By feeding money into the economy, governments ensure that spending continues and businesses continue to make money.

Unfortunately, corporations seek policies that maximize their own profits rather than those that benefit the majority (the working class and the poor). And, unlike the working class, those corporations have lobbyists to advocate for their interests. Who is left to advocate for the people?

Understanding the policies that seek to influence the behavior of the economy helps us advocate for policies aimed at maximizing profits for all stakeholders rather than only the stockholders (the few beneficiaries at the top). If our commitment to peacemaking includes *economic peacemaking*, then advocacy toward just and equitable economic policies that center the needs of the many is a necessary element.


Economic peacemaking beyond advocacy

While the Church of the Brethren has long supported speaking to the government on matters of importance, we have also heartily affirmed working in concrete ways in our communities. During the pandemic, we have seen loss of both life and financial resources. On Thanksgiving Day, for example, the

front-page picture in our newspaper was an aerial shot of an hours-long line of cars waiting for a Thanksgiving meal. In this context, the work of the Church of the Brethren Global Food Initiative and congregational efforts in community gardens and food pantries are critical.

Here in neighborhoods around Washington, D.C., mutual aid groups have started up or grown during the pandemic. These meet the needs of our neighbors and also strengthen the fabric of our communities. Not only is this an important practical response, but it is closely related to the life of the church throughout history in which "mutual aid has been one of the central marks of the church."

In the words of Brethren leader Michael Frantz, of colonial Pennsylvania: "No one is to own or possess anything by himself any longer. To this extent 'mine' and 'yours' may be spoken on this basis, that this is mine and that is yours to administer and keep until a time of need for the poor and suffering in and outside the congregation" (*Brethren Encyclopedia*, pp. 901-902).

Urgent times and dire circumstances reinforce the need to prayerfully act with boldness. But we are not without resources. The spiritual legacy of our past and the present gifts of the Spirit can lead us through such times as these. 

Nate Hosler is director of the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, in Washington, D.C. Naomi Yilma is OPP associate, serving through Brethren Volunteer Service.



Spring

Unearthing God's eco-blueprint

by Randall Westfall

It was the first time this spring that the soil had softened enough that my bare feet were no longer walking *on* the earth, but *in* it. That cold, soft, soggy soil squished and slurped between my toes with every step. It's no wonder that the part of our body that has the most contact with God's creation is called our sole. For I can attest that the way to my own *soul* occurs when my bare *soles* are interacting with creation. It's there that the inner landscape reconnects with the outer landscape. It's there that *adam* (Hebrew for human) reunites with *adamah* (Hebrew for earth).

My soles are caked in the mud because I am engaged in my concentric prayer walk. In doing so, I am communing with creation as though it were a spiritual director or what the Irish call *anam cara* (soul friend).

I've found that there is an ecological and seasonal blueprint encrypted within God's creation. And it has led to a joyful discovery that I've come to know as God's eco-blueprint. And each season is imprinted with its own meanings and lessons.

Springtime is a season for awakening and activating the parts of our lives that have been dormant. The warming of the earth begins to crack the wintry cocoon that we've been living in. And as the Light gets to us, we're invited to emerge and begin detoxing our minds, bodies, and souls. This leads us to feelings of new beginnings, fresh possibilities for our lives.


For we know that the resurrection story is one that emerges from death to new life. From deep within the earth, Christ reemerges from the muddy mess of death so that our lives and souls are made fertile again.

Spring is a time for inspiration and excitement. It cajoles us to play and be joyful. To reconnect with our childhood passions. In doing so, we reclaim feelings of joy, hope,

wonder, and awe. We are inspired to tap into artistic, creative expressions such as writing, painting, woodcraft, making music, and singing.

The vernal equinox is a time when both night and day are equally balanced. We're reminded that we too must find balance in our spiritual and corporal lives. Perhaps we feel the urge to get our hands and feet dirty again by gardening, hiking, or even tackling those outside projects that have been put on hold.

It is simply a season in which water takes center stage. Whether by rains nourishing the earth or new life breaking the waters in pregnancy, water is what creates, sustains, and regenerates life. Historically in the church, spring is the season for baptism. Perhaps you could consider baptism or renewing your baptismal vows. Even the mud, which is part earth and part water, serves as a reminder that what animated our existence were both the dusty earth and the humid vapors of breath.

And as I glance down at my muddied soles, it would be easy to live into spring's shadow side, which is not inspiration but rather agitation. That's what happens when we do not take the lessons of spring to heart. It's easier to be agitated by muddy situations than to see the fresh possibilities waiting to unfurl beneath the surface. So, I choose to see these muddy conditions as an environment where new life is possible. So too is the soil of our own souls that have endured a season of winter and are now being muddied for the new thing that God is about to do. Are we paying attention? 

Randall Westfall has been mentoring youth and adults in creation connection awareness and practices for more than a decade. He is the director at Camp Brethren Heights in Michigan as well as the 2021 moderator for Michigan District. This is the first in a series of four reflections on the seasons that will appear in MESSENGER through the year.



THE UNQUENCHABLE

joy

by Louise Benson Bohrer

Unquenchable joy. These words have embedded themselves in my mind with such power. Just the thought of unquenchable joy reminds me of joys long past. But “unquenchable joy of the presence of God” refers to the always immediate presence of God in our lives.

The phrase springs from Psalm 16:11: “in thy presence is fullness of joy” (KJV), and “in the joys of life and the exquisite pleasures of your own eternal presence” (The Living Bible). There is such power in these words.

The following paragraphs are about some of my life experiences and reminiscences, mostly as a rural person coming face to face with small miracles of grace. What are your own wonderful memories of coming face to face or ear to ear with God’s creation?

■ ■ ■

One early winter evening, I stepped outside my Florida home to look over my lawn and enjoy the fresh air. At the corner of my house, I had planted a loquat tree then in full fruit.

It was quite dark and, as I stood quietly, I spied an unusual animal under the tree, apparently dining on fallen loquat fruit. His dark fur blended into the darkness. Becoming uneasy, he fled across the lawn and into my culvert. I got a glimpse of short legs, a long and furry body with a furry tail so thick it looked like a

club, and a relatively small, sleek head. I guess it could have weighed about 20 pounds.

I could not imagine what kind of animal it might be. Searching online under Florida wildlife and US wildlife in general, I found a picture of an animal closely resembling what I saw and a description that seemed to fit: a nocturnal animal called a pine marten, with luxuriant fur, short legs, and small head, whose diet includes fruit. There was no mention of habitat or range, but my neighborhood is surrounded by stands of pine.

For awhile, I described my strange visitor to one neighbor after another—no one had ever seen anything fitting the creature I described. I tried contacting biologists and such online without results. My Michigan daughter still maintains that pine martens are not native to Florida. Well, I’m not either, but here I am!

■ ■ ■

On my usual walk on an early spring morning, as I passed a pond I heard a marvelous chorus of frog song: a complete ensemble of basses, tenors, altos, sopranos, basso-tenors, peepers, and throaty croaks. I grew up in a Michigan swamp and loved to hear the peepers announcing the arrival of spring, but I have never heard anything like this before, in Florida or anywhere else.

■ ■ ■

I do enjoy gazing through my large window at my trees, camellias, hibiscus, and the neighborhood rabbit. One morning, I noticed a small blob on the window at my eye level. The blob turned out to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience: a live miniature frog, small enough to fit on your thumbnail.

I couldn’t believe he was real. The frog was absolute perfection: his tiny feet were exquisite, as were his eyes, and sweet froggy shape, and lovely green skin. I wanted badly to get my camera, but I knew he would not stay long—and sure enough, he leaped to my trellis. Think of it: a half-inch frog leaping a distance of 16 inches! I wonder if I will ever see this tiny marvel again.

■ ■ ■

Autumn 1947. I went to college in the days when co-eds living in dormitories had to observe closing hours. One fall evening, I came back to my dorm, Ronan Hall, just before the doors were locked. In the lobby were the usual group of couples exchanging 10 p.m. farewells at the time the “chaps” were prepared to lock the doors.

But something happening in the western sky captured everyone’s attention. We, including the chaps, were so transfixed that we just stood there gazing skyward, as it seemed angels were bent on sweeping all of the stars out of the sky. We stood there for 20 minutes



OF THE PRESENCE OF GOD

Divine and unexpected beauty explodes in nature all around us

watching thousands of stars gracefully falling toward earth. After it appeared that the sky still had stars too numerous to count, I went to my room to bed.

This star event may have appeared in the news, but I never heard or read of the event. Nor have I seen anything like that in the sky, ever again.



Freshly picked wild strawberries, a little sugar, and a thick Guernsey cream—has the Queen of England ever had a dessert like this?



My husband, Ed, and I had returned exhausted late at night from a 10-day trip to our temporary basement home, with no thought in mind except falling into bed. I opened the door and went into total shock at the sight of dishes, food, pans, boxes of cereal, and open containers of food scattered across the floor. Ashes and soot from the fireplace were smeared all over the walls and floor.

Who or what had broken into our house and created this ungodly mess? Ed spotted the tell-tale tracks right away. “There’s a raccoon in here!” he said. We found the culprit right away—snugly ensconced in our bed! (There were other beds he could have chosen!) The raccoon, which had been made an unfettered pet by a neighbor boy, made no protest when Ed removed him from bed and board.

I have to admit the raccoon’s person-

al habits were remarkable. He used the bathroom floor for his toilet habits—and he knew what a bed was for. He had fallen through the fireplace chimney and had made many futile trips back to the fireplace trying to get out.

We made paths through the clutter, changed all the bedding, and hours later fell into bed—ignoring (because there was a limit to how much deodorant spray could do) the decided odor of raccoon. It could have been worse—our uninvited guest could have been a skunk!



For a few summers in Michigan, a hummingbird visited the bird feeder outside my big picture window. One summer, I completely forgot about my migrating guest and neglected to put out the feeder. I was in the living room one day and just happened to glance at the window—and there was that dear little bird fluttering away, peering through the window, hoping to get my attention. That amazing brave heart with wings got the nectar it was expecting in very short order.



My daughter, Amy, and her husband have their home bordering some state land, mostly forest that is home to a variety of large and small animals. It is handy for her family to visit whenever they fancy. One spring day, I went out to visit my daughter, and she told me there was a huge patch of pink lady’s slippers. We walked over to the patch, and it was fan-

tastic. We were very careful not to step on them—and certainly would never pick them. However, I had not thought to bring a camera. So the next spring, I visited my daughter at the blooming time with a camera. To our dismay, the patch was bare! Not a hint of a lady’s slipper! What happened? Amy guessed that probably the deer who lived there found those lady’s slippers a wonderful dessert and ate them all up.



In a hotel room in Germany, on a summer evening, I was relaxing in the silence by an open window when a bird in a nearby tree began singing. It was the most enchanting birdsong, pure and sweet. In the United States, I had never heard a bird sing after dark. The birdsong ended too soon.

I went to the front desk and told the receptionist about this unusual experience. “Could it have been a nightingale?” I asked. The answer was yes! I will always wish that somehow we could have nightingales in America.



A convocation of wood storks grimly perched on the stumps, one stork per stump, in a cut-over swamp in southwest Michigan. They looked like Scrooges with feathers.

Louise Benson Borher is a member of Sebring (Fla.) Church of the Brethren and grew up in the Church of the Brethren in Michigan.



Membership in five digits

Church of the Brethren membership in the US and Puerto Rico fell below 100,000 in 2019, according to the 2020 *Church of the Brethren Yearbook* from Brethren Press. The Yearbook includes the 2020 directory of the denomination and the statistical report for 2019.

The Yearbook reported 98,680 members in 24 districts and 978 local worshipping communities (935 congregations, 33 fellowships, and 10 new church

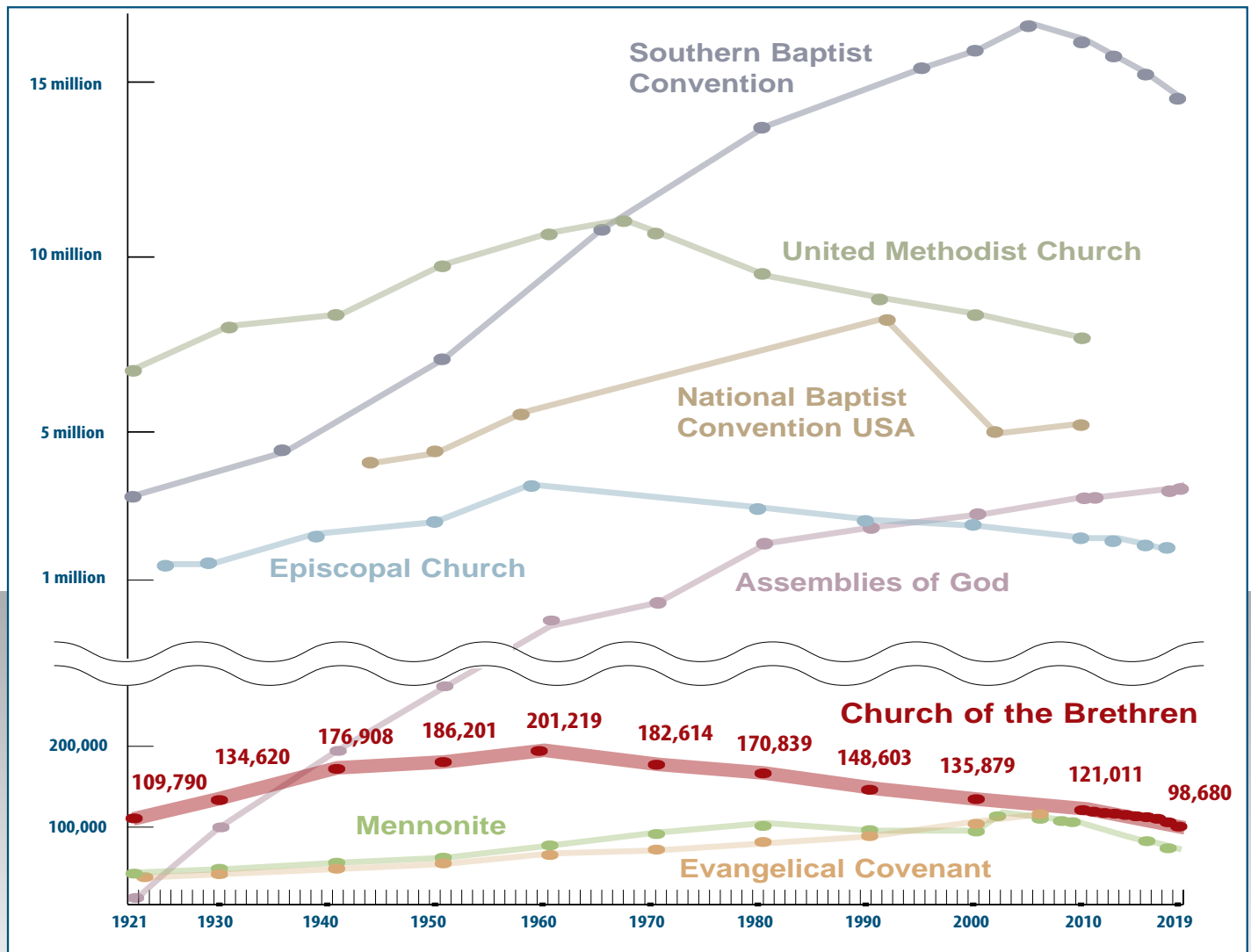
projects) in 2019—a net loss of 5,766 over the year before. Average worship attendance was 32,488.

In preliminary numbers for 2020, which will be published later in 2021, 4 new church projects were started but 32 worshipping communities closed or left—a net loss of 28. Most of the congregations that left were in Southeastern District, where 27 congregations left and 15 remained at the end of the year, including 2 that reorganized to remain

Church of the Brethren.

Some congregations that left the denomination over the last couple of years were influenced by the split-off group called the Covenant Brethren Church; others have chosen to go independent.

While recent attention has focused on congregations leaving, longer-term numerical decline has been connected far more to the size of congregations than to the number of congregations. Over the last 60 years, the number of congregations



has decreased by about 13 percent, but total membership has dropped by half.

Through a series of articles, MESSENGER is taking account of these numbers. We begin here by comparing the Church of the Brethren membership trend with a selection of other denominations. Next month we'll explore how our denomination fits into other trends in the religious landscape.

For the membership comparison, we have selected a variety of denominations in the US:

The Mennonite Church USA, an Anabaptist peace church, is the denomination most like the Church of the Brethren. Two North American denominations, the Mennonite Church (MC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church, merged in 2001 to form two national churches, the Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA) and Mennonite Church Canada. The numbers in the chart show MC figures in early years and MCUSA figures after the merger. In recent years, a number of conservative congregations and conferences have withdrawn. In 2015, the Lancaster Conference—the largest in the denomi-

ABOUT THE YEARBOOK

The Church of the Brethren Yearbook is published annually by Brethren Press as a searchable PDF file (Brethrenpress.com). The 2020 edition was released in December.

In addition to detailed information about Church of the Brethren structure and leadership, the directory contains listings of congregations, districts, ministers, and more. The information covers the Brethren in the US and Puerto Rico.

The statistical section includes membership and worship attendance reported by congregations. The number of congregations that send in reports has fallen off over the years, with only 43 percent reporting in 2019. That means the actual numbers are likely lower than stated, since the Yearbook publishes the last-known membership and worship attendance figures.

nation, with 13,838 members in 163 congregations—voted to leave. By 2018, baptized membership had fallen to 69,223 and the number of congregations to 625.


The Evangelical Covenant Church, a small evangelical denomination with Swedish roots, has about 120,000 members in more than 800 congregations. It has grown rapidly in recent years after intentional work to heal racism and become multicultural.

The Episcopal Church, a mainline Protestant denomination, is part of the worldwide Anglican Communion and dates back to the American Revolution.

The United Methodist Church, the largest mainline Protestant denomination in the US, formed in 1968 as a merger of the Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren.

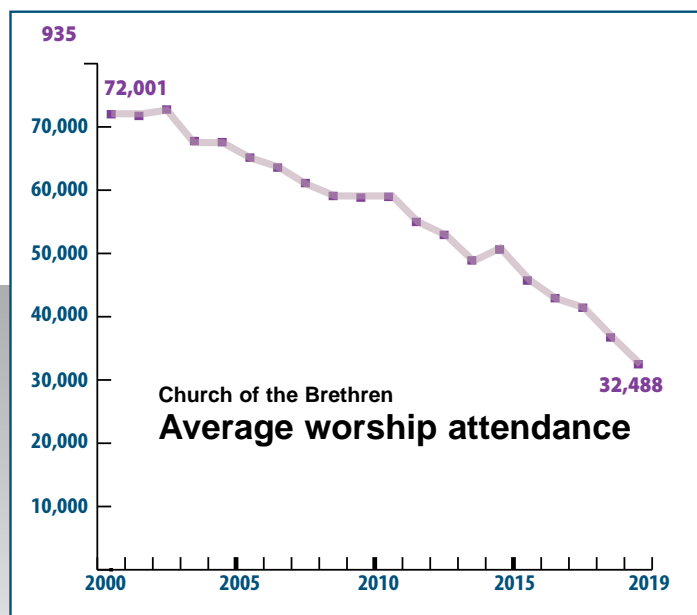
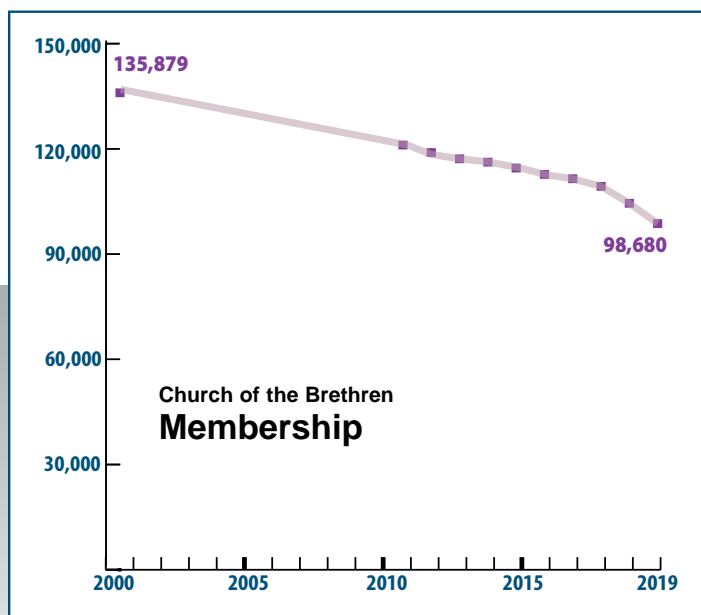
The Southern Baptist Convention, an evangelical fellowship of over 47,000 congregations, is one of the largest churches in the US. It experienced long-term growth until recent years.

The Assemblies of God, a Pentecostal denomination, has the largest Latino membership of any church in the US. The Pentecostal movement is the fastest-growing Christian movement worldwide.

The National Baptist Convention USA is one of the oldest and largest Black churches in the US. 

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford, Jan Fischer Bachman, and Wendy McFadden

Next month:
The larger religious landscape.



Sources include *Church of the Brethren Yearbook*, Brethren Historical Library and Archives, *Brethren Encyclopedia*, *Studies in Brethren History* by F. E. Mallott (1954), *Census of Religious Bodies 1936* from the US Department of Commerce, *Yearbook of American and Canadian Churches*.



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. The first essay is written by Joan Daggett and the second by William Abshire. The illustrations, by David Huth, come from *All of Us: God's Story for You and Me*.

A woman anoints

Mark 14:3-9

We find Jesus again in Bethany, a home base of sorts during the final days of his ministry, at the home of Simon, a man previously healed of leprosy. While Mark does not name the people eating with Jesus, this account is a parallel to John's story of a dinner with Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and the disciples. The names, however, are not important to Mark. What is important is the gift Jesus receives and his response to it.

While they eat, a woman comes to the table with an expensive jar of ointment, pure nard. What the woman does next astonishes the guests. She breaks open the jar and pours its entire contents on Jesus' head. The sweet fragrance fills the room. Some of the guests begin to complain: "Why was the ointment wasted in this way? For this ointment could have been sold . . . and the money given to the poor." This jar of ointment could easily cost almost a year's wages, so this was not a casual gesture on the woman's part. But the guests begin to scold her.

Jesus objects to their attack on the woman's generosity, telling them to

leave her alone. What the guests see as waste, Jesus recognizes as a gift. He tells them that she has anointed his body for burial—a gift that will be remembered long after the fragrance is gone. Sure, he wants his friends to care for the poor, but Jesus also knows that he will not be on this earth much longer. Whether she knew it or not, at that moment, the woman recognized the value of Jesus' presence and responded in love. He commends her for her act of extravagant love: "She has performed a good service for me."

Jesus' appreciation of the woman's gift calls to mind his teaching in the temple earlier in the week. While the value of the two gifts is very different, Mark chooses to highlight Jesus' recognition of two women who show love in extravagant ways. One woman is a widow who gives all that she has (Mark 12:41-44), and the other is a woman who gives perhaps the most valuable thing her family owns. Jesus commends both women as examples of giving from the heart. The widow's gift contrasts with the pompous attitude of the religious elites who loudly drop their many coins in the offering box. This wom-

an's extravagant gift of anointing contrasts with the stinginess of the other guests who seem not to recognize who is sitting in their midst.

Often unseen and unappreciated, both the woman in today's story and the widow at the temple are highlighted as examples of true discipleship in Mark's Gospel—good news for these two women and all who live on the margins of society.

Imagine being one of the disciples at the table. What might you have said or wondered in response to what the woman did? I wonder how long it had been since someone had shown Jesus the sort of extravagant care and love that the woman did. What act of extravagant love might Jesus desire from you today?

God, your good news is a story of extravagant love. Increase my love for you. Inspire me and make me bold in my loving actions. Amen.

Last Supper

Mark 14:12-26

The Jewish festival of **Passover** focuses on the covenant with Abraham, liberation, and God's protection. It is not clear how people practiced the Passover meal in Jesus' day. Documents describing the meal come only from about 50 years after Jesus' time. Mark's description of the elements in Jesus' final meal, however, are common to ordinary Jewish meals: bread, wine, a blessing. The extraordinary feature is what Jesus says after the blessing.

Judaism forbids eating blood in meat (Genesis 9:4). Priests collected the drained blood of a sacrificed animal and threw it against the side of the altar. In preparing meat, the blood of the animal had to be removed by repeated salting and washing. Yet as Jesus eats with fellow Jews, he uses bread and wine to refer to eating flesh and drinking blood. This would have been shocking even in a symbolic sense.

When Jesus says, "This is my

body" and "This is my blood," he may be echoing sacrificial words regularly spoken at the temple. Yet rather than animal flesh on the temple's altar, Jesus calls the bread that flesh. Rather than animal blood dashed against the temple altar, Jesus says this wine now takes its place. This bread and wine still demonstrate the blood of the covenant but in a new way. In the quickly arriving "hour" of which Jesus speaks in verse 41, Jesus himself is the embodiment of the new covenant and new kingdom.

During the meal, Jesus announces that one of his followers will betray him. The disciples are distressed and each one, in turns, says to Jesus, "Surely, not I?" In the scene that follows in verses 27-50, Jesus announces, using words from Zechariah 13:7, that all of them will desert him. Peter impulsively says that everyone else may deny Jesus, but he never will. Jesus responds that Peter will deny him not once but three times before dawn.

Jesus goes with the disciples to

SHINE
LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

Read along

March 7 Mark 11:15-19; 12:38-44
March 14 Mark 14:3-9
March 21 Mark 14:12-26
March 28 Mark 14:32-15:47

Gethsemane, and they disappoint him three times by falling asleep, even though he has asked them to stay awake while he prays. In Gethsemane, Jesus' solitary prayer is the poignant element. Jesus prays to "Abba" ("daddy" is the English equivalent to this intimate Aramaic address) and implores God to take away the "cup" of his suffering and death. He concludes, though, by deferring to God's will.

As the night grows dark and the authorities come to arrest Jesus, Mark's themes now all come together: about seeing, hearing, and understanding; about Jesus as the shepherd and as the bread; about Jesus as embodying the new covenant.



Mark's puzzle pieces are falling into place, yet the disciples cannot see the bigger picture. Why is that? What blinded them to Jesus' teachings? What blinds us from seeing God's vision and purpose today?

Open my eyes, Lord, to your purpose and will for my life. When I feel alone, help me to know and trust you as my loving parent. Amen.



Connection

by Jeremy Ashworth

I am not an expert evangelist. I don't have any special training or certifications, and I am no Billy Graham. God has graced some of my friends with the spiritual gift of evangelism, and I know for certain I don't have what they have. What I do have is 500 coffees.

My family and I moved to Phoenix in 2013, and I immediately started meeting with people. I discovered that most folks would agree to sit down and visit if I would simply invite them to coffee. Coffee itself was never the point. The point was—and is—connection. To listen to and share with and learn from everybody: neighbors and strangers and newcomers at church. Cowboys and homeboys and barbers and soccer moms. I was inspired by the holy hustle of my church-planting friends, who said, "Don't be picky, just be prolific." So if they were human, I invited them to coffee.

I averaged about 100 unique coffee meetings a year. I quit counting when I was 500 coffees deep.

I've met people who are interested in Jesus but not thrilled with the church. I've met people who are loyal to the church but lukewarm toward Jesus (more of those folks than I expected, frankly). I have been privileged to lead people to Christ right there at the coffee

table, and I would do the same this afternoon if the opportunity presented itself.

But 99 percent of my conversations don't go that way. In fact, most of what we do doesn't look or feel like evangelism at all. It's usually a free-wheeling combination of ice-breaking, gradual sharing, and asking sincere questions.

I have learned some brutal lessons, and made a fool of myself more than I care to admit. More than ever I try to open my heart, listen to people, and listen to the Holy Spirit. Without forcing anything, I am intentional to invite people to take the next step in their relationship with God and with others. Mostly I'm just trying to connect. Times 500.

I've heard so, so many stories. Here is one.

He was a medical professional in his late 40s, with a big voice and big personality. "My family started going to church about a year ago," he said. "First time in my life."

"What led you to start?" I asked.

"Well, the kids are teenagers now, and my wife doesn't want them to become axe murderers." Those were his exact words. He followed up with: "You know what confused me at first? All the screaming?"

"Uh . . . screaming?" Now I was con-

fused. And mildly disturbed.

"Yeah," he said, "I'd go to church every Sunday and all these people would be screaming."

I had no idea what he was talking about. I have friends and family who are Pentecostal and charismatic, so I know and respect those traditions. But the large local church his family was attending was very much not in that camp. My head was spinning.


Before I could formulate an intelligent question, he said, "Then I realized, 'Oh, they're singing!'"

"Singing?" I stammered.

"Yeah, I didn't know what was going on. I thought everybody was screaming. But about the same time I started listening to Christian radio. That's when I started to realize that the songs on the radio are the same as the screaming at church. Now I sing along. But it took me about two months to figure it out."

He did not know what congregational singing was. He is my neighbor.

Unless you live in Arizona, you and I probably don't have the same context. Heck, even the different neighborhoods of Phoenix are wildly different from each other. But God has used these 500-plus coffees to change my life, and I want to offer what I've learned in the chance that it helps encourage the body of Christ and advance God's kingdom elsewhere. I am not an expert, but I am a pastor and a practitioner. I want to be a passionate disciple of Jesus and a voracious student of my context.

So I want to be clear: This column isn't the gospel. It's just the story of my attempts to share it. 

Jeremy Ashworth is pastor of Circle of Peace Church of the Brethren, Peoria, Ariz.



Youth cabinet is named

The National Youth Cabinet has been named for the years 2021-2022:

- Haley Daubert, Montezuma Church of the Brethren, Dayton, Va.
- Elise Gage, Manassas (Va.) Church of the Brethren
- Giovanni Romero, York Center Church of the Brethren, Lombard, Ill.
- Luke Schweitzer, Cedar Grove Church of the Brethren, New Paris, Ohio
- Benjamin Tatum, Oak Grove Church of the Brethren, Roanoke, Va.
- Isabella Torres, Iglesia Un Nuevo Renacer Fellowship, Mountville, Pa.



courtesy of Annet Sitvedi

Annual Conference pivots to online

The Program and Arrangements Committee has announced that the 2021 Annual Conference will be an online event, responding to pandemic conditions.

“While we know that meeting in person eventually will be safe again,” said the announcement, “we sadly do not believe that it will happen in time to safely have an in-person event at the end of June 2021. We are nevertheless excited about the new opportunities an online gathering offers. . . . We are throwing wide the doors to thousands of Brethren who never before have been able to participate fully in Annual Conference.”

Worship services will be open to all, free of charge.

A one-time price of \$99 is offered for nondelegates to register for business sessions, insight and equipping sessions, networking events, a virtual concert, and resource sessions and Bible studies led by featured speakers Tod Bolsinger and Michael Gorman.

Delegate fees remain at \$305 and include access to the whole Conference, the right to vote, and participation in “table talk” about the proposed compelling vision.

EYN churches attacked at Christmas

In a Christmas Eve attack by Boko Haram on the town of Garkida in northeast Nigeria, four churches were set ablaze, five people were killed and many injured, five people were reported missing, and the Garkida General Hospital was looted, among other destruction.

Located in the Gombi area of Adamawa State, Garkida is the site of the first mission work in Nigeria by the Church of the Brethren and is the founding community of Ekklesiyar Yan’uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).

Another Christmas Eve attack targeted Pemi, a village in the Chibok area of Borno State, where seven people were killed, an EYN church and houses were burned, and EYN evangelist Bulus Yakura was abducted.

At least three more communities along the Biu Road were attacked Dec. 26, with three churches and many houses destroyed.

General secretary issues statement on Jan. 6 attack on the US Capitol

A statement from David Steele, general secretary of the Church of the Brethren, issued following the Jan. 6 attack on the US Capitol and Congress:

“Wednesday was Epiphany, the day marking the arrival of the Magi, seekers of the young Prince of Peace. Yet the violent actions in our nation’s capital revealed the violence of Herod rather than the peace of God.

“While the Church of the Brethren has always had an ambivalent relationship to institutions of power and government, we have consistently sought *‘the things that make for peace’* (Luke

19:42). Brethren address the government on matters of justice in our commitment to care for all people, and we participate in nonviolent protest when necessary. But the recent actions were not nonviolent protest. They laid bare racism and hatred, and breached the country’s democratic processes.

“May we together confess our brokenness, that the deep divisions within our country are also present in our church; and commit to pray for the healing of our country and our church as we all together pray and work for the peace of Christ—the shalom of God.”



Cheryl Bunnbaugh-Clyford

Present for the 2020 presentation of the benefit check were (from left) LeAnn Harnist, MAA board; MAA general manager Kimberly Rutter; Church of the Brethren general secretary David Steele and treasurer Ed Woolf; Karl Williams from Brotherhood Mutual.

Insurance benefit supports Ministerial Assistance Fund, compelling vision

The Church of the Brethren Leadership Team has distributed a Ministry Partner Program payment of \$50,000 from the Mutual Aid Agency (MAA) and Brotherhood Mutual Insurance Company: \$25,000 went to the Ministerial Assistance Fund; \$24,000 went to the compelling vision effort for technological support for Annual Conference and translation of documents into Spanish and Kreyol; \$1,000 went to the Finance Office for related expenses.

Disaster rebuilding reduced to one site at a time

Brethren Disaster Ministries projects are reduced to one rebuilding site at a time through 2021, because of pandemic surges. The Hurricane Florence recovery site in Bayboro, N.C., will close at the end of March. The tornado recovery site in Dayton, Ohio, will reopen after Easter.

Personnel notes

Erika Clary has been named coordinator of National Youth Conference 2022, to serve through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). From Brownsville Church of the Brethren in Knoxville, Md., she recently completed degrees at Bridgewater (Va.) College. She served on the National Youth Cabinet in 2018.

Victoria Ehret began Jan. 25 as interim district executive for Atlantic Southeast District. She has been serving the district as director of ministry in a quarter-time position.

Sonja Sherfy Griffith has resigned as district executive of Western Plains District, as of March 31. She started in the half-time position on Jan. 1, 2010, also continuing to pastor First Central Church of the Brethren in Kansas City, Kan. Her leadership in the denomination has included participation in the Cross-Cultural Ministries Team. In 2011, she received the Revelation 7:9 Diversity Award recognizing her as one of those who helped found the Intercultural Consultation.

William (Bill) Kostlevy will retire as director of the Brethren Historical Library

and Archives on April 17. He has been the Church of the Brethren archivist for almost eight years, since March 1, 2013. During his tenure, BHLA has responded to more than 3,000 requests for information and hosted more than 500 researchers and more than 1,000 visitors to the archive. His service to the denomination included leadership of the Church of the Brethren Historical Committee.

Pauline Liu has been named to a position coordinating volunteers for BVS, a job she held as an interim starting July 20, 2020. Previously, she worked as BVS orientation assistant for three months beginning May 18, 2020, and from 2018 to 2019 was a BVS volunteer at a L'Arche community in Ireland.

Meghan Horne Mauldin has been named to fill the unexpired term of Carol Yeazell on the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board. Yeazell resigned from the board for personal reasons. Mauldin is a member of Mill Creek Church of the Brethren in Tryon, N.C. From 2008 to 2009, she was a BVSer and assistant coordinator for the former Workcamp Ministry.

Angelo Olayvar joined the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy in Washington, D.C., in January as an intern. He is a junior at Eastern Mennonite University hoping to pursue a career in human rights law.

Shawn Flory Repogle has been named executive director of Organizational Resources in the Finance Office of the Church of the Brethren, a job he held as an interim starting April 13, 2020. He holds degrees from Bridgewater (Va.) College, Bethany Seminary, and Friends University. An ordained minister, he was moderator of Annual Conference in 2010.

Hannah Shultz resigned as coordinator of short-term service with BVS on Jan. 27 to accept a position with Georgia Interfaith Power and Light. During her year-and-a-half with BVS, since Aug. 5, 2019, she shifted the former Workcamp Ministry online in response to the pandemic, helped recreate it as Faith Outreach Expeditions (FaithX), supervised BVsers who serve as assistant coordinators, and worked to design in-person, hybrid, and online options for short-term service events.



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Family visits

by Charles Klingler

Spellbound we sat in the Kindom of Zoom—
You there and we here, as across from each other
In the same living room, and not in mere ether—
Across from each other in this very room.

Before last Palm Sunday, we languished in gloom,
While thinking ahead to when death's wings would hover
Over us all, our lives almost over,
We standing ourselves on the edge—well, of doom.

Blind force may have plotted our lives from the womb,
But perhaps on account of the dreams of our mother
And those whom we cherish who love one another,
Light shines on the other side of the tomb.

We dreamed, I suppose, that the shadows that loom
At our end are but signals that angel wings hover
Above us, and that—although life may be over—
Our prospect for joys to be had may balloon.

The thought that we talked with our dead was a spume.
Between us a great gulf was fixed—though, dear brother,
We acted as though we could talk with each other,
As freely as water flows down from a flume.

But now April flowers have started to bloom—
As so it would seem in this life and hereafter.
We here and you there, voices rise to the rafter
On earth as in heaven. All praise then to whom?

Our praise for such visits will rise like a plume.
They give us—these visits—the excellent flavor
Of joys conversational we so much favor
They rival the pleasure of bride and bridegroom. ❧

Charles Klingler is professor emeritus of English at
Manchester University, North Manchester, Ind.



The poem is about my experience of a new thing, a new way of communicating with family during a pandemic without exposing each other to the disease. The experience of this new thing is for me profoundly spiritual—a foretaste of heaven which, I now see, can be had while we are still in this life, involving interaction both with those who have died and with those who are still living.

I AM HOPEFUL THAT WITH SLOW, STEADY CARE WE AS THE CHURCH CAN FOSTER HEALING ENVIRONMENTS FOR EVERY CONGREGANT AND THEIR LOVED ONES.

Hopeful for healing churches

Thank you for Wendy McFadden's writing and recommendation of *Addiction Nation*. The opioid crisis is something that I rarely think about because it is so close to me that it feels overwhelming. When I was growing up, my mother struggled with drugs of various kinds and my grandmother only mentioned her in church via "unspoken" prayers. When I got older, I mentioned her in prayer when she was incarcerated, but never for her actual drug use.

I am hopeful that with slow, steady care we as the church can foster healing environments for every congregant and their loved ones. It definitely seemed at the time that we (my family

and I) treated church as though we expected the love and acceptance from that community to be conditional. I hope that we all can move forward now with new awareness and care for one another.

Heather Gentry Hartwell
Bridgewater, Va.

Disagreeing with the conclusions

I liked "It Is Time to End the Military Draft" in the November MESSENGER but I disagree with its conclusions.

As a retired law professor, I recently taught a class on women and the draft for Osher Life Long Learning Institute. During my career, I special-

ized in women and the law and have always argued that women will never achieve equality in the US until they are included in the military on the same basis as men. I supported the federal district court opinion that was issued in February 2019, deciding that it is unconstitutional to require men, but not women, to register for the draft. This opinion came down just before the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service issued its report.

As a pacifist, I support requiring women to register for the draft. When I was young, I would have liked the opportunity to be recognized as a conscientious objector to war! (During the Vietnam War, no one cared what I

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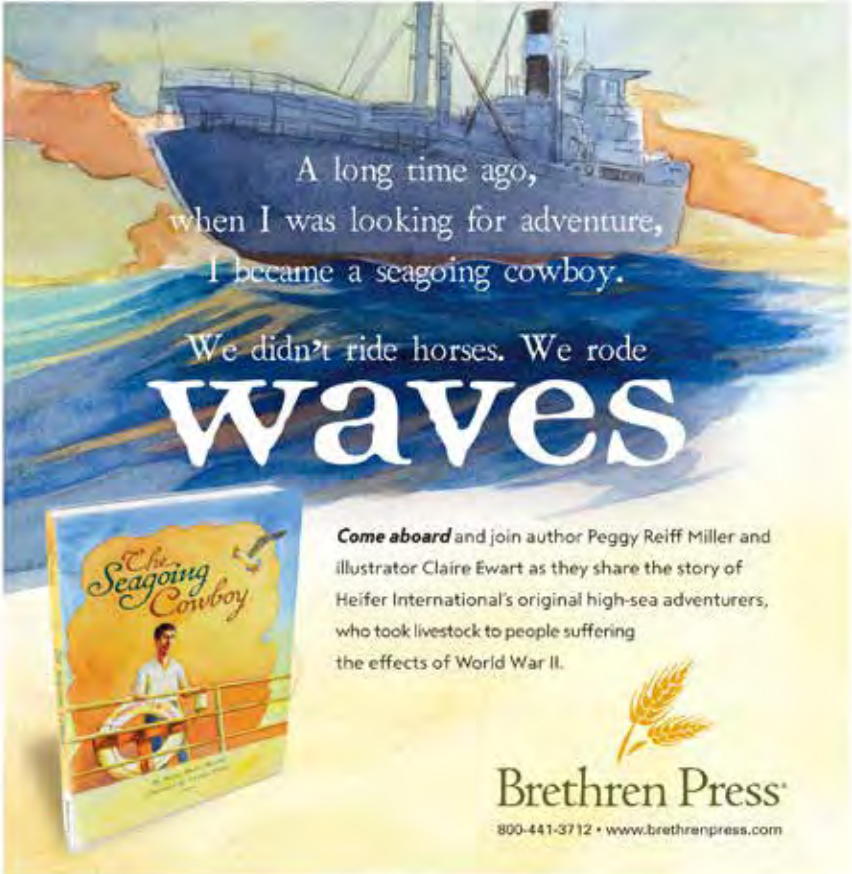
Beautiful Clivia can be found in Hillcrest's Rose Court neighborhood.

thought about the war; they only paid attention to my brother.)

In my class, I also presented the case against an all-volunteer army. Because so few in our society have any family members in the military, we have lost political control over the use of our armed forces. If we had a draft, we would not have remained in Afghanistan for over 19 years of war. Many people today don't even realize we are still involved in a war. The Vietnam War ended only because we then had the draft.

We should go one step further—we should create mandatory national service for all young people. Those who don't want to go into the military could go into a Peace Corps-like program or into BVS! In this way we would provide two years of vocational training for all young people, particularly those who live in poverty and need training to find a way out.

Marty Smeltzer West
Davis, Calif.



*A long time ago,
when I was looking for adventure,
I became a seagoing cowboy.*

We didn't ride horses. We rode
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- Melissa Hofstetter

Registration is open now! Visit www.brethren.org/leadership-wellbeing to register and to find more information.



Church of the Brethren

Looking back on 'olden days'

What has the Church of the Brethren meant to me, since I have 96 years to look back upon?

Some time ago, MESSENGER dealt with women in ministry. It took me back to my childhood, remembering our pastor's wife, Lottie, standing beside her tall husband after the church service, bidding the people farewell. She was in charge of music, programs, and all the important stuff.

She led Bible school for two weeks every summer. She had printed the words to "This Is My Father's World" on a big sheet of paper as the theme song for one summer. (And now we're singing off the wall again.)

She usually led singing for Sunday services and for our revival meetings that were two weeks long, in the fall. I can remember singing "Just as I Am" over and over, trying to get one old drunk to come forward.

And I remember how good the music sounded. I think everyone sang . . . the men sang tenor and bass, and the women sang soprano and alto, and there were solos, duets, and quartets. Several churches (not all Brethren) got together and had "song tests." Of course, this was before TV and other means of entertainment.

I can remember some of the children's day programs: we had flower drills, plays, did recitations, sang lots of songs. I remember being the Little Match Girl who died. On our way to a family reunion one Sunday, we stopped in to show my daughters where I'd gone to church. The door was open, so we went in, and I thought, "How did we ever put on such elaborate programs on such a small stage?"

I'm not sure just how regularly we had baptisms. I was 13, and I remember our pastor saying, "I know you're not afraid of the water." He covered my face with his big hand and did the

triple immersion ritual. It was on the Tippecanoe River.

After I got married, we moved to a dairy farm. Our pastor must have contacted the Plymouth pastor as it wasn't long before we got a visit from him. It was an exciting time, as they were in the process of thinking about building a new church.

A large number of young married couples and their children were attracted to the church. A new class was formed, the "Loyal Friends." Over the next few years, the Loyal Friends scattered, some finding jobs away from Plymouth, some just getting on with their lives. But a few of the Brethren-born ones stayed. And our families grew. It wasn't long until we had a kindergarten class of 30 four- and five-year-olds.

And now those kindergartners are the people who are in charge of the church.

Ellen Boos
Plymouth, Ind.



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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 in order to be published. Information older than one year cannot be published.

Centenarians

Brubaker, Glenn, 104, Ijamsville, Md., Oct. 4
Macinkas, Sara, 100, Harleysville, Pa., Dec. 15
Stump, Carl Ernest, 100, Roanoke, Va., April 21, 2020

New members

First, Roaring Spring, Pa.: Beth Burns, Herb Burns, Roy Ebersole, Bill Grubb, Carolyn Grubb, Denise Grubb, Austin Keith, Caleb Keith, Carter Keith, Justin Keith, Isabell McCready, Willow Miller, Joyce Mock, Tom Sell, Destiny Wagner
Heidelberg, Myerstown, Pa.: Miles Wagner
Ligonier, Pa.: Joseph Ometz, Roseanne Ometz, Jeremy Peiffer
Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.: Maxine Wengert
Lincolshire, Fort Wayne, Ind.: Kelin Shake, Travis Shake
Maple Spring, Hollsopple, Pa.: Larry Graham, Janet Miller
Peters Creek, Roanoke, Va.: Dianne Beason, James Merritt, Lena Merritt, Teresa Nester, John Poff, Crystal Spence, Ryan Spence
Waynesboro, Pa.: Kelly Barciz

Wedding anniversaries

Alwine, Harold and Reta, Hollsopple, Pa., 65
Barkdoll, Stanley and Hazel, Kearneysville, W.Va., 70
Belcher, Marvin and Virginia, Bakersfield, Calif., 72
Cober, Doug and Jeanne, Hollsopple, Pa., 60
Hesser, Fred and Gladys, Lewistown, Pa., 50
Isaacs, James and Brenda, Bakersfield, Calif., 50
Kees, Larry and Sheryll, Hagerstown, Md., 50
Kline, Keith and Joan, Bremen, Ind., 50
Miles, Russell and Norma Schreiber, Leonard, Mo., 60
Ontiveros, Efren and Christine, Roanoke, Va., 50

Spitler, Dale and Esther, Troy, Ohio, 71
Wilkerson, Lawrence and Audrey, Roanoke, Va., 67

Deaths

Alderman, David Lee, 64, Bassett, Va., Sept. 9
Allen, Deward L. (Charlie), 92, Brook Park, Ohio, Sept. 28
Altvater, Jacob F., 89, New Windsor, Md., Dec. 29
Bachetti, Dennis, 78, Midland, Va., Nov. 19
Baker, Barbara J., 83, Cerro Gordo, Ill., Jan. 6
Bard, Bennett R., 94, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 6
Barnett, E. Wayne, 69, Westminster, Md., Nov. 26
Barnhart, Don, 84, New Carlisle, Ohio, Dec. 12
Baskin, Carl, 93, Exton, Pa., Jan. 3
Beckner, Orissia Elizabeth (Rissie) Huffman, 98, Roanoke, Va., April 18
Bickel, David L., 81, Fort Wayne, Ind., Oct. 5
Biser, Merle Harvey, 77, Smithsburg, Md., Dec. 10
Bittner, John W., 81, Somerset, Pa., Nov. 11
Bohn, L. Alson, 95, Waynesboro, Pa., Dec. 15
Bross, Ada H. Keller, 98, Manheim, Pa., Jan. 1
Brubaker, Glenn, 104, Ijamsville, Md., Dec. 31
Cairns, Margaret, 103, Minnetonka, Minn., Dec. 15
Caplinger, Ray Franklin, 85, Peachtree City, Ga., Nov. 6
Carmichael, Nancy L. David, 75, Plymouth, Ind., Dec. 9
Carter, Leonard Clyde, Jr., 84, Daleville, Va., Feb. 28, 2020
Coffman, Joyce, 91, Boonsboro, Md., Dec. 31
Collins, Elsie M. Latherow, 88, Lewistown, Pa., Dec. 4
Coplen, Betty Isabelle, 93, Rapid City, S.D., Nov. 29
Corman, Albert Radel, Jr., 87, Chambersburg, Pa., Dec. 27
Cramer, Wayne Douglas, 78, Troutville, Va., Oct. 30
Davis, Berkley Jean, 88, La Verne, Calif., Dec. 16

Davis, Glenn E., 90, Frederick, Md., Oct. 28
Denlinger, Charles G., 80, Lititz, Pa., Dec. 24
Dray, James Francis, Sr., 89, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 18
Dubble, Curtis W., 98, Lititz, Pa., Dec. 28
Etzwiler, Ethel Anna Way, 97, Ashland, Ohio, Dec. 22
Fisher, Max E., 90, Lewistown, Pa., Dec. 2
Fogle, Patricia Ann Baulch, 72, Myersville, Md., Dec. 18
Frazier, George I., 70, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Oct. 4
Graby, Carl Edwin, 85, Bethel, Pa., Nov. 19
Grove, Terry Luther, 78, Winter Springs, Fla., Dec. 5
Harmon, Marvin Wayne, 79, Knoxville, Md., Dec. 18
Harrison, Frank Harold, 91, Roanoke, Va., June 7
Hazen, Lisa L., 54, Waynesville, Ohio, Nov. 27
Heisey, Joshua, 12, Newmantown, Pa., Dec. 17
Hepler, Gerald R., 83, McVeytown, Pa., Nov. 11
Hickerson, Judy Ann, 68, Roanoke, Va., July 22
Horner, Carole J. Eppley, 77, Davidsville, Pa., Jan. 8
Ignath, Maryln Berkebile, 84, Pittsburgh, Pa., Nov. 17
Jackson, Jane Thompson, 103, Troy, Ohio, Dec. 2
Keeling, Thelma Williford, 87, Bakersfield, Calif., Dec. 9
Kelbaugh, Barbara Ann, 82, Knoxville, Md., Dec. 24
Kimberlin, James E., 91, Dayton, Ohio, Jan. 7
Kimberlin, Johnnie Mae, 91, Dayton, Ohio, Jan. 6
Kiracofe, Elizabeth, 93, Harrisonburg, Va., Dec. 30
Little, Eileen Metzger, 99, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 20
Masonheimer, Nanette T. Brame, 91, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Dec. 5
Messinger, Merl E., 89, Spring Grove, Pa., Sept. 27
Miller, Charles William, 85, Bealeton, Va., Aug. 31
Miller, Macanna J. (Cook) Gettle, 79, Myerstown, Pa., Dec. 24
Moonshine, June L. Leisure, 83, Palmyra, Pa., Dec. 11
Morse, Doris Jean, 94, McPherson, Kan., Nov. 30
Motta-Vega, Erick Nazario, 43, Reading, Pa., Oct. 28
Moyer, Leon Z., 90, Telford, Pa., Dec. 24
Myer, J. Hershey, 96, Womelsdorf, Pa., Oct. 3

Naylor, Elva Jean Harbaugh, 96, McPherson, Kan., Dec. 6
Nelson, Anna Violet, 96, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Dec. 12
Nettrouer, James Leroy, 75, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 19
Piatt, Doris Irene Evel, 80, Ashland, Ohio, Nov. 23
Pittman, Betty A. Langham, 101, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 1
Plunkett, Margaret Head, 86, Roanoke, Va., Dec. 16
Reese, Mildred Jenette, 90, Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 29
Reese, Samuel Edward, 90, Hagerstown, Md., Jan. 25, 2020
Reniker, Betty Louise Cook, 86, Springfield, Va., Oct. 19
Rhoades, Darrell H., 89, Uniontown, Ohio, Oct. 3
Roberson, Virginia Ruth (Jenny) Stamps, 93, Dayton, Ohio, Nov. 15
Ruff, Clifford R., 94, Altoona, Iowa, Dec. 7
Rupel, Eunice Marie Crumpacker, 92, Hemet, Calif., Dec. 23
Saul, Margaret H., 95, Roanoke, Va., June 10
Schnierla, Paula A. Wallock, 74, Freeport, Ill., Nov. 16
Schrock, Marjorie E. Stealy, 88, Goshen, Ind., Nov. 3
Sellers, Jo Ann Whitlock, 75, Plymouth, Ind., Dec. 21
Shaffer, Lois Millicent (Millie), 86, Donaldson, Ind., Nov. 7
Shallenberger, Clyde R., 93, Cockeysville, Md., Dec. 2
Shipman, Ruth Anne Gronquist, 87, Montgomery, Ill., June 3
Siler, June Kessler, 92, Roanoke, Va., March 4, 2020
Sink, Barry Dean, 65, Rocky Mount, Va., Nov. 14
Staubs, Retta Jane Bohrer, 86, Martinsburg, W.Va., Oct. 8
Stough, Robert Lee, Sr., 95, Boonsboro, Md., Dec. 24
Stull, Martha McFadden, 101, Howard, Ohio, Jan. 10
Stump, Carl Ernest, 100, Roanoke, Va., Dec. 12
Stump, Gladys Carter, 95, Roanoke, Va., Nov. 21
Swynenberg, Charles Lee, 87, Montgomery, Ill., Dec. 19
Taylor, Eileen A. Charls, 96, Prairie City, Iowa, Dec. 17
Turner, John, 88, Hagerstown, Md., July 30
Turner, Phoebe Louise Mellott, 80, Hagerstown, Md., Oct. 12
Wade, Dwight L., 95, Plymouth, Ind., Nov. 18
Wade, Elsie May Helsel, 90, Plymouth, Ind., Oct. 24
Wagoner, Arthur Paul, 92, McPherson, Kan., Dec. 27
Wentz, Thelma M. Brown, 91, Martinsburg, Pa., Dec. 28
White, David I., 82, McVeytown, Pa., Dec. 30
Whitehead, Dale W., 91, Wakarusa, Ind., Sept. 24
Wilfong, Barbara Cyrus, 68, Goshen, Ind., Dec. 26
Wilson, Nancy Lou Green, 74, Troy, Ohio, Jan. 9
Wise, Ellen Mae McMillen, 89, Tucson, Ariz., Dec. 15
Wise, Robert W., 86, McPherson, Kan., Jan. 6
Wright, Nancy Lee Myers, 93, Roanoke, Va., Dec. 8
Yoder, Donald Ray, 72, Bloomington, Ind., Dec. 26
Zepp, Joy Elaine, 69, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 5
Ziegler, Kenneth Eugene, 90, Bethel, Pa., Nov. 10

Ordained

Holsopple, Bill, N. Ohio Dist. (Lick Creek, Bryan, Ohio), Nov. 15
Lorenz, Gary, N. Ohio Dist. (Eastwood, Akron, Ohio), Dec. 13
Martin, Derrill, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Parker Ford, Pottstown, Pa.), Dec. 13
Parish, Randy, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Black Valley, Everett, Pa.), Nov. 22

Licensed

Farmer, Jonathan, Shen. Dist. (Summit, Bridgewater, Va.), Nov. 22
McLaughlin, Stephen, N. Ohio Dist. (Lake Breeze, Sheffield Village, Ohio), Nov. 29

Placements

Dodd, Gabriel, from pastor of special ministries, Montezuma, Dayton, Va., to pastor, Beaver Creek, Hagerstown, Md., Nov. 9
McLaughlin, Stephen, from interim pastor to pastor, Lake Breeze, Sheffield Village, Ohio, Nov. 29
Messler, Amy, associate pastor, Providence, Royersford, Pa., Oct. 18
Ulrich, Paula, associate pastor, Oakland, Bradford, Ohio, Nov. 16
Wintsch, Robert, interim pastor, Wilmington, Del., Nov. 29

Water, holy water

Of joyful celebrations in my memory bank, the most exuberant took place in the highlands of northeastern Zimbabwe. In Nyamahumba, a village near the Mozambique border, local leaders, women and children, construction workers, and church representatives gathered for a “handing over” ceremony for a community well, one of 180 being bored or dug in the area by Church World Service and Zimbabwe Christian Care.



HOWARD ROYER

Having their own village well signified that no longer would the people of Nyamahumba need to dig into a dry river bed for a dribble of muddy water. No longer would women and children need to devote three hours a day to carrying water. No longer would families need to boil every drop of water their household

consumed. Cause indeed for jubilant splashing, singing, dancing, and praying.

The recalling of this event of three decades ago was prompted by a current invitation from Christian Peacemaker Teams to take the Water Is Life Pledge. My focus turned to Zimbabwe because it was there, in Bulawayo on the western side of the country, that I first saw a poster proclaiming “Water Is Life.” After seven straight years of drought that turned farm fields into powdered dust and reservoirs and lakes into nothing but beds of blistered earth, Zimbabweans had come to know firsthand how precious every drop of water is.

Christian Peacemaker Teams, as part of its 35th anniversary observance this year, is promoting the Water Is Life Pledge to “honor and defend the life-giving waters of our planet.” CPT engages Water Protectors to stand against pipeline construction that transgresses sacred waters of native populations, industry practices that pollute the waterways, and massive dam developments that choke off water from neighboring countries downstream. At home, people who pledge to honor the earth’s waters are asked to educate themselves about where their water comes


from, test the quality of their water, calculate their water footprint, and reduce daily water usage.

Another ally of water stewardship is Creation Justice Ministries, a coalition of religious leaders who hold water to be an everyday life-sustaining miracle, a sacred gift from God. “Through the waters of our baptism, we are reminded of how God’s redeeming grace cleanses and renews us,” its purpose statement reads. The coalition educates, equips, and mobilizes Christian communities to conduct water blessings and pursue measures to keep water clean and safe. Over the years the Church of the Brethren has had representation on its board and Brethren Volunteer Service workers assigned to its staff.

Upholding access to water as a human right, Creation Justice Ministries suggests local utilities be encouraged not to shut off water for people who fall behind in paying their water bill, particularly in the midst of the COVID-19 public health emergency.

For a quarter century the United Nations has designated March 22 as World Water Day. Of special concern are the 85 percent of the world’s population who live in the driest half of the planet and the nearly 800 million people who lack access to clean water. “What does water mean to you?” is this year’s World Water Day theme. Resources for the annual observance are available from Creation Justice Ministries and the United Nations.

In the search for life on other planets, the first thing scientists look for is evidence of water. The view of God’s earth as seen by astronauts is a “water planet”—a big, blue marble with three-quarters of its surface covered by water, of which about only three percent is fresh and potable.

Stewards of creation may ponder innumerable ways to honor and protect water. For a simple but persistent nudge toward action, place a marble—preferably a blue one—by the kitchen tap or bathroom faucet as a daily reminder of how blessed, how holy, how earth-sustaining and life-renewing is water, God’s wondrous gift. 

Howard Royer, a member of Highland Avenue Church of the Brethren, Elgin, Ill., served more than 50 years communicating the ministries of the Church of the Brethren through many media, including MESSENGER magazine.

NO LONGER WOULD FAMILIES NEED TO BOIL EVERY DROP OF WATER THEIR HOUSEHOLD CONSUMED. CAUSE INDEED FOR JUBILANT SPLASHING, SINGING, DANCING, AND PRAYING.



*Photos by Roxane Hill, Brethren
Volunteer Service, and Sammy Deacon*

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Celebrating an answered call: ¡Venid, vamos todos a reconstruir! Come, let us rebuild! *(Nehemiah 2:17)*



Distributing emergency supplies and food

When Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico in 2017, the whole Church of the Brethren and Brethren Disaster Ministries joined and supported the Puerto Rico district in relief and rebuilding efforts. In 22 months, 107 families received help and 390 volunteers served with a total program value of over \$ 1.3 Million in support of the Puerto Rican people.

Now that our efforts have come to an end, we celebrate "this work that has been done with the help of our God". *(Nehemiah 6:16)*



Emergency relief materials



Raising a wall



A house blessing

To support disaster relief and recovery programs such as the one in Puerto Rico, please donate to the Emergency Disaster Fund.
www.brethren.org/givebdm



The Castañer church hosted BDM



Rebuilding a home



**Support Brethren Disaster Ministries
Give to the Emergency Disaster Fund**
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For more information: 800-451-4407 • www.brethren.org/bdm

Photos courtesy of José Calleja Otero, Bayamón Church of the Brethren and BDM.