

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

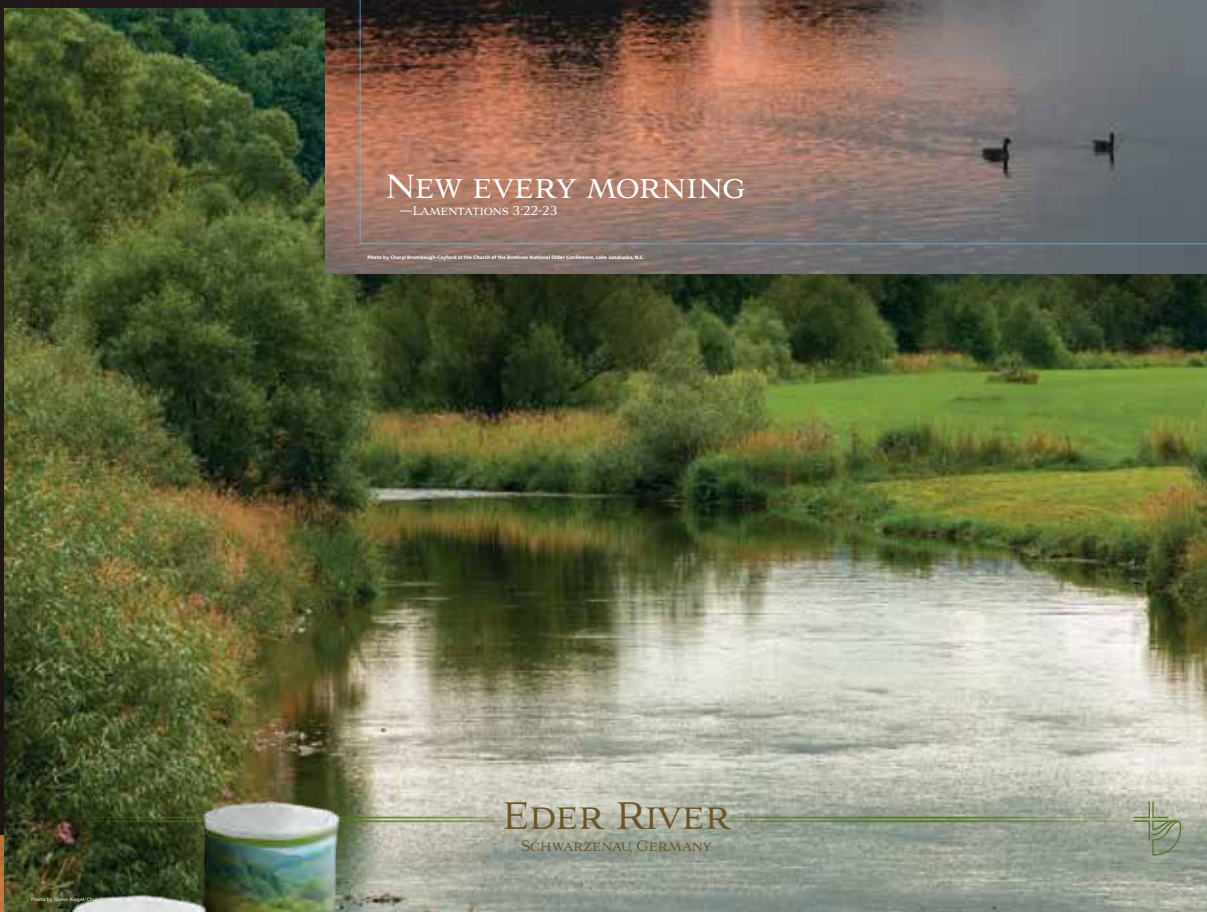
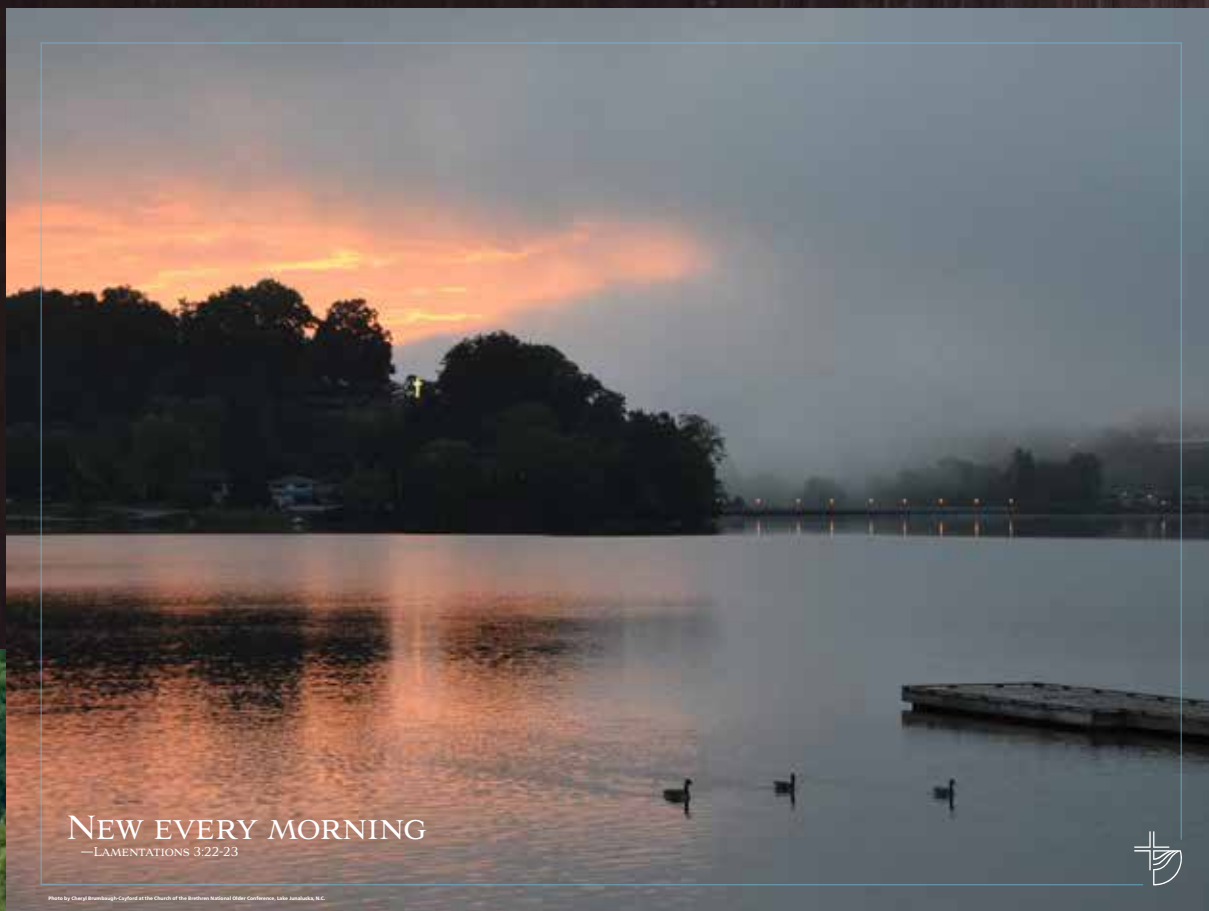
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NATIONALISM AND THE BRETHREN



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Paul Stockdale

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

June 2021 Vol.170 No. 5 brethren.org/messenger

Publisher: Wendy McFadden Associate editor: Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford
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Welcome

As I searched online for a new mat for my front door, I scrolled through many that weren't quite right. But one of those caught my attention even as I passed it by. Printed on the mat were the words "Welcome Home."

It sounded nice, but what did it mean? My house is your house? Feel free to peek behind the closet doors? The rent check is due the first of the month? It felt like false advertising, even though with the kindest of intentions. Maybe it would be perfect for a cozy vacation rental—a place you love to imagine owning but have to leave after a week.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

There's a difference between a guest and an owner. Professor and writer Drew Hart, who has spoken at a number of Church of the Brethren events, describes this difference as he explains inclusion in the church. You may tell your guest to "make yourself at home," but you don't mean that this person should remodel your living room or renovate the house. The visitor is welcome, but there are limits. The church might say it welcomes you, but hold you at arm's length.

What does it mean for the church to truly welcome? For starters, we need to remind ourselves that the house is not ours. When we extend the welcome, we are standing in for the true owner.

And what are the owner's instructions? Fortunately, there are multiple books in the Bible that tell us who Jesus welcomed. The Gospels are the measuring stick by which we know how wide our welcome should be.

Maybe most of the problems of the church stem from forgetting who the owner is. Does God watch sadly at our fumbling efforts to decide who we welcome into the house that we don't own?

On second thought, I do like that Welcome Home mat. If we take it seriously, it's hard work. But it's a theological statement we can stand on. It belongs in front of the door of every church that earnestly asks who Jesus welcomes, and then tries to follow his example.

HOW TO REACH US

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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)

If you move, clip address label and send with new address to MESSENGER Subscriptions, at the above address. Allow at least five weeks for address change.

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 © June 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)

“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.” –3 John 1:2

It is well

In April, the Church of the Brethren offered a Leadership Summit on Wellbeing for pastors and other church leaders. Sessions focused on various areas of wellbeing, including family/relational, physical, emotional, spiritual, and financial. Read more on page 10.

“Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. Anytime we can listen to true self and give the care it requires, we do it not only for ourselves, but for the many others whose lives we touch.”

—author Parker Palmer, *Let Your Life Speak: Listening for the Voice of Vocation*

“There’s a problem with treating others as you’d like to be treated when you don’t treat yourself all that well.”

—author A.D. Aliwat, *In Limbo*

“Your sacred space is where you can find yourself over and over again.”

—American literature professor Joseph Campbell

Did you know?

- In a Food Insights survey, only 56 percent of people said they were in excellent or good health.
- A United Methodist Church study in 2015 found that 5 percent of clergy regularly suffered from depression. More than 20 percent reported occasional depression symptoms.
- An Episcopal Church study reported that clergy were at significantly greater risk for stress than the general population, posing an “emotional health risk” for 72.9 percent of Episcopal clergy.
- The top five stress-related symptoms causing missed workdays, according to a CareerBuilder study, were constant fatigue, sleeplessness, aches and pains, high anxiety, and weight gain.
- Quantum Workplace reported that 16 percent of employees had a negative work situation that affected their sleep on a regular basis.
- The “global wellness economy” reached a total of \$4.5 trillion in expenditures as of 2018, representing more than 5 percent of global economic output.
- A 2018 study by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that 49 percent of Americans owned a wearable fitness device. It also found that 79 percent of employers offered a wellness program of some type.

Sources: policyadvice.net, [Global Wellness Institute](http://GlobalWellnessInstitute.com), risepeople.com, [CareerBuilder](http://CareerBuilder.com), [Quantum Workplace](http://QuantumWorkplace.com), [United Methodist Church General Board Pension and Health](http://UnitedMethodistChurch.org), cpg.org.

THE LAND OF MOUNTAINS

Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere and was decimated by a major earthquake in 2010. The Church of the Brethren has a long presence in Haiti, with disaster and medical relief projects and a flourishing network of congregations and projects, as well as several Haitian congregations in Florida. How much do you know about this Caribbean nation? (Learn more about Haitian Brethren in the US on page 6.)

1. Haiti shares the island of Hispaniola with which other country?
a) Jamaica b) Dominican Republic
c) Trinidad d) Aruba
2. Which is the official language of Haiti?
a) French b) Spanish
c) Creole d) Dutch
3. What is the capital of Haiti?
a) Santo Domingo b) Port of Spain
c) George Town d) Port-au-Prince
4. About how many people live in Haiti?
a) 5 million b) 8 million
c) 11 million d) 15 million
5. As of 2020, about how many members did the Church of the Brethren in Haiti (L’Eglise des Freres Haitiens) have?
a) 500 b) 1,500 c) 3,000 d) 10,000

ANSWERS: 1. b. 2. A trick question! It’s both a and c. Haiti has two official languages. 3) d. 4) c. 5) c. The first Brethren were baptized in Haiti in 2003.



Following in Jesus' steps

Midland (Va.) Church of the Brethren used these “Jesus footprints” and scriptures to denote social distancing when re-opening. Even though they don’t specify six feet, people understand. It is a fun way to direct everyone to move through the space in one direction and keep from congregating too closely. —**Regina Holmes**

Ten over 100

Timbercrest is celebrating 10 Brethren residents who are turning 100 this year or who already are

centenarians.

According to Laura Stone, chaplain at the retirement community in North Manchester, Ind., several residents already reached or exceeded the century mark this year including Evelyn Barr (100), Frank Bever (100), Ruth Egolf (100), Anne Garber (100), Leo Metzger (100), Mary Katherine Uhrig (100), and Pauline Pobst (106). Those on the cusp of centenarian status include Phil Orpurt (August), Helen Eshleman (October), and Bruce Young (December).

Including the centenarians, 94 people on campus are 90 years or older—representing 38 percent of residents—and 6 more residents will turn 90 this year. Timbercrest’s oldest resident turns 108 in June.

Prime time for older adults

The mission is to appreciate our position in life’s journey, and to faithfully accept it as a blessing from God which provides us with wondrous gifts and talents to still be joyful, active, and relevant servants of our Lord, not only in our home church, but also in the wider community.” —Mission statement for the Prime Time 55+ Older Adult Ministry at Ephrata (Pa.) Church of the Brethren

Every church knows that attracting and engaging young adults, especially those with families, is a top priority. Young folks bring new ideas, an openness to change, and a sense of renewal. However, an emphasis on youth can overshadow other ministries that need attention and support.

With this in mind, a small group of retired adults at the Ephrata church started talking about the essential components of a ministry for those 55 and older. At that time, the church was seeking to call a new pastor, Brian Messler. He was very supportive of the effort to meet the needs of the 55-plus segment of the congregation.

A committee created the mission statement and established goals and objectives. More than 120 names of older adults in the congregation were collected, and the committee set out to engage those “Prime Timers” in meaningful ways.

Classes and seminars on issues important to older

adults were offered, such as “Avoiding Phone and Computer Scams,” with attendance of 30 to 40 people. Socialization opportunities such as luncheons at the church and breakfasts at a restaurant were attended by as many as 65 to 70. The church offered consultation with leadership on issues and decisions that affect older adults, such as church renovation and building projects.

The opportunities for outreach go beyond the church. Older adults have volunteered at Power Packs, providing meals to families with school-aged children, and joined in a cooperative intergenerational effort that raised money for a local charity.

The COVID-19 pandemic has idled this work temporarily. But with prayer and God’s guidance, events, activities, and fellowship will soon start again. Hopefully, some new areas of engagement will begin too.

In *Aging: Growing Old in Church*, William Willimon wrote, “We know how very important friends, social contacts, and others are for the last quarter of our lives. Yet it is the conviction of the church that of even greater import is our relationship with our most challenging Friend, the One who created us and continues to work with us and to summon us to service in our old age.” —**Sam Frankhouser**

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.

Churches and COVID-19

A federal COVID-19 Community Corps invites churches and other groups to support vaccination efforts and build vaccine confidence in their communities. Go to wecandothis.hhs.gov/covidcommunitycorps.

FEMA is collecting a list of churches that can help support the national vaccination effort by providing facilities, volunteers, and other support for vaccination clinics and increase vaccination messaging. Contact partnerships@fema.dhs.gov.

In addition, federal assistance is now available to help pay costs of funerals for certain COVID-19 related deaths in the US. Call the COVID-19 Funeral Assistance Line at 844-684-6333.



A screenshot from the launch of the COVID-19 Community Corps, led by Vice President Kamala Harris (top left). Shown at Harris's right is Nathan Hosler, director of the Office of Peacebuilding and Policy, who attended on behalf of the Church of the Brethren.



Churches and the environment

• **The Green Circle at Bethany Seminary** has created a website at moodle.scs.earlham.edu/course/view.php?id=1334 with resources for pastors and church leaders who want to promote environmental awareness in their congregations. The site includes resources for worship, children and youth, and the theology of God's creation.

Curated by Ingrid Rogers, a student pursuing a certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination, the site began as a project for a course in eco-theology taught by Joelle Hathaway, assistant professor of theology.

• **The Climate Justice Task Team** in Southern Ohio and Kentucky District offered "Re-skilling Workshops" to "recapture some of the helpful skills our parents and grandparents used to practice and help save the planet in the process." Held May 22 at the "Big Tent" at West Charleston Church of the Brethren in Tipp City, Ohio, it included four workshops: "Managing our Landscapes as Good Stewards of the Planet," "Gardening for Fun and Good Food," "Refuse, Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, Rot—The Zero Waste Movement," and "Renewable Energy as Christian Stewardship."

Lemony Snicket librarian award

Janet Eldred, a Church of the Brethren member and director of the Hollidaysburg (Pa.) Area Public Library, has been selected for the American



Library Association (ALA) 2021 Lemony Snicket Prize for "Noble Librarians Faced with Adversity." The annual award will be presented June 27 at the ALA virtual annual conference.

"During her tenure as library director," said an ALA release, "Eldred has overseen major projects like completing a new, state-of-the-art \$2.8 million

library build-out on time, under budget, and mortgage-free; she also accomplished smaller daily tasks like so many in the library field, working tirelessly with her team, sweeping, shoveling, lugging books, and sitting cheerfully at library booths through rainy festivals.

"But the challenge and adversity she now faces with remarkable dignity and grace is a medical one. In 2012, Eldred was diagnosed with early-stage dementia. Since then, she has not only experienced increasingly impaired cognitive function but has also developed neurological complications, including occasional seizures and bouts of syncope (loss of consciousness). Through it all, she has remained supremely functional on the job, able to perform and excel within the library, exemplifying adaptiveness and resilience."

College news

Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind., added two Church of the Brethren members and alumni to its board: **Dr. Joshua Kline**, who serves on the board of Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren and is chief medical officer for Parkview Physicians Group in Fort Wayne, Ind.; and **J. Bentley Peters**, who has served on the denominational staff as director of ministry and human resources officer, and who also has been president of J.B. Peters Consulting Corp., senior vice president of Mutual Aid Exchange, and organizational development consultant for Advocate Health Systems.

McPherson (Kan.) College recognized three Church of the Brethren alumni with the Citation of Merit Award: **Wilbert Ethmer Erisman**, 96, retired pastor with more than 75 years in service to the church, who served 10 years on the McPherson board; **Eleanor Draper Hubbard**, who has been involved with Ventures in Christian Discipleship at McPherson and who taught for more than 30 years at the University of Colorado in Boulder; and **Dale and Christy Dowdy**, who for more than 25 years co-pastored Church of the Brethren congregations in Nebraska and Pennsylvania, carrying out peace, justice, service, and ecumenical work in their communities.

FOUNA INOLA AUGUSTIN BADET

From mentored to mentoring

by Jeff Boshart

Since her arrival in south Florida from Haiti in 1998 at the age of 16, Founa Inola Augustin Badet—known by many simply as Sister Founa—has immersed herself in the life of Miami Haitian Church of the Brethren (Eglise des Freres Haitiens, Miami, Fla.).

Badet's mother traveled to the US some years earlier, leaving her to be raised in Haiti by her father and stepmother. Her father was a captain in the feared Macoutes—a special operation paramilitary group formed by Haitian dictator, François “Papa Doc” Duvalier (he remained in the military afterwards, and retired). Her stepmother was a Voodoo priestess, or mambo.

Badet's mother paid for her travel to Florida and immediately took her to church. She recalls her mother's words to her: “I don't have much to give to you, but I have Jesus.” Church activities became the center of her life, from dance and choral groups to youth activities, Sunday school teaching, youth advising, and ushering.

“I was baptized, married, licensed, commissioned, ordained, and now am raising my boys in the Church of the Brethren,” she recounts.

Badet's call to the ministry was solidified when she was called as a young adult to serve as a delegate from her congregation to the Atlantic Southeast district conference and then later was asked to serve on the district board. Former district executive Martha Beach and denominational staff member Carol Yeazell were role models who encouraged her to seek licensing.

As a young person and a woman, Badet recalls stiff resistance to the idea from her pastor and church elders. In Haitian culture, women pastors are extremely rare. It took time and conversation with the district before the congregational leadership warmed to the idea.

Before his untimely death in 2020, district executive Terry Grove encouraged Badet to apply for her current position as director of Haitian ministries in Atlantic Southeast District. He was a great supporter and friend. She recalls being at a virtual prayer meeting with him as part of the weekly district pastoral check-in that he initiated during the pandemic. Then the following day, word of his illness and death was announced. She continues to miss his counsel and friendship.

In her present part-time role, she relates to all the Haitian Kreyol-speaking congregations in the district (Lehigh Acres, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, West Palm Beach, Naples, and two in Miami). Along with her work for the district, Badet also works as a family advocate for Early Head Start, notary public, life insurance agent, event planner, and translator (including translation of numerous papers for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference office), and somehow finds time to be a mother and wife. In any remaining spare time, Badet encourages others in their spiritual walk on a variety of social media platforms.

The main focus of Badet's job with the district is to keep the congregations connected. She emphasizes being part of a wider faith community with the leaders in these churches. Of the seven Haitian congregations, six are led by bivocational pastors. Her greatest joy comes from the opportunity to serve and bring clarity to these pastors about Brethren beliefs and practices.

The job is not without its challenges. Even though some of the churches have been part of the district for 10-20 years, there remain cultural differences over the role of a pastor, she explains. Haitian pastors differ with the Church of the Brethren on governance and leadership style; this conflicts with the Brethren emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the practice of lay leadership and democratic decision-



Photo: By Graham

making through church boards and councils. Badet's latest ministerial goal is to make sure that all the Haitian congregations in the district send delegates to the 2022 Church of the Brethren Annual Conference.

The pandemic has brought hardship to the Haitian community in south Florida. Many church members, including pastors, are employed by the hospitality industry as chefs, cooks, and cleaners in hotels across the state. Some pastors have tried to make ends meet by driving taxis. But in an economy based on tourism, making a living during a pandemic is especially difficult. The economic downturn in south Florida has caused a ripple effect in Haiti by decreasing the amount of money that Haitians living in the state can send in remittances (money transfers) to relatives in their home country.

Haitian immigrants continue to arrive in south Florida. This immigration is the symptom of the deteriorating political situation in Haiti. Country-wide strikes have waxed and waned over the past several years. Citizens face increased lawlessness, which includes gang violence and kidnapping. United Nations forces that began a peacekeeping mission in Haiti in 2004 have largely exited the country.

Civil society leaders in Haiti are calling for the international community to put pressure on Haiti's president, Jovenel Moïse, to hold overdue local and national elections. The president has responded by saying that before elections might be held, there must be constitutional reform, causing citizens to believe their president is ruling by decree.


Meanwhile, in south Florida, Badet and other Brethren



Photos By Gaeann

At her ordination service in March 2020, Founa Badet is joined by her husband, Herman Badet.

leaders stand ready to minister to and advocate for those who come and pray for Haiti. Prayer is of utmost importance in Badet's life and ministry. She constantly seeks God's wisdom, not her own. With so much responsibility, she earnestly desires more humility as she gains greater status in her ministerial and professional life.

Working with the Haitian community in Atlantic Southeast District, Sister Founa now has the opportunity to mentor others, thus passing on the gift of Jesus that her mother gave to her more than 22 years ago. 

Jeff Boshart is director of the Church of the Brethren Global Food Initiative. Previously he served as coordinator of the Haiti response for Brethren Disaster Ministries.

Byenvini!

Bondye Beni Nou frè mwen ak sè mwen yo nan Seyè a e mwen salye nou nan non Jezikri Sovè nou. Mwen rele Founa Augustin Badet, e mwen se yonn nan pastè yo ki nan Distri Atlantik Sidès la. Ki gran amou ke lanmou Bondye genyen pou nou ke li ban nou an Jezi. Se menm lanmou ke nou ap fè efo chak jou nan Legliz Frè Yo pou nou viv ansanm. Byenvini!

God bless you my brothers and sisters in the Lord and I greet in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. My name is Founa Augustin Badet, and I am one of the pastors at the Atlantic Southeast District. There is no greater love than the love of God that he shown and gave us in Jesus. It is that same love that we strive to live together everyday in the Church of the Brethren. Welcome!

"Seyè a mete fotèy li anwo nan syèl la, l'ap gouvènen tout bagay." (Sòm 103:19)

"The Lord has established His throne in heaven, And His kingdom rules over all." (Psalm 103:19)

*Sentespri ap Gide Nou. Holy Spirit Guiding Us
Lafwa pou Kore Nou Faith Strengthening Us
Men Bondye Kenbe Nou God Holding Us
Jezi Sove Nou Jesus Saving Us
Kote pye Nou Brete Where Our Feet Fail
Bondye Pote Nou God Carries Us
Nou pap Janm Tonbe We Will Never Fail
Bondye Sou Twòn La God is on the Throne*

—Founa Augustin Badet

Race, education, and the church

by Alyssa Parker

During 2020, a number of incidents of racial violence plagued our country, including the murder of George Floyd. As the movement for Black lives ramped up once again last March, First Church of the Brethren in Harrisburg, Pa., decided to make a statement, vowing to educate the congregation on racial injustice. The statement encouraged our congregation to become active listeners to our brothers and sisters of color, and to continue the work after the “moment” may have passed.

The season that followed was filled with much learning, and our congregation felt a particular pull toward the issue of education inequity in the Harrisburg school system and beyond. The implications of education inequity remain evident and prevalent in our community and this inequity is plaguing the children of our congregation.

In Harrisburg, schools are severely underfunded, and though there is a formula built to decrease the gap, our state has largely chosen not to use it. Based on research done by POWER Interfaith, the whiter the district, the more funding it receives. In fact, researchers found that on average, the least white districts get around \$1,900 less per student than their fair share, while predominantly white districts get around \$1,900 more than their fair share.


Our congregation is home to young disciples from preschool to college age, all of whom are from different backgrounds, racially and otherwise. To be the best that we can be for our young people, we must begin the work of fixing systems that do not allow them to succeed.

So far, we have begun educating ourselves on the widening

gap in education funding and have brought in a number of speakers who have worked in this area or are knowledgeable on this topic. We were blessed to hear from Michaela Alphonse and her experience working with schools in Miami, Fla., by connecting with the school board and the PTA, and by offering direct services to the schools such as after-school programs. We also heard from Gimbiya Kettering and her presentation on implicit bias in schools and the church’s role in a racist system. The church played an active role in creating the unjust system, and therefore we can be part of dismantling it.

These discussions expanded our focus and encouraged us to take other factors into consideration. Some of these included family structures and how mothers are being supported. We are now excited to welcome Sunada Roberts and Chloe Ostrich, who are active in the Harrisburg area working to bring awareness and pursue action in our own backyard.

Throughout these sessions, we have kept this question in front of us: How can we take action? The outreach arm of our church, bcmPEACE, has been a vital part of collaborating with another church to offer a full day of supervision to students in the community while they are completing online school in a program called Community Classrooms. This past year of virtual instruction has adversely affected the most vulnerable in our communities, as access to reliable Internet and adult supervision is quite a luxury. The Community Classroom program allows students to have access to breakfast, lunch, snacks, wifi, social interaction (at a distance), and help with school work if they need it.

Although we have been taking some actions, we know we need to do more. We are working toward being further involved in other education advocacy groups and even discussing “adopting” a school in the community. As with many other pursuits, we are on a journey and have not yet arrived, but are excited for what God is doing and how we may teach others what we are learning, as well. 

Alyssa Parker is operations manager for Brethren Community Ministries in Harrisburg, Pa., an organization connected with Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren and also known as bcmPEACE

Healing Racism

We are thankful to the Church of the Brethren Intercultural Ministry for the Healing Racism mini grant that made much of this possible. To see some of our work, find presentations at the Harrisburg First YouTube channel. We encourage other congregations to get involved in this ministry as God leads. Apply for a mini grant by June 30 at www.brethren.org/intercultural.

“From Slavery Through Reconstruction,” by Harlem Renaissance muralist Aaron Douglas, 1934.





Summer

Unearthing God's eco-blueprint

by Randall Westfall

Every landscape has a song. It is a matter of whether we know how to read it and hear it. That is the seminal question I raise to campers and musically minded folks who are seeking to draw inspiration from deep listening to creation.

One of the ways I do this is by inviting them to glance out over the horizon and take note of the tree line. Notice the rise and fall of the various treetops. Next, imagine placing a clear projector sheet with a musical staff against the tree line. Then chart where the notes are, and you can begin to get a sense of that landscape's song.

I often take my banjo or mandolin outside for such an opportunity, and numerous tunes have found their way across my strings as a result. I did this practice while visiting various Church of the Brethren camps over the years and have written tunes inspired by each of those landscapes. In addition to listening for bird language and tracking wildlife, this is one of the more profound ways that we can attune ourselves to creation's songs.

If we're paying attention, God's Holy Spirit will speak (and *sing*) to us through creation. There's an ecological blueprint infused within creation and the seasons that has its own meanings and lessons. And revelations drawn from creation seem to come most easily during those long, hot summer days.

As we arrive at the summer solstice in this part of the world, we are actively living in the balance between perspiration and relaxation. The days are long and hot, and the nights are brief and warm. We imitate the natural world as we, too, move from inertia into full-on, active, physical labor. Amid all that perspiration, it is a season where we feel most alive.


The flip side of the season is making time for relaxation and internalization. We schedule summer vacations, send children to summer camp, and attend summer concerts and festivals. This is all because we postpone educational opportunities for a few months in favor of applying what we've learned to our lives. It's no wonder why some of our most cherished memories from childhood have this season as the backdrop.

The element that takes center stage is the earth. It is a time for deepening connections with creation as we labor and caretake God's earth. Farmers and gardeners are tending the soils and encouraging seedlings to grow and produce. Farmer's markets pop up along roadsides and parking lots as we share

our bounty of fresh fruits and vegetables with each other.

On the church liturgical calendar, summer occurs at the start of "Ordinary Time," where there are no major church holidays. We often pause our Christian education opportunities because we know that summer church attendance tends to be less than other seasons. Yet it is during the summer that we often see a surge in revival meetings as folks seek to emulate the intense focus on discipleship in Christ with the toils and labors of the hot summer days.

In a spiritual sense, it is a time for growth. Just as children have summer growth spurts, we too can benefit from infusing our earthly toils with our discipleship. We take advantage of the Light to deepen every aspect of our discipleship and spiritual formation. When we embody the gifts of summer's abundance, we better understand what Jesus meant by abundant life.

Just like those songs that are resonating within creation, it takes a bit more work to draw out the revelations that summer presents. May our perspiration and relaxation lead to internalization as we celebrate the season of activity, vibrancy, diversity, and abundance. 

Randall Westfall has been mentoring youth and adults in creation connection awareness and practices for more than a decade. He is director at Camp Brethren Heights (Rodney, Mich.) as well as the 2021 moderator for Michigan District.

For more information on the Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) Music Project, visit the "Outdoor Ministries of the CoB" YouTube channel at [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com).



Spiritual wellness

Kindling our hearts to burn with thy flame

by Erin Matteson

Spiritual wellness is much more an art and practice than a formula. We discover its many facets through the intentional living of our daily lives with God. Sometimes it feels like mysterious graced gift. Other times we are aware of how we create spiritual wellness in partnership with the Holy Spirit.

Because spiritual wellness unfolds uniquely in and from each of us, more helpful than a rigid definition or plan may be creating a collage of pieces for prayer to carry us further into the heart of the matter. Join me as I share some snippets from my collage for maintaining a kindled heart, and wonder with you about yours.

First, what words come to mind when you think of spiritual wellness?

Write: *Spiritual wellness is* _____ (and answer that phrase till there are no more answers coming).

Then write: *Spiritual wellness is not* _____. This can provide a continuum of what you feel spiritual wellness is and be a fruitful place of prayer for you.

Saint Irenaeus, a Greek bishop of the 2nd century, once said that “the glory of God is a human being fully alive.” Years later, pastor, educator, and social activist Howard Thurman said, “Don’t ask what the world needs. Ask what makes you come alive, and go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.”

Spiritual wellness on some level has to do with *aliveness and connectedness*—feeling alive and connected to self, and so to God, whom scripture tells us is found both deep within and beyond. Getting in touch with and living into our passions is a part of what brings us alive. Music, being in creation, woodworking, whatever we each feel called to and equipped for may be some of the most important practices for



WHAT DO GREEN PASTURES OR STILL WATERS LOOK LIKE TO YOU? WHEN YOU SENSE GOD LEADING YOU THERE, DO YOU GO?

maintaining spiritual wellness.

Hildegard von Bingen, prioress, musician, and theologian of the 12th century, coined the term *viriditas*, or the greening power of Christ, to talk about how all creation and humanity is “showered with greening refreshment, the vitality to bear fruit.” She believed Christ brings “lush green to shriveled and wilted people and institutions.” She said that “greening love hastens to the aid of all.”

How green do you feel right now? What makes you green?

John O’Donohue, Irish priest, poet, and author, has said that “spirituality is the art of homecoming.” How might spiritual wellness be the art of coming home to God, our eternal home, over and over again? Certainly when that happens, through our passions, scripture, worship, meaningful times in community and more, it keeps us

coming alive.

Henri Nouwen points us to interior freedom as a characteristic of spiritual wellness: “When you are interiorly free, you call others to freedom, whether you know it or not. Freedom attracts wherever it appears. A free man or woman creates a space where others feel safe and want to dwell. Our world is so full of conditions, demands, requirements, and obligations that we often wonder what is expected of us. But when we meet a truly free person there are no expectations, only an invitation to reach into ourselves and discover there our own freedom. Where true inner freedom is, there God is. And where God is, there we want to be.”

What spiritual practices help you feel more at home and free?

We can learn from our Church of the Brethren heritage. Sister Anna Mow once said, “There is an inner realm, the country in which the true self grows, that is more important than things that can be seen or handled.” Missionary to India, author, and ordained minister, Sister Anna knew the value of listening for the voice of God in our internal conversations, as well as spending time in external experiences of service. She knew when quietly communing with God we hear challenges, heal from woundedness, embrace the essence or image of God within. She knew that prayerfully listening into experiences and interactions allows them to steep in us, allows God to deepen their meaning, and takes us to a deeper faith for living outward in even richer ways.

As important as it is for us to be a people of social justice and activism—holding signs, using our voices, marching for equity for others—it is through time apart and inward that the necessary spiritual activism God is always about can happen. If white supremacy and our woundedness are to be healed and transformed, it will be from persons of faith going first into the streets of their own hearts and then into the streets of our communities.

Desert fathers and mothers knew this. John Cassian, from the 4th and 5th centuries, developed practices for prayer to deal with eight afflictive thoughts—among them

WE HEAR THE INVITATION TO GO INWARD TO GET IN TOUCH WITH WHAT IS STIRRING IN US, IN ORDER TO KNOW HOW AND WHAT KINDS OF NEW WORLDS TO GO OUT AND BUILD OUTSIDE US.

anger, dejection, vainglory, and pride. It was the Radical Pietists who first influenced one of our founders, Alexander Mack, teaching him about the inner spark—the spirit dwelling deep within worth listening to.

As we sing the beloved Brethren hymn “Move in our Midst,” by Ken Morse, we pray, “Kindle our hearts to burn with thy flame” and “stir us to build new worlds in thy name.” We hear again the notion of a kindled heart: God’s spark or flame within as a key ingredient of faith, and so perhaps of spiritual wellness. We hear the invitation to go inward to get in touch with what is stirring in us, in order to know how and what kinds of new worlds to go out and build outside us.

There are many scriptures for thinking and praying about spiritual wellness. From Acts 17, what does it mean to live, move, and have our being in God? From John 10, what does it mean that Jesus came that we might have life, and have it abundantly? What is the abundant life Jesus wants for us? From Psalm 46:10, “Be still and know that I am God.” Do you have a rhythm of busyness and then being still?

From 1 Timothy 6, what does it mean for us to “take hold of the life that really is life”? What kind of life are we being encouraged to take hold of?

Consider Mark, chapter 12, the greatest commandments. What does it mean to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength,” and also to love your neighbor as yourself? Is Jesus referencing all the ways God comes to us, and so all the ways that we can reach out to God, as well, in order to know spiritual wellness? Do we balance loving neighbor and self, self-compassion with compassion for others?

How does God “make you lie down in green pastures . . . lead you beside still waters . . . restore your soul” (Psalm 23)? What do green pastures or still waters look like to you? When

you sense God leading you there, do you go?


Certainly as people of faith we should be looking to Jesus to learn about spiritual wellness. The Gospels clearly show

Jesus modeling the balance or steady breath we have been talking about, a rhythm of going *out* to be among the people, and then creating space to move *inward* and speak with God.

What kinds of images speak to you about spiritual wellness? I have several: an image of a woman made of green grasses that reminds me of Hildegard’s notion of *veriditas*, the greening power of Christ. An abstract image of a person with arms lifted to the sky that reminds me of aliveness, connectedness to the sacred within, and holding all. An image of John the beloved disciple with his head on Jesus’ chest. It is said to be John listening and trying to stay close to the heartbeat of God.

Former Church of the Brethren pastor Glenn Mitchell, a spiritual director and co-executive director of Oasis Ministries in Pennsylvania, recently wrote: “Spiritual practices frame and invite life. They don’t pull us from our life for a time as much as pull life to our practice. Our spiritual practices keep oneing us, joining us, to our life . . . to Spirit.”

In other words, our spiritual practices help us realize and deepen the connectedness between our life and the living God. As they do this, they deepen our spiritual wellness.

I encourage you to develop your own collage of words, scripture, images, and more that can become the centerpiece of a practice for enriching your own spiritual wellness. You can keep this collage at home or at the office to guide you in *visio divina* (divine seeing), to enrich your praying, and to deepen the joining of your life with the Source of all life. 

An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, Erin Matteson is a spiritual director, retreat leader, writer, and speaker. She led a session on this topic at the denominational Leadership Summit on Wellbeing, held virtually in April.



Paul Stockdale



flickr.com / Stephen Little

What are you worth?

by John S. Breidenstine

God bless the lowly cicada, sometimes known as a 17-year locust.

These are insects that entertain/irritate us with a sustained shrill and high-pitched sound sometime during the summer months. At least one species of these creatures will come to life this summer, in certain areas of the country, after being dormant for 17 years. They will live for a few weeks, mate, and then die.

One radio commentator questioned what possible worth such a creature could have, other than as a food source every 17 years for something else. A listener called back with an

answer. “The cicada,” he said, “lays its eggs high on the branches of an oak tree. Something of what is deposited on these branches eats away at them and they fall to the ground. The eggs then become dormant in the ground for the next 17 years. And, it just so happens,” he added, “that these oak trees need to be pruned every 17 years.”

Cicadas—pruners of trees? Who would have guessed? It says something to me about the harmony of God’s creation, how even a cicada has a special place in the scheme of God’s creative work.

Have you ever wondered about

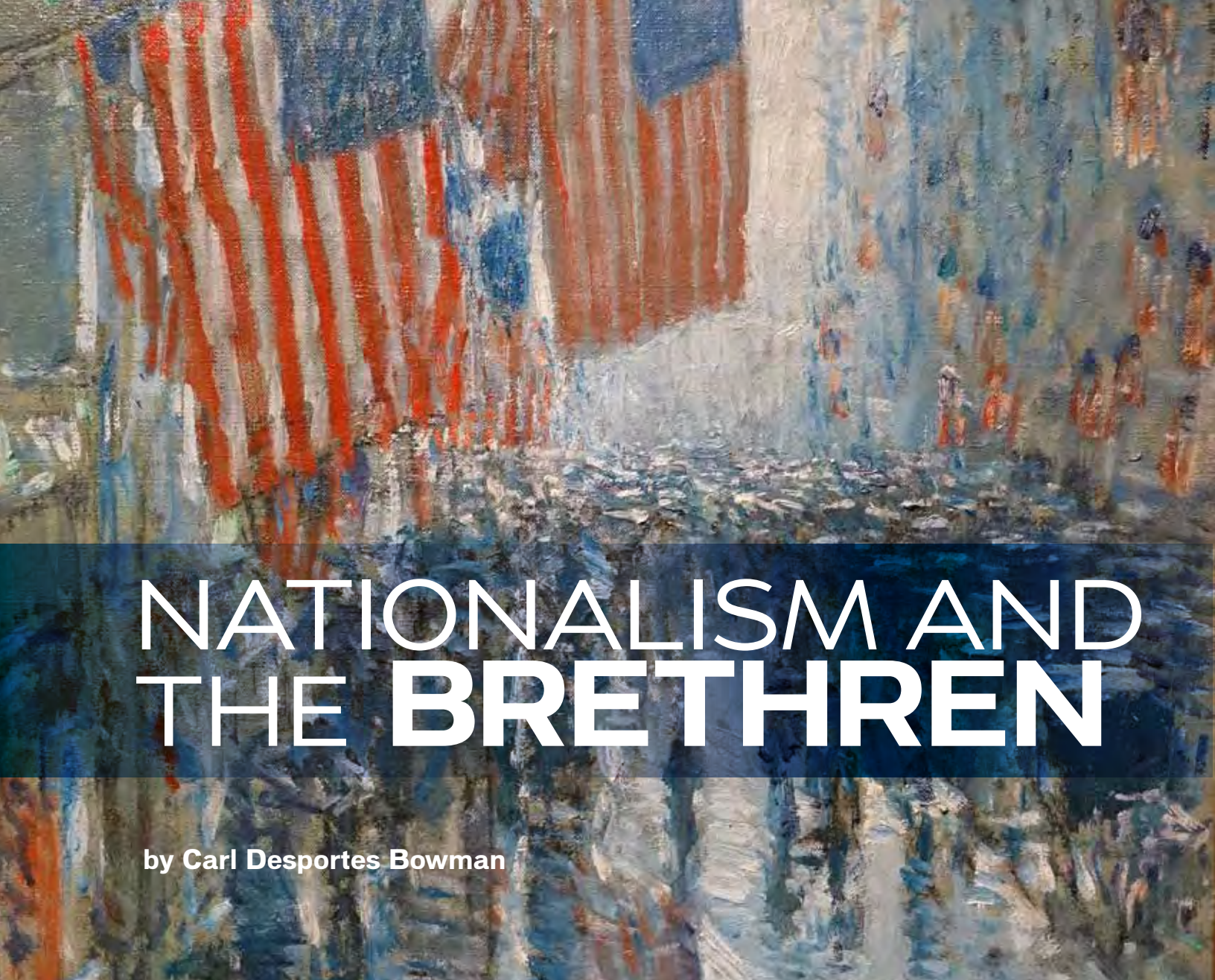
your worth, your purpose, your reason for being? Stop wondering and start paying attention to the lives you touch every day: your spouse, your children, your parents, your customers, your patients, your nurses, your roommate, your classmates, your friends, your colleagues, your students, your neighbors, etc., etc. Your attitude, the words you say and the way you say them, the greetings you give or withhold, the thanks you express or repress, the compliments you give or the complaints you make, the smiles or frowns on your face, the prayers you say—all these have an impact for good or ill. As children of a good and gracious God, would it not be well for us to intentionally pass on some of God’s loving grace to the people whose lives we touch, today and tomorrow? After all, what better purpose is there?

Jesus, we are creatures of God’s creation, whom God declared “very good.” Help us to affirm our worth, discover our purpose, and faithfully live it out. Amen. ❧

John Breidenstine, of Londonderry Village in Palmyra, Pa., is a retired Church of the Brethren pastor. During 2020, he was motivated by the COVID-19 pandemic to write a collection of devotional thoughts that he has called “Reflections.” This reflection is excerpted from that collection.

“The female cicada lays her eggs right at the end of the branches,” said Gene Kritsky, dean of behavioral and natural sciences at Mount St. Joseph University in Ohio. “She does that using an ovipositor, which actually saws into the branch. . . . It’s actually sort of a natural pruning. Trees with those branch breaks will actually produce more flowers the following year.” In the 1890s, Kritsky said, a paper studying the effect of cicadas on cherry trees was published titled, “Out of Evil Cometh Good.” “They discovered that the year after a cicada emergence, cherry trees did better.”

—From “Periodical Cicadas Perform ‘Natural Pruning’ on Trees Across Western Pennsylvania,” Trib Total Media, Tantarum, Pa., a 2019 article about Brood VIII, the generation of cicadas that emerged in spring 2019 and will return next in 2036. This year’s cicadas are Brood X, or “the Great Eastern Brood,” the most widespread and largest generation of the insects.



NATIONALISM AND THE BRETHREN

by Carl Desportes Bowman

"Rainy Day on Fifth Avenue" by Childe Hassam, 1916 oil on canvas

One of the first opportunities for Brethren to declare themselves American patriots occurred in 1777, when Pennsylvania demanded an oath of loyalty to the United States. The following year, in their very first recorded Annual Meeting decision, the Brethren instructed all members who had taken an oath of loyalty to the United States (the “attest”) to renounce it before a justice of the peace and to turn in their certificate of loyalty, apologize to their churches, and repent for their error.

“If they cannot do this, and will justify themselves,” they were told, “we should withdraw ourselves from every brother who walketh disorderly, and

such a brother will be deprived of the kiss of fellowship, of the counsel, and the breaking of bread, until he becomes obedient again.”

Only a few years later (1790), the Brethren assembled in Annual Meeting proclaimed, “Christ has forbidden to his followers the swearing of oaths and partaking of war. Hence we must . . . withdraw ourselves from every brother that returns again to swearing and war.” This was their response to a member’s assertion that oaths and fighting were being required of him by “the higher powers.” Annual Meeting concluded that there was no higher power when it was a question of obeying God or men. They drove the point

home by deciding, “Should there be any among us having such a conscience as to be able to fight and swear oaths, such a one would not be of us.”

Nearly 60 years after that (in 1848), the Brethren incorporated non-resistance (“defenselessness”), nonconformity to the world, and the non-swearing of oaths into their standard baptismal process, requiring a promise from baptismal applicants that they would be faithful to these Christian principles. These membership criteria, which remained in place into the 20th century, were themselves sufficient to define Brethren as unpatriotic in the minds of many outsiders.

By the 1860s, Brethren again faced contentious issues of national loyalty

WERE THIS LOVE UNIVERSAL, THE WORD PATRIOTISM, MEANING SUCH A LOVE FOR ONE'S COUNTRY AS MAKES ITS POSSESSORS READY AND WILLING TO TAKE UP ARMS IN ITS DEFENSE, MIGHT BE APPROPRIATELY EXPUNGED FROM EVERY NATIONAL VOCABULARY. –John Kline

and national identification. Union and Confederate governmental authorities vied for their support and sacrifice. Would Brethren be loyal to the United States, their civic homeland for the best part of a century? Would Brethren living south of the Mason-Dixon Line support the Confederate States of America? Would church members divide their loyalty based upon geography as Protestants of many denominations had done?

As early as the 1780s, Brethren had taken a strong position against purchasing and owning slaves. Wouldn't this evoke loyalty to the Union cause? It was a pivotal moment. Members of Brethren communities were violently killed. Many had their farms burned and livelihoods decimated. Yet their church refrained from actively supporting either side. Instead, they instructed all members not "to wear any military clothing," noting that if any persisted in being disobedient, they should be dealt with according to Matthew 18 (1864).

"The times in which our lots are cast," Annual Meeting decided, "demand of us a strict adherence to all our principles, and especially to our non-resistant principle, a principle dear to every subject of the Prince of Peace. . . . And to endure whatever suf-

ferings and to make whatever sacrifice the maintaining of the principle may require, and not to encourage in any way the practice of war."

Even so, they gave a public nod to their sentiments: "Lest the position we have taken upon political matters in general, and war matters in particular, should seem to make us, as a body, appear to be indifferent to our government, or in opposition thereto, in its efforts to suppress the rebellion," Brethren noted that the United States government had their "sympathies and prayers" and would have their aid in any way that didn't conflict with the gospel of Christ. Again, they pointed out that gospel principles were "superior or paramount" to all others and that "consistency requires that we so regard them in our practices."

Brethren sympathies and prayers were not extended in the same way toward the "Rebellion," as they called it, nor toward church members who spoke positively about slavery or negatively about President Lincoln and the Union. Even so, Brethren actions during the Civil War might best be described as *sympathetic inaction*, and can hardly be thought of as nationalistic or patriotic as we understand the terms today.

More than a decade prior to the war, on the occasion of festivities related to

George Washington's birthday, Brethren elder John Kline reflected upon his own understanding of patriotism:

"I have a somewhat higher conception of true patriotism than can be represented by the firing of guns which give forth nothing but meaningless sound. . . . My highest conception of patriotism is found in the man who loves the Lord his God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. Out of these affections spring the subordinate love for one's country; love truly virtuous for one's companion and children, relatives and friends; and in its most comprehensive sense takes in the whole human family. Were this love [indeed] universal, the word patriotism, in its specific sense, meaning such a love for one's country as makes its possessors ready and willing to take up arms in its defense, might be appropriately expunged from every national vocabulary."

It's notable that Kline doesn't slam patriots or patriotism outright; he simply reframes it in terms of a universal love that springs from faith, a species of love that renders the idea of patriotism (as commonly expressed) unnecessary.

Beyond that, however, Brethren also understood themselves to be pilgrims just passing through, with their eye and heart set upon the Kingdom of God. The

OUR CONCEPT OF PATRIOTISM. [T]he highest welfare of our country must harmonize with the highest welfare of humanity everywhere. Our faith is in security through love, protection through goodwill; and for such we are willing to make the necessary sacrifice. We are opposed to war as a method of settling disputes because it is unchristian, destructive of our highest values and sows the seeds of future wars. We feel that we are true patriots because we build upon the eternal principles of right which are the only foundation of stable government in our world community." —from 1936 tract on "Christian Patriotism"

published by the Church of the Brethren's Board of Christian Education (jointly developed with Friends and Mennonites at a 1935 Conference of the Historic Peace Churches in Kansas)

pilgrim's primary authority, identification, and loyalty were to their eternal homeland, the Kingdom of God; civil governments, politics, and affairs of this country were all deemed to be transient. Civic rulers and authorities—like the Confederate States or British rule over America, or even the United States government itself—might last for a season, but they were only temporary arrangements. The last formal articulation of this view was the 1912 “Restatement of our attitude toward voting and politics,” in which Annual Meeting proclaimed, “The church of Jesus Christ is no part of this world system.”

Fast-forward about 75 years. By the 1980s, Brethren had long since refocused upon the world beyond their sec-

tarian borders. Few Brethren framed their identity in terms of a split between their churchly kingdom and the secular world with its “evil and pernicious” ways. In a relatively short span of years, the allegiance, identity, and authorities followed by most church members had moved outside the church.

A scientific survey of Church of the Brethren members that I conducted at the time, based upon a representative national sample, informs us of a few of the consequences: Most Brethren (56%) had come to the conclusion that there wasn't really any important way in which the Church of the Brethren remained different from other Protestant denominations. Even so, when the minority of Brethren who still

considered the church to be distinctive were asked directly, “How is it different?” The word “peace” was invoked much more often than any other.

While two-thirds (67%) of the membership embraced the sentiment that “complete nonviolence as a way of living is very important to me,” just a third (34%) claimed “it is wrong to help in any war by fighting” and even fewer—1 of every 4 Brethren (26%)—believed young members should be counseled against joining the US Armed Forces. Voting as a boundary between the church and nation barely registered at all in 1985: Only 2 percent of members agreed that Brethren should not vote in national elections. Even so, just over half of our members (56%) agreed that

THE LENS OF HISTORY

The Moderator's Town Hall on “Today's Headlines, Yesterday's Wisdom: Historical Insights for the Contemporary Church” took place in April, drawing more than 260 people for an April 15 question-and-answer session, and more than 200 on April 17 for a five-hour presentation session with Brethren historians Carl Bowman, Bill Kostlevy, Stephen Longenecker, Carol Sheppard, and Dale Stoffer.


Frank Ramirez, pastor of Union Center Church of the Brethren (Nappanee, Ind.) reported on the events for the Church of the Brethren Newline. Some excerpts of his coverage are below:

Bill Kostlevy focused on several compelling vision statements from the past, from iconic Brethren figures Christopher Sauer Jr., Peter Nead, and Dan West. Referring to Brethren congregations in Africa, Latin America, and Europe—founded by missionaries from the several Brethren groups—he noted, “There are more heirs of Schwarzenau alive in the world today than any time in Brethren history. There is explosive growth in other parts of the world.”

Stephen Longenecker drew on the concepts of economist Adam Smith and James Madison to suggest that the marketplace of ideas makes division among churches not only inevitable, but even desirable. Stating simply, “The best will survive,” he echoed Madison's belief that “religion thrives under the First Amendment.” With regard to the

recent separation of churches referring to themselves as the Covenant Brethren, Longenecker admitted he would prefer fewer divisions, and that division sometimes brings out the worst in people. However, he said, “I think the lesson is that division is normal.”

Carol Sheppard traced the history of accountability among the Brethren and identified factors that have led to its breakdown. “Accountability has been an integral part of the Brethren movement since the very beginning,” she stated. “With baptism we enter into covenant relation with one another as one body in Christ and with the aid of the Holy Spirit mutually agree to walk together in human love, promote spiritual humility and peace, and engage to live true and exemplary lives before the world,” she said. But what remains today, she said, “is a one-sided affair. Brethren recognize those decisions they support, (and) reject the others ‘where the church got it wrong.’”

Dale Stoffer charted the course of how his denomination, the Brethren Church, has sought to keep scripture central, suggesting that for Brethren there is a third way between liberal and conservative authorities. “We have been given an unchanging creed in the Bible, but understood anew by each generation of believers. What God has revealed through the person of Jesus Christ can be understood only by obedience to Jesus Christ.” 

A recording of the webinar and a study guide is available at www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.

BY 'NATIONALISM' I MEAN . . . THE HABIT OF IDENTIFYING ONESELF WITH A SINGLE NATION OR OTHER UNIT, PLACING IT BEYOND GOOD AND EVIL AND RECOGNIZING NO OTHER DUTY THAN THAT OF ADVANCING ITS INTERESTS. NATIONALISM . . . IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE DESIRE FOR POWER." –George Orwell, "Notes on Nationalism," 1945

when Christian teaching and US law come into conflict, Christian teaching should be followed, even though only a third (34%) perceived such conflicts to occur with any regularity.

Twenty years later, another national survey of Brethren revealed that exactly the same majority (56%) believed the Church of the Brethren no longer differed in important ways from other Protestant denominations. Those who did see a difference again named the church's peace or anti-war stance as the biggest differentiating factor. Yet only 1 out of 5 members (21%) said that entering the armed forces was usually or always wrong.

On a scale from 1 to 6, with 1 being "American citizen" and 6 a "citizen of the world," nearly 6 out of 10 Brethren (58%) landed squarely on 1: They understood their own citizenship only as "American" and not at all as a "citizen of the world." More than 4 out of 5 landed on the American citizen side of the 6-point spectrum.

What can we learn from this history? Let me offer these possibilities:

- A strong national identity is a relatively recent occurrence, historically speaking, among Brethren. No form of nationalism is really supported by our denominational heritage. Even patriotism is only relevant as a love and appreciation for one's homeland, a constructive patriotism as Brethren spoke of it during the early to mid-20th century.

- Love for the Brethren—a Kingdom characteristic—can, or might, mitigate against aggressive political division within the church.


- A conviction to aid others in need, no matter where they are—again an

expression of Christian love—can mitigate against nationalism and overly aggressive patriotism.

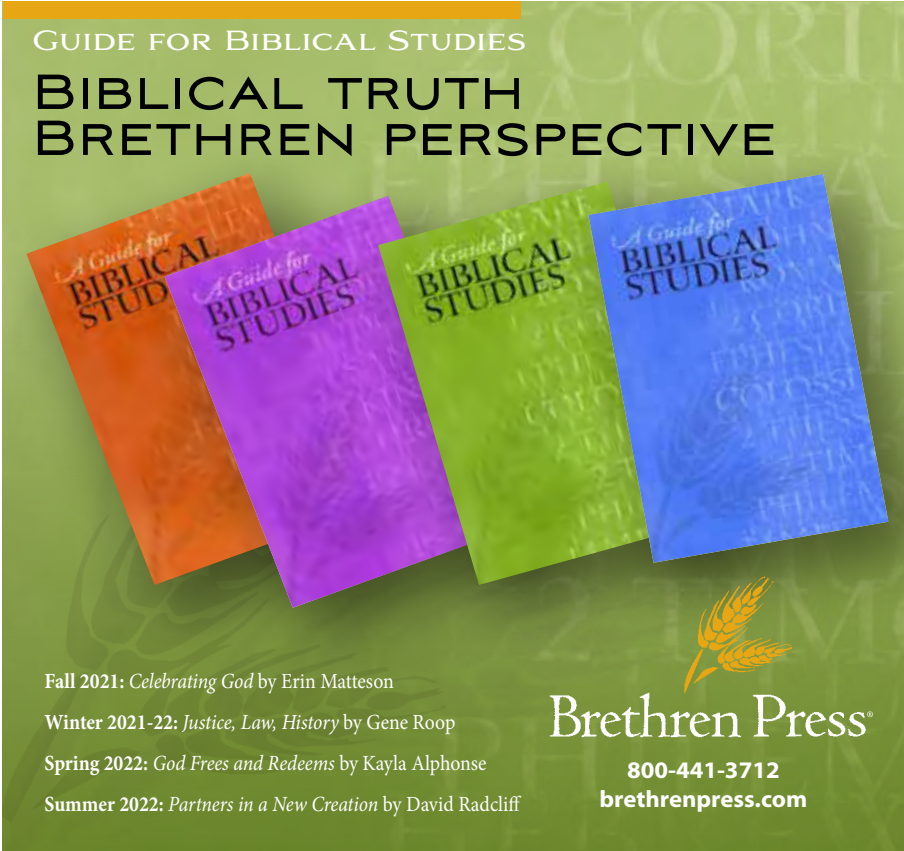
- There is an apparent gap or inconsistency between the Brethren's abstract commitment to nonviolence and abstract classification of "all war as sin" and their willingness to attach any practical import to these convictions. They no longer see avoidance of military service, for instance, as an important goal.

- Brethren traditions of service, simplicity, humility, and the equality of all before God could mitigate against the exaggerated quest for power, dominance, and exclusion that are impor-

tant elements of many species of nationalism.

- And finally, our historic separation from the world, of which there are still echoes, may still mitigate against the American brand kind of God-and-country Christianity that can so easily become little more than nationalist ideology. 


Carl Desportes Bowman, a Brethren historian and sociologist, is director of survey research for the University of Virginia's Institute for Advanced Studies in Culture and former professor of sociology at Bridgewater College. This article is extracted from Bowman's presentation for the April 17 Annual Conference Moderator's Town Hall on "Today's Headlines, Yesterday's Wisdom."

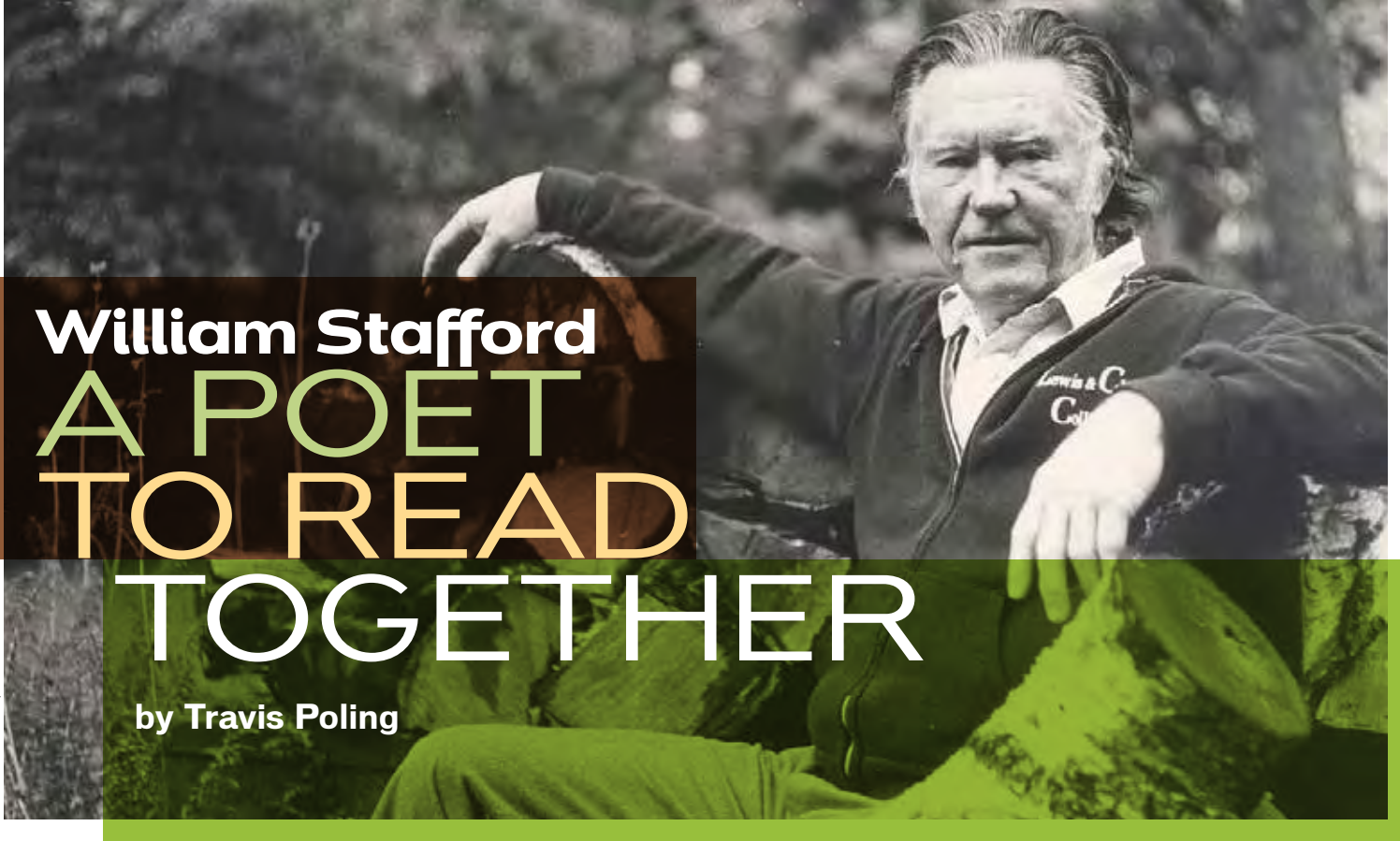


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**BIBLICAL TRUTH
BRETHREN PERSPECTIVE**

Fall 2021: *Celebrating God* by Erin Matteson
Winter 2021-22: *Justice, Law, History* by Gene Roop
Spring 2022: *God Frees and Redeems* by Kayla Alphonse
Summer 2022: *Partners in a New Creation* by David Radcliff


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William Stafford A POET TO READ TOGETHER

by Travis Poling

*If you don't know the kind of person I am
and I don't know the kind of person you are
a pattern that others made may prevail in the world
and following the wrong god home we may miss our star.*

These words open the poem “A Ritual to Read to Each Other” in the slim collection *A Scripture of Leaves*, a book I found in the library as a student at Manchester College in 2004. The book was written by William Stafford and published in 1989 by Brethren Press. How fitting, I thought, that this would be in a book put out by the Church of the Brethren. Our denomination has long been concerned with following the peaceful ways of Jesus, often in opposition to the patterns of the world. At our best, we reach out to know and love our neighbors; at our worst, we give into disastrous ways of power and ego. Stafford was able to capture this inner conflict so beautifully and, in typical Brethren manner, so simply.

Once I read a Stafford poem as part of a worship service in Richmond, Ind., and Donald Miller, former general secretary of our denomination, told me afterward, “William Stafford is our Brethren poet laureate.” Stafford was, in fact, a Consultant in Poetry to the Library of Congress (now called the United States Poet Laureate) from 1970 to 1971, and was Oregon Poet Laureate from 1979 to 1989. His first collection, *Traveling through the Dark*, won the National Book Award for Poetry in 1963. By the standards of the literary world, he was a

significant American poet, if lesser known. And for nearly his entire adult life, he had strong connections to the Church of the Brethren.

Born in Liberal, Kan., in 1914, Stafford grew up in the severe droughts of the Dust Bowl during the Great Depression. His family moved often to find work, and they would attend the closest Protestant church in the neighborhood. When Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941, Stafford found that his personal conscience would not allow him to fight in the US Army. He was granted conscientious objector (CO) status and assigned to Civilian Public Service (CPS) work camps operated by the Church of the Brethren. Over the next five years, he and his fellow COs faced animosity from much of American society, including an angry mob that suspected them of spying for the enemy and threatened deadly violence. Ultimately, Stafford found a deep connection with the other CPS workers who believed that participating in war was sin.

Stafford spent World War II in several camps in Arkansas and California. Alongside COs of Brethren and other backgrounds, he performed physical labor such as building trails and fighting wildfires. He spent the summer of 1943 at Manchester College in Indiana training for an overseas project that never materialized. While there, he met Dan West and Andrew Cordier, among other Brethren, and grew fond of the small-town college. In his final year, Stafford worked for Church World Service in the Elgin, Ill., offices of the Church of the Brethren.

In CPS, Stafford established the practices that became the foundation for much of the rest of his life. Together with the

HE HAS BEEN REMEMBERED AS A POET OF PEACE AND RECONCILIATION, DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN NATIONS, INDIVIDUALS, AND THE NATURAL WORLD.

other men in his camp, he studied philosophies of nonviolence from Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, and others. He also began writing poems in the early morning before the day's hard work began. He met a young woman named Dorothy who traveled with her father, Brethren pastor Harrison Frantz, when Frantz preached to the CPS men. William and Dorothy soon married.

Following the war, Stafford completed his master's degree at the University of Kansas, for which he wrote a memoir of his wartime experiences, *Down in My Heart*. Afterward, he completed his doctorate in English at the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop and soon established himself as a poet in publications like *Poetry* and *The New Yorker*. Meanwhile, Dorothy became an elementary school teacher who was well loved by students. Gradually their family grew to include four children: two sons, Bret and Kim, and two daughters, Kit and Barbara.

In 1947, Stafford began teaching English at Lewis & Clark College in Portland, Ore., but he did not forget the friends he had made among the Brethren. In May 1955, Stafford was baptized into Nicholas Garden Church of the Brethren in Springfield, Ore. When a conflict between a coach and professor turned violent at Lewis & Clark, he left for a job back at Manchester. He would work there for only one year, but the Staffords were active in the community and joined Manchester Church of the Brethren.

Stafford reconnected with Paul Keller, professor of communications at the college. The two men had met in CPS, and their families maintained a lifelong friendship. In August 1955, Stafford wrote in his journal: "I belong to a small fanatical sect. We believe that the current ways of carrying on world affairs are malignant. We believe that armies, and the kind of international dealings based on armed might, will be self-perpetuating to a certain point—and that that point may bring annihilation." At this

A SCHOLARLY LOOK

On April 13, the Bowers Writers House and the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College hosted an online lecture, "Travelling through the National Dark: Poet and Pacifist William Stafford." Fred Marchant, a poet who has edited some of Stafford's work, provided a lyrical tribute to Stafford's life and work and briefly touched on Stafford's Brethren affiliation. Marchant said Stafford was too independent to strictly follow only one tradition. Steve Nolt, interim director of the Young Center, suggested that Stafford's attention to both individual conscience and the broader community of peacemakers reflected something like the two Brethren roots of Radical Pietism (individual) and Anabaptism (communal).

LEARN MORE

Brethren Voices did an interview with Kim Stafford in 2015 about his father's Brethren connections. View it at: <https://youtu.be/E8qWxBAM4iY>.


Down in my Heart and *A Scripture of Leaves* can be purchased from BrethrenPress.com. To learn more about Stafford, other works to consider include:

- *Ask Me: 100 Essential Poems of William Stafford*, Graywolf Press, 2014
- *Every War Has Two Losers: William Stafford on Peace and War*, Milkweed Editions, 2003
- *Every War has Two Losers*, documentary film by Haydn Reiss, 2009
- *Early Morning: Remembering My Father, William Stafford*, by Kim Stafford, Graywolf Press, 2003

point in his life, he may have seen his baptism into the Church of the Brethren and teaching at Manchester as a continuation of his work for a nonviolent world.

In 1956 Stafford worked at San José (Calif.) State College, and in 1957 he made his way back to Lewis & Clark, where he taught for 20 years. Upon their return to Oregon, the family attended a Presbyterian congregation so their children could be with friends. Despite disconnection from the broader Brethren community, Bret and Kim learned of pacifism from their parents and claimed conscientious objection during the Vietnam War. Today, Kim is a poet who shares many of his father's concerns for nonviolence.

Stafford was quite prolific, writing more than 20,000 poems and publishing over 60 books in his lifetime. His witness for peace continues to spread through those who read his words. His poem "A Ritual to Read to Each Other" ends with an "appeal to a voice, to something shadowy, / a remote important region in all who talk." It is important that we not "get lost in the dark," the poem says. Rather, "the signals we give . . . should be clear: the darkness around us is deep." If we intend to live in peace and work for our neighbor's good, we need to speak in empathy and clarity, guiding each other into the unknowable "darkness" of the future.

Since his death in 1993, he has been remembered as a poet of peace and reconciliation, deeply concerned about relationships between nations, individuals, and the natural world. Stafford is certainly the poet laureate of the Brethren, speaking to the world on behalf of nonviolence, simplicity, and community. 

Travis Poling is a Ph.D. student in English literature at Miami University of Ohio. He attends Happy Corner Church of the Brethren in Clayton.



A DIFFERENT KIND OF 'HOTSHOT'

**Ben Martin found his vocation
in fighting wildfires**

by Walt Wiltschek

We see the headlines and news reports each summer as wildfires rip through the western United States—more and more frequently, it seems. But what's it like to be in the midst of that, day in and day out? Just ask Ben Martin.

These days, Martin mostly rides a desk for the US Forest Service, processing grants and agreements to fund a variety of projects. But up until recently he was out on the front lines fighting those western wildfires, and it still captures his attention when fire season rolls around.

"I've loved the field work of working in the wild," he says. "It felt like something I was born to do."

Martin said he always wanted to be outdoors while growing up at Grossnickle Church of the Brethren (Myersville, Md.)—where his parents, Tim and Donna

Ritchey Martin, were pastors—and visiting his grandparents' farm in Indiana, running around fields and forests and watching meteor showers. So when he went to Manchester College (now Manchester University), he naturally majored in environmental science. When graduation time arrived, he took Manchester's Graduation Pledge of Social and Environmental Responsibility, complete with green ribbon on his gown.

With degree in hand, he spent a summer on a ranch in Wyoming, then landed an AmeriCorps position with the Washington Conservation Corps in the Pacific Northwest, doing a variety of restoration and construction projects.

"It was just a cool way for a kid who had never been out west to see part of the Pacific Northwest," he said.

It ended up becoming much more,

though, as that experience parlayed into a position on an entry-level fire "attack crew" for Washington's Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest. The 20-member crew would respond to fires that broke out but also did proactive work to maintain the health of the forest and encourage good stewardship of the natural resources.

Martin spent two years in that assignment, and "loved every minute of it." Periodically the crew would be called to assist with wildfires elsewhere if things were quiet in their region, and that led him into other possibilities: applying for a US Interagency "Hotshot Crew"—the wildfire equivalent of being called up to the Major Leagues. They earned their nickname because they often serve in the hottest part of wildfires as they work to bring them under control. A current

SOME OF THE BEST HUMAN BEINGS I HAVE EVER BEEN FORTUNATE TO CROSS PATHS WITH HAVE BEEN IN THIS PROFESSION, AND FOR THAT I'M SO GRATEFUL.

US Forest Service description of the crew says members must meet “stringent standards for physical fitness, training, leadership, qualifications, and operational procedures.”

He passed through that challenging process and landed a spot on the Entiat Hotshot Crew, one of about 100 top-line crews spread across the western US that typically receive the most difficult assignments. Their numbers also include smokejumpers, who jump out of planes to reach hard-to-access areas, and rappers, who navigate difficult terrain.

Those latter two categories try to address the fires when they start, according to Martin, hopefully minimizing their growth. The fires that do grow large and complex call for the Hotshot Crews, who work at mitigation and control. When you see on the news that a large fire “is X percent contained,” that is often these crews at work.

“For folks who want to make a job out of fire, a job on a Hotshot Crew is almost always a part of that,” Martin says. “I consider myself extremely fortunate to do that for three years. I have never been in a similar situation where the skill and passion and commitment of other folks on the crew was as present and fun on an hour-by-hour basis as when I was part of that crew. They are people who see taking care of their chunk of ground as more than a job; it really was a vocation. There are a lot of folks who put all of themselves into it. They’re the most selfless folks I’ve ever met, and they were happy to do it. They took pride in every hour.”

Martin says he “can count on one hand” the number of times he genuinely felt afraid while out fighting the fires, as the work is mostly doing containment at the edges of a fire or creating firebreaks or clearing debris ahead of a fire, not standing in front of it. Experienced leaders also knew what was and wasn’t safe. Nonetheless, he says he had a standing rule with his mother: “Tell me about it when it’s all done and you’re home and



Ben Martin

it’s safe. That’s pretty much been the rule since I left home.”

It was all rewarding work, meaningful work, but it was also grueling at times. The crews would typically work 14 to 16 days straight and then get 48 hours off before starting it all over again. He would fit the 2,000-plus hours a more typical full-time job would see in a year in half that time.

“So by the time October rolls around, you were exhausted,” he says. “It’s just a whole different kind of fatigue.”

There was a long offseason to recuperate, but the intense “on” season also meant long periods away from family and friends, which became particularly acute after Martin married fellow Manchester alumnus Corinne Lipscomb, and they settled in the Twin Cities region of Minnesota. He got a job with a National Wildlife Refuge in the state, still occasionally traveling west to help with fire suppression work there if needed.

He took a break from the firefighting world for a few years to attend graduate school for public policy and do some work in renewable energy. But then that urge returned to get outside again. So he returned to the US Forest Service, taking a position back with Okanogan-Wenatchee to teach newcomers the basics of firefighting and help run the lower-level crews. After doing that last year, he planned to return to it again this season before the grant administration opportunity arose.

Part of his heart will always be in the field work, though, despite the challeng-


es growing greater by the year. Media coverage sometimes adds hyperbole, he says, but the trends surrounding wildfires are genuinely concerning, too. The season has lengthened on both ends and fires have grown larger with hotter and drier weather patterns, and humans are interacting with forests in closer proximity and greater numbers.

“Fires even in the last 10 to 15 years have fundamentally changed in terms of intensity and impact,” Martin says. “Part of that is the growing wildland-urban interface. People want houses out in the woods, and it’s awesome to live there, but more and more people are doing that, and whole neighborhoods and even towns are inserting themselves right into places that burn frequently and intensely—more homes, more buildings out deeper and deeper into beautiful but flammable places.”

Programs like Firewise USA and other educational resources can help people build sustainably and mitigate the risks, he says.

Those more frequent crises have taken a toll on those who fight the fires, too. Martin admits it could be hard seeing “all those blackened trees” and charred buildings, combined with the long hours and time away from home. Turnover in the profession has increased, and mental health issues are a significant concern, with a suicide rate significantly above the national average. That’s receiving more attention and resources now, he says, with a “bigger investment” in the people who serve.

It’s not for everyone. But for Ben Martin it was exactly right, and he wouldn’t trade that experience for anything.

“Despite its challenges, I really do believe it’s the best job in the world,” Martin says of his firefighting days. “Running a chainsaw on a fire crew is the best job in the world, full stop. Some of the best human beings I have ever been fortunate to cross paths with have been in this profession, and for that I’m so very grateful.” 

My church growth notebook

by James McKinnell

The MESSENGER series “Taking Account: Studying the Stats” is adding to my church growth notebook. I have collected a series of writings about the membership statistics of the Church of the Brethren since I made the Church Growth Movement the subject of my studies for a doctor of ministry at Bethany Theological Seminary from 1975 to 1978.

One of the things I researched was what leading Brethren in the '70s were thinking about the growth possibilities of the Brethren at that time. I collected a sheet of quotes in preparation for my dissertation. Even though the decline had been going on for about 10 years, most of the prognostications were positive. My faculty supervisor, Donald Durnbaugh, wasn't quite as upbeat about the subject, nor my dissertation.

About 1980, Matt Meyer had me write a small church growth book, and the centerfold graph for the Brethren has a slight upturn, probably reflecting what I heard Brethren leaders saying. I headed up a Brethren church growth group in the early '80s, with a mailing list of several hundred correspondents including pastors and other interested people.

The Church Growth Movement, which then was bursting with methods and motivation, has now pretty much collapsed. I am still a believer in growing the church in numbers of Jesus-loving disciples, as well as meeting human need and challenging the powers in our present-day cultural situation. But I will say that church decline wasn't what I or my fellow 1961 graduates from Bethany

“It may be that new church development in the Church of the Brethren is turning around after a decade of near dormancy. If it is, let us be sure that the new interest is generated out of a sense of mission and ministry, and not just to add another congregation to the list in the denominational directory. Let us be sure, too, as new churches are conceived, that they are brought to birth as expressions of the body of Christ where persons love and are loved, receive and are received, accept and are accepted.”

—Hubert R. Newcomer, “A Sense of Mission and Ministry,” MESSENGER, October 1975

“Judgment is not being made against any church because of its size. It is recognized that many small churches have made significant contributions to our Brotherhood and to Christendom. Size alone is not always a fair measure of quality and faithfulness. The committee does feel that the problems perplexing all churches are even more confounding to the small church. For this reason, the small church's future may be in question.”

—“Problems Confronting Small Congregations,” minutes of Annual Conference, 1964

Biblical Seminary were expecting.

When I entered Bethany in 1958, the future was bright, and enthusiasm was high. Churches were erecting new buildings, and the '50s had been years of numerical growth for all denominations. The 250th anniversary Annual Conference in Des Moines was the church sailing confidently into the future.

My first post-seminary pastorate was with Worthington (Minn.) Church of the Brethren, a large rural congregation with about 125 people in worship. The building badly needed remodeling, but a few members suggested that we instead buy a relatively new Baptist church building that had been outgrown. Located in the

city, it would have put us in the midst of a larger population. I supported the suggestion, which was stoutly rejected by the majority. It put a chill on my remaining years at Worthington. And it was while I was at Worthington, about 1965, that the present decline began. Amazingly, a tiny nucleus of about a dozen people still worships and serves the Lord at that location.

But my record as a pastor is not very good at church growth or survival. I was pastor of Rockford (Ill.) Church of the Brethren during the '70s, and it took all the church growth thinking and stamina the Lord gave me to keep the membership from declining. The Rockford

“If we tend to become more excited over new buildings,

bigger budgets, and more members than we are about the courageous ministries of some of our men in small, struggling churches or about the unsung heroes of every congregation, or about the truths that Jesus gave us, then we are making a very grave mistake. It is interesting to note that in the New Testament we never hear how large the churches were or what the collections were.”

—Roy A. Johnson, “Whither the Brethren?” *Brethren Life and Thought*, Spring 1957

“Although the Brethren insight into the meaning and the message of the Christian faith appears to be valid

we have not been successful in convincing large numbers of persons to join with us. It is not likely that this long historical pattern will be greatly altered during the next quarter of a century. The Brethren will be a decreasing percentage of the total population. . . . Even though it appears that the Brethren will not enjoy growth in terms of numbers, there are now, and will continue to be, several hundred strong churches located in a small number of well-defined geographical areas.”

—Raymond R. Peters, “The Brethren in the Year 2000,” *Brethren Life and Thought*, Winter 1972

“The Church of the Brethren will return to a concern for evangelism

in the true and full sense of that noble word. Perhaps return is not the best word here, for it may be questioned whether we have ever been strongly and creatively evangelistic. This will lead to a deeper sense of commitment on the part of most members of the church, and it may lead to a reversal of the present decline in membership in the church. Dean Miller’s prediction of a total membership of 300,000 by the year 2000 may be quite realistic.”

—Edward K. Ziegler, “The Church of Our Visions,” *Brethren Life and Thought*, Spring 1972


church disbanded in 2011, and the property is now the base for ministry of the Rockford Community Church, started under Samuel Sarpiya. I went into nine years (1983-1992) of church redevelopment and new church development, and those two projects also were closed.

After retirement, my wife, Letha, was ordained and joined me in co-pastoring a young, small house church. It was a church that was really a friendly family church, content with service ministries. I did present one more church growth plan to them, which was to spend \$5,000 for a direct mail campaign into the rapidly developing residential area around the sleepy little village in which the

church was located. But they told me nicely that they didn’t think that would work, and needed the \$5,000 to re-gravel the parking lot. That settled, we went on to enjoy 11 years of ministry with them. And that house church has just celebrated 30 years of worship, fellowship, and ministry.

Back to statistics, I really think the membership of the Church of the Brethren denomination is probably nearer to the average worship attendance than to the gross membership number. Madison Avenue Church of the Brethren in York, Pa., where I am now a member, has a big church plant and a large membership, but a worship attendance

(before COVID-19) of about 60.

I am back at advocating church growth on the neighborhood emphasis in the compelling vision, in a densely populated area of northwest York. I do believe that Jesus wants people saved from sin and separation from God, and especially from the rage and conspiratorial worldview of American culture, and I am convinced that the church is God’s instrument for bringing people into Jesus’ Kingdom way. 

James McKinnell is a retired pastor living in York, Pa. In addition to his involvement in church growth and new church development, he has served on the Standing Committee of district delegates to Annual Conference and as moderator of Virilina District.

Recapturing cool

by David Radcliff

Cool—you know it when you see it. And you often want to be it or be near it.

What is “cool”? According to a University of Virginia study, it comes down to autonomy (unique, even rebellious), authenticity (walking one’s talk), and attitude (not forced nor trumpeted but flowing naturally from one’s inner being and bearings). I would add a fourth “a”: audience (coolness draws some, while threatening others).

David Radcliff



Stiveria Vincent in Malawi.

Jesus was the coolest person ever. He marched to the beat of a different drummer socially (hanging with the wrong crowd), spiritually (eschewing religion and its strictures), morally (challenging wealth as a sign of blessing, calling for love of enemies), actually (healing on the Sabbath, treating women and children respectfully).

Our Lord certainly walked his talk, preaching acceptance of the marginalized and then accepting them in practice, living an austere lifestyle even as he warned of materialism, talking about love of enemies and then refusing to “call down legions of angels” against his adversaries.

Attitude? He knew who he was and could respond to the latest crisis out of that God-given centeredness: “Let the one without sin be the first. . . .”

And he could draw a crowd. Certainly some came seeking tangible benefits (“because I gave you bread”), but many more pressed so close to hear what he had to say that he had to put out to sea to be heard.

The Church of the Brethren has been cool. We attracted attention and adherence in our earlier years for these same Jesus-like features. We were contrarian—not accepting the unholy matrimony of church and state, disobeying laws forbidding rebaptism or nonresis-

tance, practicing strange customs like the love feast.

We have practiced what we preached. We have loved our neighbors and our enemies. We gave more relief aid to post-war Europe—including our nation’s enemies—than any other US denomination. Being pacifist has never meant passivity: we strode into war zones armed with “a shovel instead of a gun.” We sat at lunch counters with young Black students in the ‘60s and took the heat at civil rights protests.

Attitude? Never, but always. We’ve never worn our faith on our sleeves, but we often have known just what to do in the moment of crisis—whether responding to the internment of Japanese Americans or famine in North Korea—when others looked the other way.

Can we draw a crowd? Once upon a time. Now? The church with the slickest worship teams or largest screens may draw crowds, but not the crowds we seek to do our Lord’s bidding. One



test is whether some are repelled by our brand of cool as others are attracted, just as Jesus' style of cool stirred the pot even as it stirred the crowds.

What are the secrets of cutting-edge coolness in our time? Same as in Jesus' time. At the church-related nonprofit New Community Project, we've found people young and old are attracted as we:


- **challenge the materialism** that threatens our souls and our planet, and the theological and economic systems that sustain it;
- **stand by the marginalized**, from God's beleaguered creation and the

native communities who defend it, to the 138 million girls around the world not in school, to immigrants fleeing climate change and violence;

- **try our best to walk our talk** related to lifestyle; and
- **inwardly prepare** to rise to meet the outward need of the moment.

Learning that Malawian girls like Steveria had to walk 14 miles each way to high school, the idea for New Community Project's "A Girl and a Bike" program emerged. Previously missing several days of school a week due to leg pain from her daily trek, she now has perfect attendance. This

wouldn't have been possible if people in our network hadn't flocked to the idea. Getting a girl a bike is just cool.

Recapturing cool may help turn around our declining denominational attendance but, much more importantly, it would show that we are joining with our contrarian, consistent, creative—and thus, charismatic—Lord to share the good news of God's ways with our world. Cool. 

David Radcliff of Blue Ridge, Va., is founder and director of the New Community Project, a church-related nonprofit "building a new community of justice and peace for our neighbors and respect for the earth."

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

Jesus calls for justice

Luke 4:14-30

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.” These words from the prophet Isaiah are often read during Advent. Some receive them with fond nostalgia, while others experience deep longing. They are familiar words about a hoped-for future. And when read from Isaiah, they can feel somewhat distant.

This text from Luke invites a much more immediate hearing. Here is Jesus, fresh from his encounter with the devil in the wilderness. The waters of his baptism have dried, but his baptism of the Spirit is ongoing. Word of his teaching has begun to spread through the countryside. Now he has arrived in his hometown of Nazareth to preach his inaugural sermon. When he speaks these prophetic words from Isaiah, there is not only

the opportunity to witness his bold proclamation that he is the fulfillment of the promise, but also the crowd’s reaction—the first and the second.

After Jesus reads from the scriptures and declares that he is the anointed one, Luke says that *all* were amazed. Those who knew Jesus when he was just a little boy are delighted. They speak well of him, and they wonder, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” This is their first reaction.

And then Jesus turns the tables, not the last time he will do so. He sees through their admiration. He knows they want him to perform wonders for them—*his* people—as he has done for others. But Jesus knows what they really need is difficult truth. The truth that release, healing, and freedom are for everyone, not just for them. Ouch.

Jesus reminds them of the years of

Read the words that Jesus speaks from the prophet Isaiah in Luke 4:18-19. What might those words look like in your own community? How are Jesus’ words good news for you? How are they difficult truth?

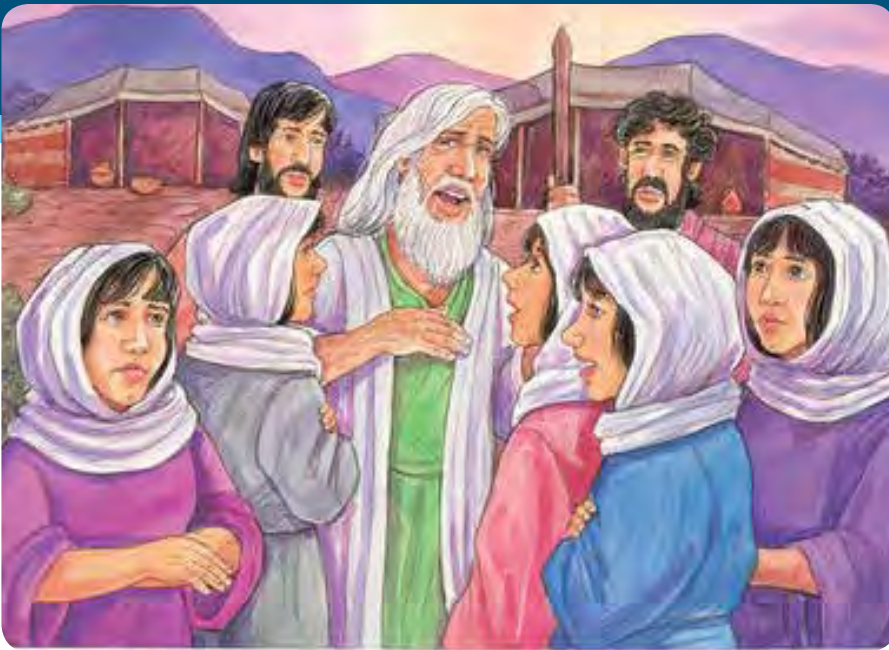
God, remind me daily that you are for all people. Help me to receive your gift of healing even as I work to bring about your healing for others. Amen.

drought in which Elijah is sent, not to an insider, but to an outsider from Zarephath. And among all the lepers Elisha could have healed, God sends him to heal Naaman, the Syrian.

Jesus’ proclamation is both good news and difficult truth. And this leads to the crowd’s second reaction—anger. They realize that Jesus is criticizing them for their exclusivity and preoccupation with purity, and they are filled with rage. They attempt to drive him out of town so they can throw him off a cliff.

In Jesus, Isaiah’s prophecy is not an image of a distant future but an immediate call. Jesus calls the people to bring release, healing, and freedom for all people, as God has been doing throughout their history. And there is also the reminder that what is good news for one can be difficult truth for another.





Read along

- June 6:** Luke 4:14-30
Jesus calls for justice
- June 13:** James 1:27-2:8, 14-17
Welcoming everyone
- June 20:** Matthew 25:31-46
Caring for those in need
- June 27:** Acts 4:32-37
Enough for all
- July 4:** Numbers 27:1-11
Sisters ask for land
- July 11:** 2 Samuel 12:1-15
Nathan confronts a king
- July 18:** Esther 2-8
Esther saves her people

Sisters ask for land

Numbers 27:1-11

Women are infrequently the main characters in biblical stories, but in this one, there are five! Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah are sisters with a mission. Following a plague, God instructed Moses to do a census of the people of Israel and portion out the land according to the actual numbers in each clan. The sisters quickly realize a problem. Their father has died, and because he has only daughters, his land will be taken away and his name will end. This is not acceptable.

It is tempting to read this story as a fight for women's rights. And in some respects, it is. Women could not inherit land. A clan's name and land were passed down from father to son. A clan with no sons would simply die out. The author emphasizes the importance of this structure by starting with a list of Zelophehad's male ancestors. So yes, the sisters are arguing against a law that prohibits them from inheriting as women.

However, in that context, women

did not have equal voice or equal rights. And so here the sisters are not arguing for their own voice, or their own rights, but for their father's. This is not to downplay the incredible courage of their actions, but to recognize that the value of their own personhood was simply not yet in their imagination.

Their courage in challenging the law, however, is paramount. Given the place of women at the time, it is incredible that the sisters even considered approaching Moses and the entire congregation. What makes this even more astounding can be found in the brief reference to a man named Korah. The sisters note that their father did not die because he was part of the company of Korah, but why does this matter? Earlier, in chapter 16, Korah, Dathan, and Abiram of the tribe of Levi rebelled against Moses, and thus against God. In dramatic fashion, God had them swallowed up by the earth. The sisters are well aware of this event. Yet they are willing to risk their lives for a law that

they see as unjust, even a law that has been given to Moses by God.

Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah may not be advocating for themselves in a 21st-century sense. However, their story is a reminder that the words and laws of those in power, even if the words are presumed to be from God, can still be challenged, and in fact, should be, if those laws are unjust.

Take a few moments to reflect on the sisters' courage. What helps you to act with courage?

Are there laws or rules in your church, community, or country that benefit some, but are not for the good of all? How might you speak into those situations?

God, sometimes it is easier to remain silent. Grant me the courage to open my eyes to injustice and to speak out according to your Spirit. Amen.

Brethren endorse effort to repeal Selective Service

The Church of the Brethren has endorsed the Selective Service Repeal Act (H.R. 2509 and S. 1139)—legislation to repeal the Military Selective Service Act—introduced in Congress on April 14 with bipartisan support in the House and Senate. The endorsement was made on the recommendation of long-term partner the Center on Conscience and War (CCW), and on the basis of Annual Conference statements.

The bill offers an alternative when others are urging Congress to expand draft registration to women as part of the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year 2022.

The CCW is one of a number of peace and justice and faith-based organizations that are endorsing the legislation, including the Friends Committee on National Legislation, American Friends Service Committee, Pax Christi USA, and the Presbyterian Peace Fellowship.

“Even though no one has been drafted in almost 50 years, the Selective Service System continues to do harm, as millions of men have been denied access to federal jobs, money for higher education, and in some states, driver’s licenses and admission to state universities,” said the CCW. “This bill includes language that overturns the penalties for failure to register, including bars to citizenship, while it also protects conscientious objectors.

“As the Supreme Court and Congress debate the merits of the draft in the



Children’s Disaster Services works at border

Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) in late April deployed a team to the US/Mexico border in Texas. The team provided creative play opportunities for migrant children and respite for parents before the next leg of their journey. The team served about 100 children each day.

The growing humanitarian crisis along the southern US border has led to increased urgency to help migrant families seeking asylum. In March, the US government picked up nearly 19,000 children traveling alone across the border, the largest monthly number ever recorded.

CDS is in conversation with partner organizations handling the influx of children and families from the border, discovering ways to contribute to the care of these minors, especially ages 4 to 12. CDS expects to respond to additional locations in the future.

coming months, they essentially will be faced with two choices: extend the draft—and the harm—to women or abolish it altogether. This bipartisan legislation can help shift the conversation toward the latter option: ending the draft once and for all.”

The legislation includes provision for those employed by the Selective Service System to transfer to other positions in the executive branch.

Global Brethren survey essential characteristics

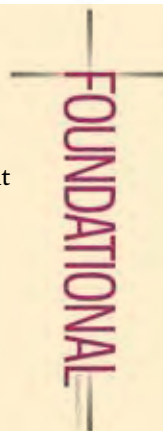
The Global Church of the Brethren Communion has taken a survey of essential characteristics for a church to be considered Church of the Brethren. The survey, which closed at the end of April, was published in English, Spanish, Kreyol, and Portuguese.

The communion is an organization of the 11 registered Church of the Brethren denominations in the US, India, Nigeria, Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Spain, Venezuela, and the Great Lakes region of Africa—the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, and Uganda.

Survey findings may assist decisions about theological and denominational identity, criteria for churches to join the communion, and what education is needed for church members.

National Youth Conference 2022 theme, dates, cost are announced

National Youth Conference (NYC) 2022 be held July 23-28 at Colorado State University in Fort Collins, Colo., with a focus on Colossians 2:5-7 and the theme “Foundational.” The registration fee of \$550 includes food, lodging, and programing. Youth who have completed ninth grade through one year of college at the time (or are age equivalent) and their adult advisors may attend. Online registration will open in early 2022.



Personnel notes

Fabiola Fernandez resigned from the Information Technology department of the Church of the Brethren on May 21, to accept a position with the city of Elgin, Ill. She served in the IT department since May 23, 2016, first as systems specialist at the General Offices in Elgin, and then as manager of IT.

Brethren Disaster Ministries builds homes in Ohio

Brethren Disaster Ministries is working with the Miami Valley Long Term Recovery Operations Group, the Presbytery of the Miami Valley, and Presbyterian Disaster Assistance to build homes for tornado survivors in Trotwood, Ohio.

A groundbreaking took place April 14 on the first homes that are part of the Tornado Survivors Pathway to Homeownership Project (Pathways Project). The project provides qualified tornado survivors who are not currently homeowners the opportunity to become homeowners. Applicants work with the HomeOwnership Center of Greater Dayton to become mortgage-ready while volunteer teams construct or rebuild homes on properties donated by the jurisdictions.



Kim Gingrich began May 17 as interim program assistant for Brethren Disaster Ministries' rebuilding program, working out of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md. Since January 2014, she has been a disaster project leader, serving and living at rebuilding project sites.

Rhonda Pittman Gingrich will begin Aug. 23 as director of Annual Conference. She is an ordained minister working as adjunct faculty at the Brethren Academy and program director at Camp Pine Lake in Iowa. Gingrich has provided leadership for the denomination's compelling vision process and served on the Annual Conference Program and Arrangements Committee, Revitalization Task Force, and 300th Anniversary Committee. She coordinated the 1990 National Youth Conference as a Brethren Volunteer Service worker, and has helped with later ones. A member of Open Circle Church of the Brethren in Burnsville, Minn., Gingrich has been a trustee for Bethany Theological Seminary, moderator of Northern Plains District, and a writer of devotionals and curriculum for Brethren Press.

Jennifer Houser begins Aug. 2 as director of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. She is a licensed minister currently serving as part-time pastor at Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind., and a reference associate at Mishawaka-Penn-Harris Public Library. She is a graduate of Messiah College in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and holds a master of divinity from Duke Divinity School in Durham, N.C., where she worked as archival assistant.

Zechariah Houser begins Aug. 9 as coordinator of short-term service for Brethren Volunteer Service, working from the General Offices. He is a licensed minister and part-time pastor at Crest Manor Church of the Brethren. He is a graduate of Messiah College and



#SleevesUpBrethren2021

A virtual blood drive is being held alongside the virtual Annual Conference the year. Brethren are encouraged to give blood in their own areas, between June 15 and July 15. Pledge by going to www.brethren.org/virtualblooddrive2021 or contact bdm@brethren.org or 800-451-4407 ext. 1.

holds a master of divinity from Duke Divinity School.

Lee Marsh began May 17 as Buildings and Grounds assistant at the General Offices. He previously was a truck driver at Nu-Way Transportation and warehouse manager/driver at Goodman Distribution Inc.

William W. (Bill) Wenger has resigned as Western Pennsylvania District executive minister, as of Oct. 31. He started as an interim in January 2017. During his tenure, he oversaw changes in district ministries including sale of the district retirement community and stewarding of the financial resources of Camp Harmony.

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Paraclete

by Debbie Eisenbise



“When prayer allows itself to be exploited for purposes which are beneath itself, then it becomes strictly impure.” —Thomas Merton

The air thick, the evening soft,
a flash of red amidst green: a cardinal
flies past the porch posts and my toes resting
in a hammock, content, while my prayers
circle in eddies stuck between rocks without
a freeing sluice. I wonder: where is the key

to unclothe the anxious clasp, the key
to free me from the silken, soft
and sticky web of worries without
beginning, without end. My cardinal
sin: too much rumination in my prayers,
pettiness piled like rubble resting

in heaps, too heavy to hoist, resting
and weighing me down whimpering. The key?
The shovel to unearth deeper prayers,
to free my soul to soar on soft,
strong wings? I hear the cardinal’s
shrill song, notes articulated without

shame or second thoughts, pure cries without
expectation. I remain stuck, resting
yet restive. Not roused by the cardinal’s
song nor moved to follow his flight. The key
to freedom foiled by my pride. Soft
submission to silence, prayers

surfacing without sound, prayers
emerging without agenda, without
words, allow worries to be softly
spooned up and set aside, heat reduced. Rest
now and heal. The overwrought need key
disciplines to be observed, cardinal

rules to be followed. Quiet! The cardinal
glides past my hammock and beckons my prayers
to fly into the sky. The key
is letting this harbinger without
worry carry me to rest,
in the evening air—thick and soft.

My soul is resting now—still and without
concern. Prayers released, weight lifted. The key
found in the soft dusk flight of a cardinal. **||**

Debbie Eisenbise, interim congregational life pastor at Goshen (Ind.) City Church of the Brethren, is a writer, spiritual director, and instructor.

Answering the question

Thanks again for another terrific issue. In May, there appeared an article titled "The No. 1 Question" (in the series "500 Coffees," by Jeremy Ashworth). I read this with great interest and, as I could not figure what the question was, my interest was held. Such a basic question in people's minds and yet often not understood or dealt with.

I think the denomination has an answer for satisfying this question right

in its logo: The cross and the towel. We are Christians and believe in service to act out that agreement with God.

I searched through every page of that issue hoping to see the logo often. Alas, the only one I could find was a small one at the bottom of the page inside the back cover.

For a small denomination, MESSENGER continues to be full of good information and well-written articles on a wide variety of topics. Thanks for continuing that.

Chris Coble
Elizabethtown, Pa.

It's a small world

Enjoyed Karen Smucker's article on Mac Wiseman. Years ago, when he had his bluegrass festival nearby at Renfro Valley, Ky., we talked about his early music background. He told me he grew up in the Church of the Brethren near Crimora, Va. We related to each other in that, at about the same time, my father pastored churches nearby at Weyers Cave and in Grottoes, Va. Small Brethren world.

Lowell Wagner
Annville, Ky.

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

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

Centenarians

Barr, Evelyn, 100, North Manchester, Ind., May 8
Bever, Frank, 100, North Manchester, Ind., April 21
Cline, Inez, 102, Palmyra, Pa., Dec. 28
Dadisman, Avis Smith, 103, Chatham, Ill., April 11
Egolf, Ruth, 100, North Manchester, Ind., May 30
Pobst, Pauline, 106, North Manchester, Ind., May 9
Roller, Evah, 100, Dayton, Va., March 26
Uhrig, Mary Katherine, 100, North Manchester, Ind., May 28

New members

Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.: Avery Morris, Regan Morris, Doris Snow, Josie Snow
First, Roaring Spring, Pa.: Ben Beers, Bobbi Beers, Sandra Burket, Kaylee Keith, Shirley Lingenfelter, Julie Myers, Cathie Pollard, Michael Pollard
Freeport, Ill.: Schann Stewart
Geiger, Friedens, Pa.: Bud Stoner, Sandra Stoner
Gettysburg, Pa.: Debbie Robbins, Ed Robbins
Goshen City, Goshen, Ind.: John Brubaker, Marla Davis, Cheryl Reinoehl, Grady Reinoehl, Ruth Ritchey-Moore

Palmyra, Pa.: Joy Derck, Randy Derck, Jill Keyser Speicher, Tim Speicher

Anniversaries

Beal, Albert and Phyllis, Friedens, Pa., 69
Bowman, Nelson and Janice, Frederick, Md., 50
Fogle, Jerry and Linda, Frederick, Md., 55
Greenway, Thomas S., Jr. and Ruth, Tryon, N.C., 70
Grubb, Wilmer, Jr. and Dorothy, Palmyra, Pa., 75
Hickernell, Donald and Phyllis, Myerstown, Pa., 65
Hitz, Elvin and Donna, Elizabethtown, Pa., 50
Miller, Leroy and Sharon, Easton, Md., 60
Myers, Richard and Leona, Rockingham, Va., 70
Rush, James and Bertha, Polk, Ohio, 60
Smith, Robert and Betty, Annville, Pa., 65
Soper, Paul and Shirley, Union Bridge, Md., 65
Stitely, Bernard and Roxie Ann, Frederick, Md., 55
Wenger, Clarence and Carolyn, Quarryville, Pa., 65

Deaths

Ashbaugh, Linda, 76, Gridley, Calif., Feb. 9
Bashore, Rufus Z., 98, Bernville, Pa., Feb. 15

Beam, Fern Evelyn, Blackwell, 88, Palmyra, Pa., March 13
Blosser, Ruth E. Burger, 94, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 12
Buzi, Gloria Martin, 94, Saint Michaels, Md., Jan. 15
Cripe, Carmon V., 87, Middlebury, Ind., Dec. 31
Curry, Betty Ann Hilton, 73, Lexington, N.C., Jan. 21, 2020
Eberly, Eloise Whitehead, 93, North Manchester, Ind., Oct. 10
Gerber, Nancy Barbara Heisey, 98, Elizabethtown, Pa., March 21
Gronewold, Jeraldeen K. Schrader, 80, Waterloo, Iowa, March 6
Harr, Charles, 91, Lawrenceburg, Ind., Feb. 8
Hartman, Nancy Look, 85, Palmyra, Pa., Nov. 8
Hedrick, Gladys Coffman, 88, Bridgewater, Va., March 15
Hinkle, George D., Jr., 91, Washington, Pa., Sept. 8
Hock, Ann L., 82, Bethel, Pa., Jan. 15
Hockenberry, David M., 74, Chambersburg, Pa., April 15
Hogle, Lee D., 88, Ames, Iowa, June 27, 2020
Hursh, Donald Franklin, 96, Mechanicsburg, Pa., Nov. 19
Jacoby, Paul E., 92, Harleysville, Pa., Feb. 24
Keeney, Lois M. Graver, 83, Bethel, Pa., Feb. 9
Kegerreis, Helen Miller, 91, Lebanon, Pa., April 8
Koons, C. Glenn, 98, Chambersburg, Pa., March 12
Landauer, Ada Joan Kepler, 91, Tonganoxie, Kan., Dec. 13

Loser, Linda D. Zeigler, 75, Elizabethtown, Pa., April 15
Mark, Miles (Melvin), 66, Wooster, Ohio, Feb. 1
Marshall, Blanche F. Schmidt, 59, Lowber, Pa., March 29
McClanathan, Lenora Virginia, 95, Hagerstown, Md., April 5
McCoy, Lou Ann, 64, Berlin, Pa., Jan. 13
Miller, Gaynel Elizabeth Summers, 82, Hagerstown, Md., April 1
Miller, Leighton Busey, 83, Shepherdstown, W.Va., Jan. 31
Neher, Lois Ruth, 92, McPherson, Kan., March 28
Nimsz, Dolores M. Donmoyer, 89, Hershey, Pa., March 4
Nowell, Russell Edward (Rusty), 63, Polk, Ohio, March 29
Sheller, Dean H., 74, Chaska, Minn., Dec. 9
Spire, Ronald Duane, 87, Dandridge, Tenn., March 16
Summers, Jean L. Boltz, 89, Hershey, Pa., Sept. 3
Thompson, Deborah Suzanne, 68, Hagerstown, Md., March 3
Wagner, Lloyd E., Sr., 84, Hummelstown, Pa., April 12
Walbridge, Ellen Virginia Miller, 102, Easton, Md., Feb. 26
Wolboldt, Fern E. Maxwell, 88, Wooster, Ohio, Feb. 2
Ziegler, Emmanuel John, 98, Lititz, Pa., Feb. 18

Licensed

George, Kenneth, Sr., Mid-Atl. Dist. (Ridgely, Md.), April 11

Meiser, Laura, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.), March 21

Placements

Bozman, Paul, from pastor, Eastwood, Akron, Ohio, to pastor, Reading, Homeworth, Ohio, March 22
Diamond, Douglas, from pastor, Broadfording, Hagerstown, Md., to pastor, Eden, N.C., April 1
Heinlein, Christopher, from interim pastor, Maple Springs, Hollsopple, Pa., to interim pastor, Curryville, Martinsburg, Pa., April 5
Keener, Frederick, from pastor, Bristolville, Ohio, to pastor, Greencastle, Pa., Feb. 1
Keller, Jeffrey, Sr., from youth pastor, Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa., to pastor, Lebanon, Pa., March 8
Laird, Timothy, interim pastor, Diehl's Crossroads, Martinsburg, Pa., March 1
Lancaster, Mark, interim pastor to pastor, Good Shepherd, Tipp City, Ohio, March 7
Layman, Brian, from interim pastor, Reading, Homeworth, Ohio, to pastor, First, Ashland, Ohio, April 15
Park, Calvin, from pastor, Mechanic Grove, Quarryville, Pa., to pastor, Brownsville, Knoxville, Md., March 28
Poteat, Eric, interim pastor to pastor, Koontz, New Enterprise, Pa., and Waterside, Woodbury, Pa., March 8

TURNINGPOINTS

What is your ZIP code?

What is your ZIP code? The postal code in Nazareth, Jesus' hometown, is 1613101. Have you ever thought about Jesus' ZIP code before? I hadn't—until recently!

John 1:14 reminds us that “the Word became flesh and lived among us. . . .” In *The Message*, that text is paraphrased this way: “The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood.”



BECKY ULLOM NAUGLE

What does it mean to us that Jesus moved into the neighborhood?

This question, posed to those gathered for Christian Citizenship Seminar 2021 by pastor and author José Humphries, is both age-old and fresh. God sending Jesus to our physical world, in human flesh-and-blood form, grounds Christian understanding. Yet connecting the idea of Jesus moving into a neigh-

borhood with the reality of a ZIP code sparked my imagination anew.

Our hearts warm with the idea of helping a neighbor. We have the theological heritage, a legacy of witness, and official statements encouraging the broad Brethren understanding of “neighbor,” which of course includes the literal definition of “the person(s) living beside you.”

Our history of presence in predominantly rural areas has created several generations of us who have naturally engaged economic justice practices—whether consciously or not. Our grandparents supported small, local businesses because that was the only option; chain restaurants and big box stores are only interested in certain kinds of locations, and “rural” is not one of them. People consumed locally produced food because it came from their own gardens and farms.

But things are different today, aren't they?

More of us (both Brethren and the US population in general) are living in urban or suburban areas. Fewer of us produce our own food—or know those who did. We make purchasing decisions based on free shipping and/or

delivery, as well as cheap prices. Too often, we favor convenience over our values.

Made astoundingly clear by the pandemic, we affect our neighbors through our actions. We have daily reminders of how individual choice compounds into large-scale response. No matter where you live, the choices you make with your resources matter.

Economic justice can involve rather complex domestic and international policy, but individuals making choices “for the glory of God and my neighbor's good” are also powerful witnesses. Individuals are empowered to make rapid, holistic change in their own decisions.

How then, should we live?

Pastor José suggests that we show up, stay put, and see. Jesus showed up, physically, in a lot of places. He shared meals with people and visited friends. He put clothes on his body and sandals on his feet. He walked places and talked to people. He literally showed up, and so should we (individually and as communities).

Staying put also challenges us, despite its simplicity. Learning new things about God's people and God's creation through travel forms us in important ways; so does staying put. How does your community rely on you—literally? How are you partnering with God to restore the breaches?

Finally, when we show up and stay put, what does God allow us to see differently? When we are committed to a place and its people, how does God call us to mend the brokenness?

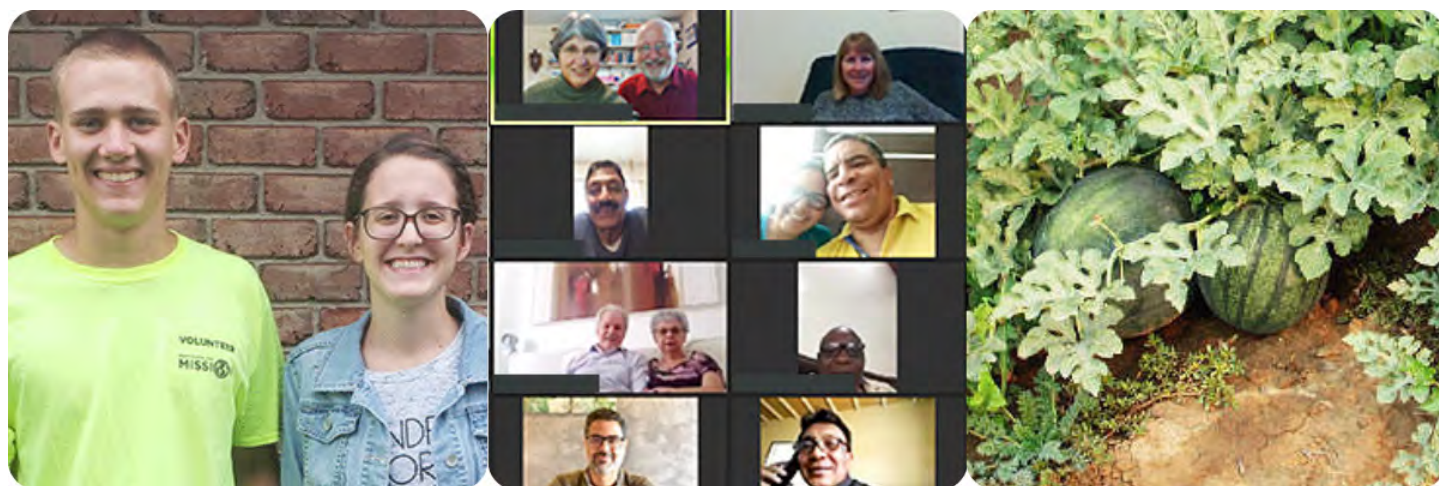
As you observe things around you, you might notice what your community has and doesn't have (this is called community asset mapping). You might wonder about all the people who've lost jobs in the past year, especially in your congregation or community. Who is suffering? What small and big things can be done to lessen suffering?

As we seek to be the hands and feet of Jesus in our world today, may you find the courage to show up, the endurance to stay put, and the desire to see things as God might see them. **NU**

Becky Ullom Naugle is director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry for the Church of the Brethren.

WHEN WE SHOW UP AND STAY PUT, WHAT DOES GOD ALLOW US TO SEE DIFFERENTLY? WHEN WE ARE COMMITTED TO A PLACE AND ITS PEOPLE, HOW DOES GOD CALL US TO MEND THE BROKENNESS?

"We always give thanks to God for all of you, mentioning you in our prayers, remembering without ceasing your work of faith and labor of love and perseverance of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." ~1 Thessalonians 1:2-3, WEB



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**Connect with Mutual Aid Agency
at this year's virtual Annual Conference.**

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A Map to Mutuality:

**Doing good for the good of doing it.
Thursday, July 1, 5:30 EST.**

MAA's deepest purpose is to be a channel for mutual aid in times of crisis, bearing one another's burdens and providing hope in times of loss.

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