



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN
MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2021 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG

*'The Touch of
the Master's
Hand'
turns 100*



Homes, Water, and Hurricane Recovery

"Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me"

—Matthew 25:40 (NRSV)

Help build 200 new homes and repair 100 community water systems for survivors of the 2020 hurricanes in Central America!

Powerful and rare November Hurricanes Eta & Iota struck Central America leaving millions of people hungry, thirsty, and without shelter in Nicaragua, Honduras, El Salvador, and Guatemala. These storms devastated roads, bridges, and water systems, and added to the difficulties of ongoing economic crises and the COVID-19 pandemic. The early response supported temporary shelter, water, food distributions, medical supplies, and the shipment of a container of food.

Join in the rebuilding of the lives of God's people. Support the Emergency Disaster Fund. www.brethren.org/givebdm



**BRETHREN
Disaster Ministries**

Emergency Disaster Fund 1451 Dundee Avenue, Elgin, IL 60120

For more information: 800-451-4407 · www.brethren.org/bdm · bdm@brethren.org

In partnership with: Church World Service, Proyecto Aldea Global (PAG, Project Global Village) and Christian Solidarity Program for Honduras



Photos courtesy of Church World Service and Proyecto Aldea Global

Brian Bert / Camp Blue Diamond



CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

July/August 2021 Vol. 170 No. 6 www.brethren.org/messenger

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

6 Blue Diamond is forever
by Walt Wiltschek

10 Lessons learned from a church renewal story
by Susan Liller

11 Exegeting your neighborhood
by Ryan Braught

14 Listening and learning from Asian American Brethren
with Wendy McFadden, Madalyn Metzger, and Lin Reish

18 'The Touch of the Master's Hand' turns 100
by Wendy McFadden, with poem by Myra Brooks Welch

20 Brethren mascots
by Walt Wiltschek

24 On the border with CDS
by Lisa Crouch

departments

- 2** FROM THE PUBLISHER
- 3** THE EXCHANGE
- 4** IN TOUCH
- 13** 500 COFFEES
- 17** MEDIA REVIEW
- 22** BIBLE STUDY
- 26** NEWSLINE DIGEST
- 29** LETTERS
- 31** TURNING POINTS
- 32** POTLUCK

on the cover

Myra Brooks Welch's poem "The Touch of the Master's Hand" is likely the most well-known Brethren poem ever. It was first published in MESSENGER one hundred years ago.

Coming and going

This issue of **MESSENGER** has something unusual: When you turn the magazine upside down and backwards (go ahead—try it!), you’ll find the Church of the Brethren annual report right-side up.

Since we’ve never done this before, our printer helpfully provided a template for the designer to use when preparing the files for production—so the



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

MESSENGER pages go one direction and the annual report pages go the other. The template has a name, and that’s how we learned that this arrangement is called a “coming and going” project—which sounds a lot better than the paragraph of words (and hand motions) that I was using to describe the concept to others.

I’m captivated by the name for this printing idea. Coming and going conveys a bustle of activity, which is true for the Church of the Brethren even in a year when literal coming and going came to a standstill. Reinventing so many things had people coming and going all the time, though some of that was mainly clicking from one Zoom session to another.

Even the harried expression “I don’t know whether I’m coming or going” seems about right, at least for those days when time seemed to warp and we had to think twice to figure out what day it was.

Mostly the term refers to the appealing busyness of everyday life, as in, “I like to sit in the coffee shop and watch the coming and going of all the people.” Who knew how much we would come to value all the ordinary things in our quotidian lives.

Whether ordinary or extraordinary, those moments belong to the God who guards our lives, whether we are coming or going. In the words of the psalmist:

*The Lord will keep
your going out and your coming in
from this time on and forevermore (121:8).*

HOW TO REACH US

MESSENGER
1451 Dundee Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120

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

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

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

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 © July 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)

“Let the fields be jubilant, and everything in them; let all the trees of the forest sing for joy”

—Psalm 96:12, NIV

“Time passes differently at camp. You can miss a year, and when you go back it’s like you never left.”

—Unknown

“Camps offer kids a chance to feel like they belong. All those goofy chants and team songs, the sense of common purpose and attachment to the identity that camps promote go a long way to offering children a sense of being rooted.” —Dr. Michael Ungar, scientific director, CYCC Network

“Summer camp is a great opportunity to explore new things or dive deep into areas you love.”

—Peggy Chang, CEO and founder of ActivityHero

PROPOSING A TOAST

According to *Holiday Insights*, Aug. 10 is National S’mores Day, and Aug. 30 is National Marshmallow Toasting Day (although they could not verify official status for either holiday).

This popular combination of chocolate bar, graham cracker, and perfectly toasted marshmallow reportedly dates to at least the 1920s, making their first official appearance in a Girl Scouts guidebook in 1927. The name came about because hungry campers, naturally, wanted “some more”—or “s’more,” as pronounced with a marshmallow-filled mouth.

They continue to be favorites at the various Church of the Brethren camps and elsewhere. If you don’t have access to a roaring campfire, you can also make s’mores in the microwave with 15 to 20 seconds of heating action, but minus the marshmallow’s golden color (or charred, depending on your preference).



DID YOU KNOW?

The Church of the Brethren has 28 camps and outdoor ministry centers spread across the United States. Camp Harmony, in Western Pennsylvania, was the first, established in 1923, followed by Camp Alexander Mack in Indiana in 1925.

Most of the camp programs are resuming this year after having to cancel in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Learn more on pages 6-9.

FASTER, HIGHER, STRONGER

The Summer Olympics

are scheduled to take place July 23 to Aug. 8 in Tokyo, Japan, bringing together athletes from around the world. A few Church of the Brethren members have competed in the games over the years, including pole vaulter and decathlete Bob Richards (1948, 1952, and 1956), marathon runner Brian Sell (2008), and middle-distance runner Clayton Murphy (2016). Richards won gold in the pole vault in 1952 and 1956.

Can you find the names of past Olympic host cities in the puzzle below? They can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, forwards or backwards:



Atlanta	London	Rome
Athens	Los Angeles	Sapporo
Barcelona	Mexico City	Seoul
Beijing	Oslo	Sydney
Calgary	Paris	Tokyo

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

Camp Bethel is ventilating cabins

with “DIY air filters” as one of its COVID-19 protocols for in-person summer camps. The filters were assembled by volunteers with donated items and supplies. Shown here is a team assembling one of the 19 box fan air filters during a workday April 3. Each fan bears this tag:

Camp Bethel Box-Fan Air-Filter

Place on floor, fan blowing UP, in center of room or cabin. On high, this unit filters 900 cubic feet of air per minute and entire room in 3 minutes; 5 minutes on low. These MERV-13 filters are 85% efficient in removing airborne droplets. COVID-19 can only be airborne inside wet or dried respiratory particles 1 micrometer or larger. Weather permitting, open screened windows and doors while in this room. Turn off the fan when you leave this room. Replace these filters after Oct. 3, 2021.



In prayer for international Brethren

This spring, several countries where there are Church of the Brethren denominations have been hard-hit by COVID-19, including Venezuela and India—which for a time was “ground zero” for the global pandemic.

In May, leaders of ASIGLEH (the acronym by which the Church of the Brethren is known in Venezuela) reported that COVID-19 levels were five times higher than in September 2020 and a new variant was spreading. The church-

es were near a crisis due to COVID-19 infections, with the Maracay congregation having the highest infection rate. Several church leaders had bad cases of COVID-19 including Robert Anzoategui, president of the denomination. On May 23, a missionary leader who was one of the few female leaders in the church died. The church also paid tribute after the death of Obed Rincón, principal musician in the Brethren Band. Said the tribute: “Our God has called our brother

Obed Rincón to the lines of the great celestial orchestra where his sax, flute, and clarinet will sound eternally.”

In India, death rates climbed through the spring. Sanjay Malaviya communicated prayer concerns from the Gujarat Diocese of the Church of North India, one of the Church of the Brethren’s two partner denominations in India. “While officially approximately 4,100 people died in Gujarat, about 130,000 death certificates were issued during last 2 months,” he wrote. “In many households more than one member has died. Children have been left orphaned, or parents have lost a child or children even. Many families have lost the chief bread-earner. The CNI Gujarat Diocese has been deeply pained and grieved as it has lost 11 pastors and 3 missionaries till now in the second wave. . . . One of the beautiful and heartwarming things that I experienced during this terrifying situation is that most people were ready to provide help and did their best to be of help.”



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.

Pleasant Hill turns 50

Pleasant Hill (Ohio) Church of the Brethren celebrates 50 years on Aug. 29. Said an announcement: “August 29, 1971, was the actual date of the initial dedication of the new building so it will be 50 years to the day.”

72 years of ministry

Pastor Edward Kerschensteiner of Boise (Idaho) Valley Church of the Brethren has resigned after 72 years of active ministry. “He has served our congregation for the past 34 years,” said Harold Kerschensteiner. “We thought it was noteworthy that he has held an active pastoral role for most of those years, either fulltime or part-time.”

Cedar Grove reopens

Tennessee’s oldest Church of the Brethren is reopening, according to the *Blue Mountain Eagle*. The Cedar Grove congregation operated in Hawkins County for nearly 200 years before closing in 2015 because of membership loss.

Kristie Wilson, a chaplain at Holston Valley Medical Center, is reopening the church to serve a new congregation, with approval from Southeastern District and the help of her husband to do the remodeling. She told the paper: “It’s a good thing

that this church stays alive and continues to thrive for the people. It is part of the history of this community and we want it to stay open for another 200 years. The world needs hope right now more than ever, and I really hope we can be that beacon of light for this community.”

Stimulus for Haiti

Some Churches of the Brethren have received donations out of members’ COVID-19 stimulus checks. Among them is Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren in Quarryville, Pa. Interim pastor Bob Kettering wrote a letter to the congregation offering the idea:

“Some may have really needed this check to meet expenses or pay down debt. Others may have received the stimulus check without having experienced an economic hardship. . . . I would like to challenge the members of the Mechanic Grove Church to join me in contributing this stimulus check for mission outreach, specifically to help the Delmas Church of the Brethren in Haiti to purchase land and a building.”

He explained the situation of the Delmas church, which lost its building during the 2010 earthquake and for more than 10 years has been worshipping in a temporary shelter. It will cost some \$80,000 for a piece of land with an existing building that may be remodeled to serve as a church.

As of May, Mechanic Grove has raised some \$26,000 for the Delmas congregation.

College news

Juniata College in Huntingdon, Pa., was selected to receive an IDEAS (Increase and Diversify Education Abroad for US Students) grant from the Department of State’s Capacity Building Program for US Study Abroad. A release said that the college was one of 26 selected from 132 applicants “to create, expand, and/or diversify American student mobility overseas in support of US foreign policy goals.”

The college also received a \$34,936 Humanities Planning Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities to develop a humanities-centered interdisciplinary program in rural poverty studies. “Stories have enormous power in fostering empathy and sparking imagination,” said provost Lauren Bowen. “An oral history project like this helps us understand the experience of others.”



Brethren in the news

Jeffrey Clouser, director of music at Palmyra (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, received the May Schwarz Award for “a graduating student who show[s] outstanding potential for and commitment to the church’s music ministry” when he graduated from Trinity Lutheran Seminary with a master of arts degree in church music.

Greg Davidson Laszakovits had a sermon selected for a Sojourners collection called “*El Camino*,” or “the way,” described as “sermons on the way to a robust engagement with immigrant justice.” Laszakovits’s sermon “Philoxenia vs. Xenophobia” was preached at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren. “There are dozens and dozens of scriptures in our Bible that talk about the love of the stranger and how we are to treat people, even people who are different from us,” he said in his sermon. “We know that these compassionate scriptures are rooted in the experience of God’s people because God’s people were often the foreigners and the outsiders themselves.”

Ellis and Rita Yoder of Monitor Church of the Brethren are among the six Kansas Master Farmer and Farm Homemaker couples recognized this year, according to *Kansas Farmer*. The publication lauded the Yoders for their care for the family’s 120-year-old farm southwest of McPherson. They are involved with Growing Hope Globally, and also have “spent the last 30 years incorporating no-till and regenerative agriculture practices into the farming operation,” said the article. “The goal is to have healthier soils so that their grandchildren will be able to continue the family’s ties to the land and the community.”

Two Church of the Brethren members have been named dairy princess for counties in Pennsylvania: **Mikayla Davis** of the Mohrsville congregation, who is studying agribusiness at Penn State, was crowned in Berks County. **Rachel Hollinger** of the Elizabethtown congregation was crowned in Lancaster County.



Blue Diamond is forever

Dean and Jerri Heiser Wenger reflect on 30 years of camp leadership

by Walt Wiltschek

For three decades, Dean and Jerri Heiser Wenger have been co-executive directors of Camp Blue Diamond—the Church of the Brethren camp for Middle Pennsylvania District, located in Petersburg, Pa.

They have announced their plans to retire this fall, so this seemed like a good opportunity to have them reflect on the experiences of the past 30 years and the role of outdoor ministry in the denomination.

MESSENGER caught up with them recently amid preparations for one final summer camp season:

Q Thirty years is a long time! How did you first get started in outdoor ministry?

JERRI: I had gone to school at Fort Wayne (Ind.) Bible College. I really felt a call to ministry and didn't know what that meant for a woman in the early '80s. At first I majored in missions, because I wanted to be like Anna Mow, but I ended up switching my major to Christian education with a minor in camping. I went back to Ohio and became the first program coordinator for Inspiration Hills (in Northern Ohio District). I did part-

time for a summer and then was hired on full-time, combining the program coordination with some office manager work. I did that for two years.

DEAN: And I worked three summers as a counselor at Woodland Altars (in Southern Ohio) and one summer as a naturalist at Inspiration Hills while I was teaching school. That's where Jerri and I met, at Inspiration Hills.

Q So then how did you end up at Camp Blue Diamond?

JERRI: After we were married, we lived in North Manchester (Indiana) for six years. Dean went back to Manchester College—he had a degree in elementary education, but he went back and got a junior high endorsement to teach math. I worked for the admissions office for a couple of years until our second son,



Jerri Heiser Wenger (front right) meets with other camp leaders at an event in 2015.



Brian Beert / Camp Blue Diamond

Jacob, was born, and then I stayed home with him. After a time, we just kind of began to think, “What are we doing?” There was a little sense of discontent. We asked ourselves when were we the happiest, and for both of us, hands down, it was when we were in camping.

DEAN: I had always loved camping. As a kid, I went as soon as I could go. Back then it was like third grade all the way through high school and then as a counselor. I always loved the community at camp, and I just felt most at home when I was there. So after teaching for five years I was ready to get back into camping.

JERRI: We began watching for positions, and after looking at some possibilities we noticed Blue Diamond was open. We interviewed at Inspiration Hills and at Blue Diamond, but we were offered the position at Blue Diamond immediately, and that’s where we came. The support of the congregations in the district for the camp was obvious—the way they gave to the camp and embraced the camp—and (then-district executive) Randy Yoder had a desire to be partners in ministry within the district and really

worked with us and embraced us and worked alongside us. That was comforting and empowering.

DEAN: He was a very good mentor. From the interview process, we could just tell Camp Blue Diamond was in a good place, and the district had a good relationship with the camp. We were glad they offered us this position, and we started in August 1991.

🚩 Did you encounter any challenges in starting up?

DEAN: We had to get used to living way out in the woods. It was a transition. But once we felt ourselves established it kind of became “our” camp and district. We were all working together and understanding each other.

JERRI: We are tucked away, yet oddly enough we’re really close to all the congregations. Our three children were raised with their lives revolving around camp. They were eight miles from school, and sports were out in the summer, so they were committed to camp. At times that was difficult, but only for a season. It got better as they got older and began to embrace that. It’s given them a lot of good memories.

DEAN: Sharing the position could be difficult at times, too, because Jerri and I don’t always agree, and you have two bosses. I think I’m the one who usually steps on Jerri’s toes!

🚩 So what have been some of the best parts of your tenure?

DEAN: We were able, with a large gift from an individual who had owned a feed mill, to start a scholarship fund, and then other people gave money toward the fund—eventually up to about a quarter of a million dollars. Now we can help 50 or 60 kids every summer. It’s been a real asset.

JERRI: We were also able to do two capital campaigns—replacing summer camp cabins with cabins that are winterized, building two self-contained

family cabins, a new staff house, new maintenance building, and RV campground improvements.

DEAN: We replaced the summer camp cabins with ones that had electricity and heat, which made summer camp more comfortable but also allowed us to do outdoor school for six weeks in fall and six in spring. That really added to our programming. We have kids here more than 20 weeks of the year now. And I’d say relationships, too: Jerri and I have been very deliberate about building positive relationships. Like most districts, we have a wide spectrum—conservative to liberal, and traditional Brethren who are right down the middle. We’ve tried to put together a program that will fit the needs of all, promoting Jesus Christ as our Savior. That’s our focus of summer camp. We just welcome everyone.

JERRI: And all three of our kids now are doing things having to do with church and creation. Jacob is an entomologist, really getting into bugs; Laban is an adventure junkie, and he’s been working at church camps; and Andrew is pastoring a Church of the Brethren congregation in Akron, Ohio. They have taken things from where they were raised and concentrated on things out of that experience.

DID YOU KNOW?

Dean and Jerri Heiser Wenger are among a number of long-serving camp directors and managers in the Church of the Brethren. Bill Hare of Camp Emmaus (Mount Morris, Ill.) has served in that role for more than 50 years, and Doug Phillips of Brethren Woods (Keezletown, Va.) and Mike Neff of Camp Ithiel (Gotha, Fla.) have also eclipsed the 30-year mark, while several others are in double figures.

“I think that speaks well of the Church of the Brethren that there are a lot of long-tenured directors,” Jerri Heiser Wenger said. “I think it takes a long tenure to truly be part of the community. Then you hit that sweet spot, and you don’t want to give it up.”



Camp Blue Diamond

Dean and Jerri Heiser Wenger with other Camp Blue Diamond staff in 2019.

What about for the church as a whole? Why is having camps important for the Church of the Brethren?

JERRI: What I see over and over again is people who grew up coming to camp and then moved away, got married, and had children. Often times they are not connected to any church, let alone the Church of the Brethren, but then they find it's important that their kids come back to camp. It's where I truly believe children and youth are most connected to Christ and to the community, and it becomes such a part of who they are and what they need in their lives that they come back to it. Facebook has

played a huge role, too, as we watch these campers reconnect on Facebook and have conversations and share memories. Camp is still really a part of who they are.

I also believe that it's through the church camps that the church does its best evangelism. At least a quarter or more of our campers do not attend church, but they come to church camp because somehow the community is important, and they want to be part of that. It's a great opportunity for us to name Christ as the center of that community and what makes it special. I truly believe that our camps are the best part of what's going on in the church.

Are there particular lessons you think the church could learn from our camps?

DEAN: it would be nice if we could be more tolerant and understanding of one another, and realize we're not going to agree on all the issues, but we agree on the main issues—the teachings of Jesus and that he is our Savior, and to love one another. As camp directors in the district we have to walk the middle ground and try to understand everyone and work with them, and it would be nice if congregations would try to understand people outside their congregations with different views but who agree on the basics. We can accomplish more as a denomination when we stick together.

JERRI: We remember that we're still brothers and sisters.

DEAN: Community seemed to be the thing I really found at camp, being accepted by others when I wasn't always in high school or middle school.

JERRI: I've used this quote a lot: Probably 25 years ago, a young lady had just finished up her senior project, and she was just spent. She came to an

CAMPS PREPARE FOR 'IN-PERSON' SUMMER

"In person" is the mode for most Church of the Brethren camps this summer. Representatives of several camps reported on their planning for the 2021 season in a May Zoom meeting of the Outdoor Ministries Association, chaired by Gene Hollenberg.

Barry LeNoir of Camp Bethel in Virginia reported having to grapple with changing state guidelines, as did others on the call. Virginia is one of the states issuing new guidance and COVID protocols to allow overnight camps this summer in light of the availability of vaccines and lower numbers of cases and deaths.

Camp representatives talked about a variety of COVID mitigation measures that may help keep campers safe. Each

camp is making its own plan. Examples of what different camps are doing—based on CDC guidelines, the American Camp Association Field Guide, and varying state and local regulations: requiring staff and counselors to be vaccinated, COVID-19 screening such as quarantines or negative test results before arrival, reducing numbers of campers and staff, shortened schedules, social distancing, separating campers into small-group "bubbles," requiring face masks, keeping cabins ventilated, setting up dining tents, and using other means to do as much as possible outdoors.

Some are having a slightly reduced camping season or holding fewer camps per week.

In addition to looking ahead to the summer, the OMA meeting also looked back at what the pandemic has done to camps across the denomination. Surprisingly, it was not all bad news. "We survived 2020," said LeNoir. "We kept all our staff. We begged for money. Some 60 percent of our income was from gifts."

Strong giving was important across the board. Many camps also used the quiet year to carry out improvement projects to facilities.

A continuing problem for all the camps, however? Recruiting enough counselors for this summer season. For a listing of Brethren camps, go to www.brethren.org/camps/directory.

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

I WANT TO BE THAT SPACE WHERE CHILDREN AND YOUTH CAN BE WHO GOD CREATED THEM TO BE AT CAMP, BECAUSE THEY CAN'T ALWAYS DO THAT AT SCHOOL OR EVEN CHURCH.

event here, and I remember her lying down on the futon in the lodge. And she said, "I love to come to camp where I can be who God created me to be." I want to be that space where children and youth can be who God created them to be at camp, because they can't always do that at school or even church. I want camp to always be that safe place.

🔗 With the end of this chapter nearing, what's ahead for you?

DEAN: We don't know!

JERRI: We bought a home in Clovis, Calif.—near Fresno. We'll live about 5 miles from our son Jacob and his wife and two sons. We're going to be grandparents! We're young to retire, so we're going to get part-time jobs, too.

DEAN: New opportunities will open. We just don't know where. Whatever comes, we'll be open to it. But this has been a great job. Running a camp involves a great variety of work that needs to get done, so you never get bored. The plans for a day always change halfway through. It keeps you young, too, working with young people. It's been a fast 30 years, and I think we both would do it again.

JERRI: In a heartbeat! I think outdoor ministry is the best job in the church, because we do get to meet a variety of people and get to be part of a lot of different people's lives. We get to hear a lot of stories and be part of a lot of stories. If you talk to past campers, they'll remember when they got scared by a bear when they went up to the shower house or the campfires and the songs. We get to be a part of people's faith development that they'll talk about for a long, long time, and that's pretty cool. That's a gift. 🔗

A CURRICULUM FOR CAMPS

Many Church of the Brethren camps use the InsideOut camp curriculum developed by an ecumenical development team and published (since 2013) by Chalice Press. The current team is made up of representatives from the Church of the Brethren, Presbyterian Church USA, United Church of Christ, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Baptist communities. Lee Yates serves as project manager.

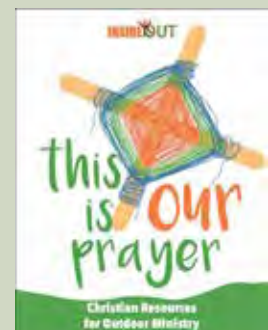
Together this group of camp leaders meets in February each year and creates the theme, chooses scriptures, and develops "Campers Will . . ." statements of objectives. When choosing the theme, special consideration is given to past curriculum themes, concerns that children and youth may be facing, and where members sense God is leading.

The development team strives to be inclusive, respect scripture, and be sensitive to children and youth no matter where they are in their faith journey. "We are intentional about creating activities and experiences that are affirming of all God's people," a statement from the publisher says. "However a camper arrives at camp, and however they understand themselves, we want them to know they are a beloved child of God."

Once the development team has completed its task, the writers take over, creating a week's worth of Bible studies, activities, crafts, worship materials, and more. Material is created for young children through older youth, as well as for intergenerational gatherings such as family camp.

Church of the Brethren representatives in recent years have included Karen Neff (Camp Ithiel) and Jerri Heiser Wenger (Camp Blue Diamond) on the development team and Chris Kaake (Inspiration Hills) as a writer.

The project works two years out, currently planning for 2023. The 2021 theme is "Creation Speaks," but many camps this year are using the materials from the canceled 2020 season, with the theme "This Is Our Prayer." InsideOut is available from Brethren Press.—Jerri Heiser Wenger





Lessons learned

FROM A CHURCH RENEWAL STORY

by Susan Liller

I have been privileged to observe and be a part of a unique experience. From July 2017 through the present, I have seen a very small, older, urban Church of the Brethren congregation be renewed by working with a newly formed Brethren in Christ (BIC) congregation made up mostly of people on the fringes of society.

This story was told in “A New Dawn for East Dayton,” in the October 2020 issue of *MESSENGER*. For the recent New and Renew Conference, I was asked to lead a workshop that told what we learned from this experience—what worked and what didn’t work—and how others might gain ideas to renew their own congregations.

The workshop was not intended to be a new method or theory of church planting or church renewal. It was not intended to dismantle leading models of church planting or church renewal. Instead, it was simply a story in which two city congregations came together to work as one body to further God’s kingdom in East Dayton. I hoped the listeners could glean some ideas to help them in their locations and situations.

The story begins with an older Church of the Brethren congregation consisting of a handful of elderly members. This church’s history dates back to 1845. It had been a large

neighborhood church in the 1930s to 1950s. The current building, its third location, was built in 1949.

The second group in this story is The Shepherd’s Table, a Brethren in Christ church planted by Zach Spidel. Made up of mostly urban neighborhood folks, the congregation began meeting in his home, two houses from East Dayton Church of the Brethren’s building.

Now there’s a new group of the two congregations. It’s called the East Dayton Fellowship. Its ministries are based on the needs of the people in the neighborhood. Relationships were formed with the neighbors and those who began attending worship services and events. Needs were identified and ministries begun. These included wor-



MINISTRIES ARE BASED ON THE NEEDS OF THE PEOPLE IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD. RELATIONSHIPS WERE FORMED WITH THE NEIGHBORS AND THOSE WHO BEGAN ATTENDING WORSHIP SERVICES AND EVENTS.



The Reward of Risk

ship services, youth activities, serving and distributing food, giving away clothes, community outreach events, and mentoring recovering addicts.

All of these ministries are revitalizing the original Brethren congregation and its remaining members. When the East Dayton church lost its pastor in 2016 and was considering asking Spidel to be their pastor, the members told each other, “We used to be a neighborhood church. We want that back.”

What helped us succeed? The No. 1 requirement was patience. An idea would be presented to the two separate groups. There was discussion. Then the topic was tabled till the next meeting. This discussion and waiting process took several rounds. Then pros and cons were identified. Eventually a decision was made by each group. If everyone agreed, the idea was put into place.

This process took place many times. For some decisions, a joint group was formed for the discussion process, which allowed people to slowly adapt to change and discern together.

Another factor contributing to the success of this story is that the groups started with the easier stuff. Joint community outreach events were the first activities consid-

ered. The last activity to be combined was the Sunday worship service. About three years spanned the first and the last, illustrating the time needed for these two groups to bond together.

What did not work? The main factor was that the planning process offered by church planting and renewal coaches was not right for this story and this set of circumstances. The traditional recommendation of creating a five-year plan and sticking to it didn’t work. The people living in this economically depressed, unstable neighborhood have chaotic lives, and relationships explode easily. The environment changes quickly and often. A fixed plan may work in more stable environments, but not here.

How did we adjust? When the plan did not work, other tactics did: being willing to change directions, learning and becoming part of the neighborhood, and building relationships.

The biggest lesson comes from the words of pastor Zach Spidel: “The good things that happened were not in the plan. They happened when we loved people relationally.”

Susan Liller, a newly ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, is associate pastor at the East Dayton (Ohio) Fellowship.

Exegeting your neighborhood

by Ryan Braught

If you and I were sitting down together at your favorite local coffeehouse, and I asked you to describe for me your neighborhood or community, how would you answer that question? Would you tell me the socioeconomic status, the racial make-

up, the population, whether it is rural, suburban, or urban, the history, etc.?

My next question would be: “How did you come up with these answers? How did you interpret or exegete your community?” Many of us who are pastors have been taught during seminary how

to exegete (to interpret or understand) the Scriptures, and we have sought to teach others how to exegete the Scriptures for themselves. But we haven’t been taught and haven’t taught others how to exegete the communities in which we live, work, worship, and play.



GET TO KNOW THE OWNERS AND EMPLOYEES BY THEIR FIRST NAME. PRAY FOR PEOPLE YOU MEET IN THAT THIRD PLACE. PRACTICE LISTENING AND ASKING QUESTIONS

So as we continue our conversation over a cup of coffee, tea, or—my favorite—chai, we would eventually get around to the question, “So how do we understand or exegete our neighborhoods and communities?” And I would reply, “That is a great question. Let me give you four different spiritual practices that can help you understand your community.”

The first spiritual practice is to walk—to pray with your eyes. Take your cue from Paul in Acts 17, when he visited Athens. Acts 17:23 (NIV) says, “For as I walked around and looked carefully at your objects of worship, I even found an altar with this inscription: ‘to an unknown god.’ So you are ignorant of the very thing you worship—and this is what I am going to proclaim to you.”

Paul walked around Athens to better understand the missional context that he was in. You and I need to walk our neighborhoods and communities, to see what objects of worship we can find, and to engage with the people that we meet on our walks. We learn far more about the communities that we are a part of when we slow down and walk them than when we only drive through them.

The second spiritual practice is to listen—to pray with your ears. The artist Waldemar Raemisch sculpted a statue in Philadelphia titled “The Preacher,” with these words inscribed: “The Preacher: He guided our ways.” The preacher in

his robes has his hands cupped up, not to his mouth (to amplify his voice), but to his ears as if he is listening. James 1:19 in *The Message* calls us to lead not with our voices but with our ears: “Lead with your ears, follow up with your tongue, and let anger straggle along in the rear.”

The Fresh Expressions movement says starting contextual expressions of church among the many segments, neighborhoods, and people groups of society starts with listening. This means listening to God in prayer, solitude, and silence, and listening to the team that you are working with, but also listening to the community to which God has sent you and placed you. The old adage is true: We have two ears and one mouth so that we listen twice as much as we speak.

The third spiritual practice is to ask questions—to pray with your mouth and ears. Jesus was a master at the art of asking questions. In his three years of earthly ministry, Jesus asked 307 questions, was asked 183 questions, and only directly answered three to four questions. We need to become better question askers.


Consider these four questions that you can ask people to better understand the community in which you live, work, worship, and play:

- 1) Narrative. What story is the community calling us to embody?
- 2) Ritual. What are the core practices people engage in that shape their identity and sense of mission in life?
- 3) Institutions. What are the

primary institutions that are shaping our community, and how are they shaping people’s identity and destiny?

- 4) Ethics. How would your community define success?

The last spiritual practice is to be present—to pray with your butt. What does that look like? It looks like finding a “third place” in your community and becoming a regular. Find a local coffeehouse, restaurant, bookstore, gym, etc., and make it a habit to be there a few times each week. Meet people from church there, write your sermons (if you preach) there, maybe even get a job there. Get to know the owners and employees by their first names. Pray for people you meet in that third place. Practice listening (spiritual discipline #2) and asking questions (spiritual discipline #3) when you are at that local third place.

As we wrap up our conversation at your favorite third place, say goodbye to the barista, and head out into the neighborhood, my parting blessing for you is this: “May you walk, listen, ask questions, and become a regular. May you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, ask with your mouth, and feel the seat beneath you in that third place, so that you see, hear, smell, feel, and taste the kingdom of God becoming tangible right before your eyes.” 

Ryan Braught is a church planter and the founding pastor of the Veritas Community, a Church of the Brethren congregation in Lancaster, Pa. This article was drawn from a presentation he did for the Church of the Brethren New and Renew Conference for Church Planting and Church Renewal in May.



What's that smell?

by Jeremy Ashworth

Urine. That awful, acrid, unmistakable smell was the first thing that hit me when I stepped in the front door of the church. A minor plumbing issue became a major plumbing issue, but it happened so gradually that longtime members hardly noticed.

The church board asked, “Why aren’t we growing?” Several suggested that their decline was a sign of Christian faithfulness. Their beliefs were pure, their theology was strong, their values were radically countercultural. By contrast, their neighbors were shallow and spiritually disinterested (board members said this directly). Thus, they reasoned, no growth. Nobody mentioned the fact that the foyer reeked like a toilet.

I wish this were hyperbole. It’s not. I’ve had this exact discussion with more than one Brethren congregation. But even churches with perfect plumbing can be caught in the same dilemma. A friend in another denomination told me, “Our theology is awesome, but our churches stink.”

The great commission is clear. It’s also clear that many congregations struggle with basic evangelism, community engagement, and growth. So here are three big ideas that might help: *values*, *vitality*, and *volume*. I’ll hit the first two now, and the third in a future article.

First, *values*. When we show and tell the message of Jesus, we are expressing our values. We are also inviting others to adopt those same values. This applies

both to the core teachings of Christ and to the particularities of our tradition. When a charismatic believer shares about the experience of speaking in tongues, when a Greek Orthodox Christian invites a friend to join them on pilgrimage, when I make a case for feet-washing, this too is a kind of evangelism.

For some, our commitment to Christ and the church is bone-deep. We are convinced and convicted, and we are willing to realign our life around this central commitment. So it came as a jarring surprise to me when I realized that evangelism is about more than values. Values are central, but they are not the only factor.

Consider *vitality*. Remember the stinky church? Any church’s vitality—or lack thereof—will directly affect their ability to transmit their values and grow.

A close friend of mine is a lifelong Christian leader who recently discovered Anabaptism. After loving what he read in theology books, he wanted to meet actual Anabaptist people. The result? “Every church I visited had the same vibe: circle the wagons and bring out the doilies.” Nobody had to convince him about Jesus generally or Anabaptism specifically. He walked in the door pre-convicted. He had the values. But he walked out the door and never came back because there was no vitality.


My goal is not to ban doilies. If your unchurched neighbors find doilies compelling, go for it. Double down on the doilies. My goal is to ask this ques-

tion: What if the people who are rejecting our church aren’t rejecting our awesome theology? What if they’re rejecting some weirdness or weakness or half-heartedness that our core leaders just don’t see (or smell) anymore?

Hardcore disciples and fierce loyalists may stick it out with a not-thriving congregation because they are committed to the belief system. I’ve done it myself. These folks choose *values* over *vitality*. But this is the minority. My experience is that far more people choose *vitality* over *values*. They may privately wince at the mediocre theology from the pulpit, but they remain rooted because the fantastic youth group keeps their teens engaged.

Don’t make people choose between values and vitality. Both matter. Evangelism is more than the transmission of beliefs. It’s the God-honoring, heart-winning, dynamic combination of both communal vitality and Christ-centered values. Good values + good vitality = good evangelism.

We can’t be perfect; only Jesus is. And I’m not saying that we should never be offensive, because the cross will always be a stumbling block. I am saying that bad odors make for a bad witness. God is great, and our churches can be good.

So fix the toilet, fix the website, and overhaul your attitude if you have to. Then fix your eyes on Jesus, the perfect One, and invite others to do the same. 

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

WHAT IF THEY’RE REJECTING SOME WEIRDNESS OR WEAKNESS OR HALF-HEARTEDNESS THAT OUR CORE LEADERS JUST DON’T SEE (OR SMELL) ANYMORE?



LISTENING AND LEARNING FROM ASIAN AMERICAN BRETHREN

In the wake of the shootings in Atlanta and a rise in crimes against Asian Americans, Nancy Heishman, director of the Office of Ministry, sponsored an online conversation so the church could hear from several Asian American Brethren. The session was hosted by Dave

Shetler, executive of Southern Ohio/Kentucky District, who had hosted a similar session for pastors in his district.

The presenters were Wendy McFadden, publisher of Brethren Press and Communications; Madalyn Metzger, vice president of marketing at

Everence Financial; and Lin Reish, associate research analyst at Healthline Media. Attenders were invited to post questions to the presenters. Here are excerpts from the array of questions and answers. Find the full webinar at www.brethren.org/webcasts/archive.

Tell us about yourselves

Wendy McFadden

I was adopted when I was about one from Korea into a white family in California. I can't separate race and adoption; they are totally intertwined. I was never not aware that I was Asian. As an Asian adoptee in a white world, I could sometimes be startled when I saw myself in the mirror. Nowadays I am always aware of my identity. I've heard it said that one of the differences between people who are white and people who are not is that people who are not white always think about their race.



Most of my life I'm the only Asian in the room. When I am in a new space, I am very aware of my appearance, and that's where I really know that I'm not white. When I walk into a small store, I will speak up right away to the shopkeeper, so that person knows that I know how to speak English.

Madalyn Metzger

I identify as Amerasian: my father is an American national and my mother is from Vietnam. The common vernacular is to refer to myself as biracial, but more and more I am uncomfortable with that term because it insinuates halfness, and I don't feel like I'm half of anything. I feel like I'm fully white and fully Asian American at the same time.



I've been described as "exotic." On occasion I was treated as a novelty, like a toy that could be played with and discarded. I am frequently asked, "What are you?" I've witnessed and felt the anger and pain when others have treated my mom a certain way because of how she looks or her accent or her country of origin. So to some extent, I've always struggled internally about what it is to be me.

I have been described as "white enough" by whites. That not only erases my Vietnamese heritage and culture, but it also sets the assumption that being white is the preference and the norm.

Lin Reish

I'm a Chinese American

adoptee who grew up in the Richmond (Ind.) Church of the Brethren. My experiences as an Asian American have largely been shaped by my proximity, or lack of it, to whiteness. I didn't realize that I wasn't the same race as my parents or that I was a different race than my community members until I reached kindergarten or first grade, when the concept of race first enters a child's mind. Children don't have the filter to address the nuances of what race looks like and why different families might look different. I found great comfort in the community that I had of Asian American adoptees as a child, seeing families that looked like mine, and bonding over what it meant to be divorced from our cultural backgrounds. There were certain parts of my upbringing that were really disconnected from how I look.



As an Asian, I have felt sometimes like I have fallen into the in-between space of the Black and white dichotomy that forms the racial narrative in America. As an adoptee who was brought here at two and has no memory of the motherland, I am regarded by people as an immigrant—by those who can't tell from looking at me that this is the only country that I've ever known.

What can congregations do?

MM: Listen and learn. Ask questions and dig deeper. Start to hear stories and experiences that are not like your own. Then vocalize it and become allies.

LR: To understand someone's story, you have to accept who they are, not ignoring that someone might have different lived experiences than you, that there may be past racial trauma or generational trauma that follows them and affects the way that they experience the world. I encounter people who think that my ability to speak English well and my assimilation into American culture preclude me from being someone who is not a white American. To accept people as they are requires *seeing* all that they are.

How helpful is it to combine all Asian Americans into the same 'basket'?

MM: As a North American society, we need to do better at recognizing the rich cultural differences that each group brings. On the other hand, there are times when there is power in having groups come together in solidarity. This country has a very long history of trying to separate different racial and ethnic groups in order to maintain white supremacy and power. I really want to acknowledge and celebrate the cultural differences that people bring, but not to the detriment of everyone coming together to recognize the oppression and injustice that we all continue to face—even though our experiences with that oppression and injustice have been different.

LR: Part of my continued education about what it means to be Asian in America is going beyond the textbook history, which I think tends to be traumatic, with things like the Chinese Exclusion Act, lynching, Japanese internment camps, and the Vietnamese and Korean wars. So for me it's been about seeking out Asian artists and reading novels from Asian writers and following Asian influencers on social media. I spend way too much of my time on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter; I might as well be diversifying my feed and incorporating those voices—and watching movies that feature Asian actors and actresses.

What's the difference between race and ethnicity?

MM: It's important to recognize that race is a social construct. It was developed to categorize people. Made-up biological differences were used to justify some of the racialization and racial categorization that has happened over generations. That's why it's difficult to differentiate between the two, because they are socially made-up constructs.


LR: I remember Googling “what is ethnicity?” because I knew that racially I was Asian. When I was looking at ethnicity, the Google definition is your cultural group or the social group to which you belong. Well, then, is my ethnicity white because I grew up in white America in a white family and the culture that I belong to is white? But nobody thinks of me as white. Can I be Asian and white? Does “Asian American” cover that?

WM: If you look at the history of whiteness in the States you can see why it's confusing—because each new group was regarded as not white until the next group came in and the power structure agreed that, for instance, now Italians could be white. Those things become embedded; it's just “the way things are.” It's helpful to learn why things became the way they are.

How do you feel about the term “Brethren heritage”?

MM: To me, “Brethren heritage” primarily conjures up history and values and theological frameworks related to our Anabaptist and Pietist roots. From a cultural standpoint, we come from a very rich heritage and background. I celebrate that. It can also be used as a tool of exclusion, whether conscious or unconscious. As more individuals discover Anabaptist beliefs and values, they may not come from the typical European stream. I think playing the Brethren name game or talking about our history as if it's only about the Brethren who originated in Germany can be exclusionary.

WM: I love Brethren identity and history, and a big part of what I do in publishing in the Church of the Brethren is to help people embrace that and learn more about it. I'm aware that up until a certain point it was all white. I also know that some parts that weren't white were not shining moments: In Ohio, early Black clergy were pushed out and told to go back home and preach to “your own kind.” As part of our Brethren history we need to tell those stories. One would hope the Brethren identity would grow.

I think “we” is one of the slipperiest words around. Sometimes in one sentence it has three different meanings. I try to edit so that it's always clear who “we” is. It's easy to say, “we welcome all people.” But if you look closely, the “we” is white Brethren welcoming people who don't look like “us.” There's a lot of care that needs to be taken in how white Brethren talk and think about who the church is and what it means to be Brethren. 

The story behind what we think we know about #BringBackOurGirls

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

B*ring Back Our Girls: The Untold Story of the Global Search for Nigeria's Missing Schoolgirls* is a work of reporting by Joe Parkinson and Drew Hinshaw, journalists with the *Wall Street Journal* who have expertise in Africa and its politics. Parkinson is the Africa bureau chief for the *Journal*. Hinshaw spent a decade in West Africa, most of that time working for the *Journal*.

They spent six years putting together a book that reads like a political thriller. But as the extensive notes for each chapter attest, this is far from a novel. The source for virtually every detail is documented, including how White House staffers decided on what Michelle Obama's tweet would say to support #BringBackOurGirls. The authors carried out interviews with hundreds of people on four continents, "from presidents to child soldiers," they write, including interviews with 20 of the Chibok girls themselves.

The result is gripping, focused on the experience of a core group of the 276 students captured by Boko Haram in Chibok, Nigeria, on April 14, 2014—and what it took, over the next three years, to free them.

The book's central thread is the story of Naomi Adamu, a woman of character and courage, who is from the Chibok congregation of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria). At age 24, she was one of the oldest and a leader in her class. After being taken to a forest hideout of Boko Haram, with some of the other girls she began to keep a secret diary that she managed to carry along when she was released. It was written in notebooks given to the girls by their captors to write down their lessons about Boko Haram's understanding of Islam—but Adamu and some others turned the notebooks into records of what happened to them. They recorded events, wrote their thoughts and feelings, remembered homes and loved ones, made drawings, scribbled phone numbers they didn't want to forget, even wrote letters to their parents that would never be mailed.


As the young women suffered in captivity, from spring 2014 through spring 2017, northeast Nigeria suffered the height of

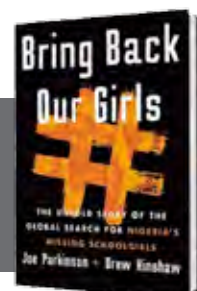
Boko Haram's violence and power. The second thread tracks Boko Haram activity during those years, as it seized the city of Gwoza and made it the "capital" of a new "caliphate" of roughly 12,000 square miles. Tens of thousands of Nigerians were killed and hundreds of thousands fled. Hundreds more children, as well as women and men, were abducted.

The authors note the irony that while the world focused on the Chibok girls, it largely ignored the slaughter of thousands. They also meticulously note human rights abuses by Nigerian authorities, extra-judicial killings of suspects by security forces, detentions of Boko Haram family members and bystanders, and horrors Boko Haram members experienced in Nigerian jails.

A third thread tells of the political machinations of Nigeria and a number of international powers, including the US, as they tried to deal with a crisis powered by social media outrage. The heroes of this thread are not the politicians or the military but individuals who really cared about the girls and took their plight to heart—like Oby Ezekwesili, a former Nigerian cabinet minister who started the movement #BringBackOurGirls—and people who worked at negotiating with Boko Haram for the girls' release—blogger and freelance journalist Ahmad Salkida, Maiduguri lawyer Zannah Mustapha, Swiss envoy Pascal Holliger.

"We began this project as a piece of accountability journalism, to interrogate the real-world impact of that celebrity-driven hashtag and find out why it had taken three years, at a heavy price, to free a group of captives that seemingly every important public figure on earth had championed," says a postscript that also outlines the care taken in interviewing the Chibok girls and the authors' ethical guidelines. "But as we plunged further into the secret world of hostage talks and drone surveillance, we confronted a leviathan of a story that was more complex, more clandestine, and more global than we could have ever imagined."

The authors are donating proceeds of the book to educational needs in Chibok. 



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *Bring Back Our Girls: The Untold Story of the Global Search for Nigeria's Missing Schoolgirls*. **Authors:** Joe Parkinson, Drew Hinshaw. **Publisher:** Harper (March 2, 2021). The book is available for purchase through www.brethrenpress.com.

'The Touch of the Master's Hand' turns 100

by Wendy McFadden

For the first 15 years after "The Touch of the Master's Hand" appeared in print, it made its way from one person to another anonymously. It was preached from pulpits, reprinted in tracts, and published in collections of poetry. The poem was immensely popular, but almost no one knew who had written it.

Myra Brooks Welch, who lived in La Verne, Calif., never set out to be a poet and made no effort to claim ownership of the poem when it began to circulate beyond its original publication. Her poetry was a gift she developed when she became physically limited because of illness.

She was only 35 when "old Mr. Arthritis moved into our home," eventually requiring her to use a wheelchair. "That explains why I have been writing poetry," she said some years later. "I didn't choose it as a career; it chose me."

She had grown up in what she called a singing family. Her childhood home was filled with instruments, and frequently she was the organist for evenings of singing. Later she learned to play guitar and piano.

Through poetry, her new music, she celebrated God's goodness, the beauty of creation, and the emotions of human life. Each word was typed using the eraser ends of two pencils.

For many readers, this physical struggle made Welch's words more meaningful.

Welch's most famous poem was inspired in early 1921 by the remarks of a speaker addressing a group of young people. The poem seemed to write itself in just half an hour. It first appeared in the Feb. 26, 1921, issue of *The Gospel Messenger* (forerunner to today's MESSENGER), earning her 75 cents.

The poem's wide circulation might be traced to a woman in Ohio who, in 1933, sent the poem to the *Mother's Home Life* magazine as her favorite poem. It appeared there and in many other publications as "author unknown."

Then in 1936 the "anonymous" poem was read as the conclusion of a speech delivered by the main speaker at a YMCA conference in Hawaii. Coincidentally, presiding at the meeting was Dwight O. Welch, YMCA secretary for the island of Kauai. According to a report in a 1954 *Lutheran Youth* magazine, "he explained to the surprised audience that the author of the poem was not 'unknown' to him, for she was his mother."

Myra Brooks Welch's name was finally attached to the poem in 1936 when the *New York Times Book Review* followed up a search for the author by including "The Touch of the Master's Hand" in an anthology, *The Best Loved Poems of the American People*. By that time, the poem was being read frequently on the radio, reprinted widely, and set to music.

The poem appears in two volumes of Welch's poetry, both titled *The Touch of the Master's Hand*, one published in 1941 and the second in 1957 by the Brethren Publishing House. When the copyright lapsed in the late 1980s, the famous poem passed into the public domain and has continued to be used in countless ways.

Welch was always modest about the poem's success. "I think God took it as he did the little lad's loaves and fishes and blessed it to his own praise and glory." ❧

A full version of this account appears in *The Story Behind the Touch of the Master's Hand*, a small book that Brethren Press published as part of its centennial in 1997. The book is available from Brethren Press (800-441-3712 or www.brethrenpress.com).



The Touch of the Master's Hand

by Myra Brooks Welch



Jan Fischer Bachman

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile.

"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"

"A dollar, a dollar"; then "Two! Only two?
Two dollars, who'll make it three?
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three—" But no,

From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.

"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand! And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone," said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand
What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:
"The touch of a master's hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.

A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game—and he travels on.

He is "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."

But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand

The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.

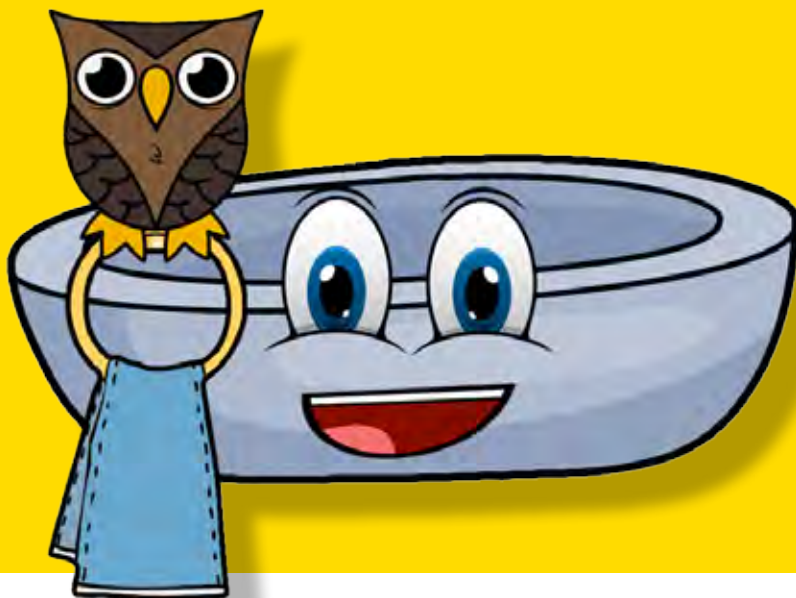
BRETHREN MASCOTS

You've probably seen or heard of the San Diego Chicken, or the Phillie Phanatic, or Mr. Met, or the Philadelphia Flyers' googly-eyed Gritty, all lovable mascots from the world of pro sports. In the college ranks, you have Wisconsin's Bucky Badger, Ohio State's Brutus Buckeye, Virginia Tech's HokieBird, the Oregon Duck, and many others. (Bethany Theological Seminary doesn't compete interscholastically, but if it ever did, the Thundering Theologians has a nice ring to it.)

That got us thinking: If the Church of the Brethren were to have any mascots wandering the Annual Conference sidelines, what might they be? Imagination can be a dangerous thing, but we let our brains run wild to come up with a few possibilities. What (or who) would you add to the list? Send your ideas to messenger@brethren.org. —Walt Wiltschek

TUBBY THE FEETWASHING BASIN AND HIS (OR IS IT HER?) FAITHFUL SIDEKICK, THE TOWEL OWL

They come from humble origins, but they're always on hand when something's afoot. And nothing reminds us to love our neighbor like a bird that keeps asking, "Who?"



THE POTLUCK PLATYPUS

Like the meals beloved in so many congregations, this aquatic mammal is composed of parts that don't seem to go together naturally but end up producing a delightful result. It's a match made in heaven, or at least in Australia.



SIR SCOOPS -A-LOT

The patron saint of ice cream-loving Brethren everywhere, his head and torso naturally feature three scoops for the triple dip of believers baptism. And what is the cone made of, appropriate for sometimes-indecisive Anabaptists? Waffle, of course.

C.O.C.O. THE PEACEFUL PANDA

The C.O.'s are a double reminder of the denomination's long history of conscientious objection in the face of war, lifted up by Ted Stuebaker and countless others. And why a panda? Well, they reportedly can have a temper, but those bamboo-munching mammals generally seem rather peaceful, right?



HEATHER HEIFER

Yes, **Heifer International** is an independent organization these days, but Brethren created it (thanks, Dan West!), and we don't let anyone forget that. We're (humbly) proud of this piece of our heritage of serving others, so we might as well milk it for all it's worth.

FOAMHEADS

Milwaukee baseball games feature the popular sausage races, which have been emulated in numerous other ballparks. What if Annual Conference featured a race between adorable, foam-headed Alexander Mack, John Kline, Sarah Major, and Anna Mow? In whatever order they finished the race, they would have, of course, kept the faith.



The Bible studies this year come from *Shine: Living in God's Light*, published by Brethren Press and MennoMedia. This month the essays for teachers are from Shine's vacation Bible school curriculum, *Come to the Table*. The writers are Seth Crissman and Christina Hershey, and the illustrations are by Kate Cosgrove.

Be our guest

Luke 14:15-24

Who is welcome at God's table? The answer might surprise you!

The parable of the great feast is the focus of today's session, but the preceding verses offer important background for understanding the parable and the theme of this session. Jesus is having dinner at the home of a prominent Pharisee (a "religiously serious" leader). It is the Sabbath, but that doesn't stop Jesus from breaking Jewish law to heal a man who is sick. Jesus notices that the guests are vying


for the important seats at the dinner table. He then teaches the guests that at God's table, the humble are exalted, the stranger is invited, and all are welcome. Social status, wealth, and power don't matter here; come as you are! This is God's table, where the poor, ignored, and excluded receive the extravagant and warm hospitality of God.

Jesus doesn't stop with just a lesson about where to sit and how to treat guests. He tells the dinner guests a parable of a great feast to reveal who

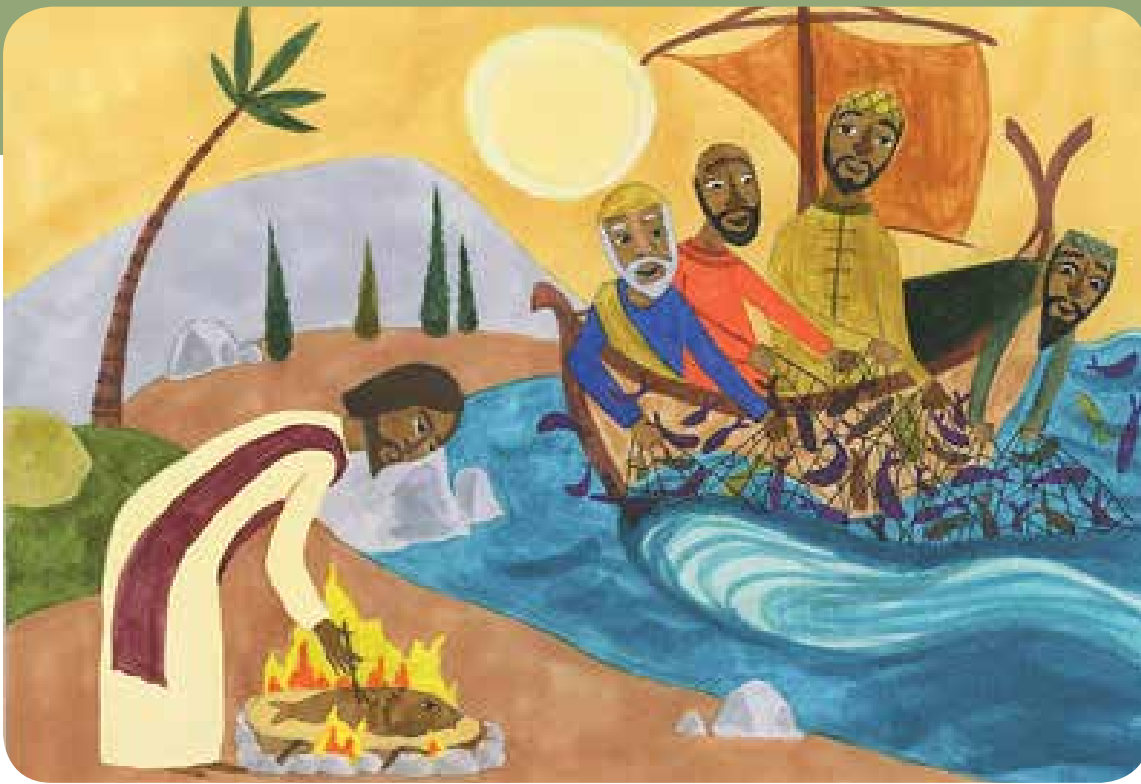
God is and what God cares about. This is the focus for children today. This story, like so many of Jesus' parables, stretches and challenges the listener. The host invites many friends, who initially agree to come, but then some back out on the day of the feast. They have more pressing things to do—visiting a purchased field, trying out some new oxen, enjoying the early days of a marriage.

The host doesn't have patience for these excuses and sends his servant to invite people until his house is full. He specifically tells the servant to look in the streets and alleys to find people who are poor, people who can't walk, and those who can't see. Even after doing this, there is still room. So the servant goes far and wide inviting people until the house is full.

Jesus closes the story by restating the sad reality that not everyone is interested in this alternate way of being in community; some want to carry on with life as usual. It can be hard to embrace a world where the last are first and the least are the greatest, especially if you have been living in a position of privilege.

The good news is that God (the host of the feast) offers an invitation to all people. No one is left out! Everyone is welcome to come to God's table. Those who come do so in response to God's generous hospitality. May all the children in your group experience welcome and hospitality this week! 





Breakfast on the beach


John 21:1-17

After the Last Supper with his disciples, Jesus is betrayed, denied, and abandoned by his disciples. He is put on trial, crucified, and raised back to life by the power of God. By the time we arrive at John 21, Jesus has already revealed himself to Mary Magdalene in the garden and to a group of disciples in a locked room.

Today's story takes place at the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus first called Peter, Andrew, James, and John to follow him. Jesus finds the disciples frustrated. Despite their best efforts, they have not caught any fish during a night-long fishing trip. After Jesus tells them to cast the net on the other side of the boat, they have a net full of 153 fish! Jesus then "sets the table" and serves them breakfast on the beach. Perhaps this meal of bread and fish reminds them of the feeding of the 5,000. In the breaking of bread, perhaps they think of Jesus' words at the Last Supper to "do this in remembrance of me."

After breakfast, Jesus talks with Peter. At the time of Jesus' trial, Peter will deny knowing Jesus three times. While Jesus does not bring this up, Jesus asks Peter the same question three times: "Peter, do you love me?" Each time Peter affirms that he loves Jesus, and Jesus tells him, "Feed my lambs," "Take care of my sheep," and "Feed my sheep." In other words, he states, "If you love me as you say you do, take good care of the ones I care about." Earlier in the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the image of a vine and branches to teach the disciples about abiding in him. Essentially, he says, "Remain in me and value what I value, see the world the way I see it, and take up the work that I set before you."

As he does so many times before his death and resurrection, Jesus connects with people by showing up, setting the table, and serving a meal. In this way, Jesus provides a model for us. Do we love Jesus? Then let's reach out and welcome everyone to God's table. Let's

make sure that the abundance God provides is accessible to all people. Let's make things right when we hurt others. Let's remember Jesus in the breaking of bread and the washing of feet. Let's love wholeheartedly. 



Read along

- Day 1:** Luke 14:15–24
Be our guest
- Day 2:** John 6:1–14
Jesus and the giant picnic
- Day 3:** Luke 19:1–10
Guess who's coming for dinner
- Day 4:** Luke 22:13–20; John 13:1–20
A supper to remember
- Day 5:** John 21:1–17
Breakfast on the beach



ON THE BORDER WITH CDS

Serving God by loving others

by Lisa Crouch



Lisa Crouch



P. Henry



P. Henry



Lisa Crouch

“This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you” (John 15:12, ESV).

Over the course of six weeks this spring, Children’s Disaster Services (CDS) deployed three teams of volunteers to the southern border town of McAllen, Texas.

The CDS teams entered a crowded space where families seeking asylum in the US found themselves receiving great love and generosity from a host of volunteers. That loving compassion came in the shape of a welcoming smile, clean clothes, food, and a good night’s sleep before they departed for the next leg of their journey. The facility is the Humanitarian Respite Center, run by Sister Norma Pimentel of Catholic Charities. Her exceptional humanitarian work is something of legend, and she is a true role model and inspiration for all those who witness

her efforts.

Most families arriving at the facility have small children who, after a long and difficult journey, are eager for an opportunity to play and just be children. This is where CDS responds to the call to serve. From a room set up as a chapel for Mass, the children exit in a rush and are seen running to the CDS play space, bumping into each other and laughing, eager to secure a good spot at the Play-Doh table. It is one of the most popular spots in the CDS area, with no fewer than 10 children at any given moment. The children take a small pile of dough and sculpt it into a masterpiece of their imagination, with large smiles and joy radiating as they show the CDS team their creations.


I think of this pile of pliable mush as each of us looking to serve God. Just how pliable are we?

Have we sat out on the table too long and become hardened to the work of our master’s shaping hands?

Or are we still freshly opened and ready to be sculpted into the masterpiece God intends us to be? One with arms that are open to love, hands that are ready to give, and a heart that radiates joy in the activities where we are called to serve.

How are we loving others? Rather than judge one another, let us lift up our brothers and sisters when they encounter times of hardship. To serve God is to serve others, which is the greatest form of love.

I am grateful for our CDS volunteers who have faithfully responded to this location. As Sister Norma says, “Bringing a smile to a child is so amazing; it is love.”

Indeed, the children’s smiles were abundant. Regardless of what was happening outside the walls of that respite center, inside there was nothing but love, some Play-Doh, and hope for a brighter tomorrow. 

Lisa Crouch is associate director of Children’s Disaster Services.

Grants, and more grants

Grants have been given recently from three Church of the Brethren funds: Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF), Global Food Initiative (GFI), and Brethren Faith in Action (BFIA).

EDF

- \$5,000 for Eglise des Freres au Congo to respond to the eruption of Mount Nyiragongo.
- \$5,000 for a pandemic-related feeding program of Bittersweet Ministries in Tijuana, Mexico, that aids at-risk and migrant families.
- \$5,000 for Church World Service (CWS) to provide hygiene kits for families affected by Tropical Cyclone Seroja in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.
- \$7,500 for the Church of the Brethren in Venezuela (ASIGLEH) to aid people affected by COVID-19, particularly church members.
- \$15,000 for Eglise des Freres au Congo to support families displaced by violence.
- \$15,000 for the continuing COVID-19 response by Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria).
- \$25,000 for the worldwide coronavirus response by CWS in 2021.
- \$27,000 for the Children's Disaster

Services response with migrant families and children at the southern US border.

GFI

- \$1,500 for a community garden associated with Springfield (Ill.) First Church of the Brethren.
- \$3,000 for the garden advocate/casual labor fund of Capstone 118, a community garden in New Orleans, La.
- \$5,000 for a maize mill project of the Church of the Brethren in Uganda that will support widows, orphan-led households, and the elderly.
- \$11,000 for a food crops project of La Fundación Brethren y Unida in Ecuador following losses caused by flooding.
- \$17,000 for EYN's Soybean Value Chain Project in Nigeria.

BFIA

- \$1,250 for Antelope Park Church of the Brethren in Lincoln, Neb., to expand its outreach ministry to the neighborhood.
- \$5,000 for Pleasant Hill (Ohio) Church of the Brethren to purchase video equipment to enhance virtual ministries.
- \$5,000 for Dupont (Ohio) Church of the Brethren to turn a creek on the congregation's wilderness camp into a 1.5-acre pond to enhance outreach ministry.



Zakariah Mwanza



Bill and Ann Chamberlain/IMA

Mount Nyiragongo erupts near Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo.

Volcano response in Congo takes shape

Brethren Disaster Ministries has begun a disaster relief response to the May 22 volcanic eruption of Mount Nyiragongo affecting the areas of Goma, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Gisenyi, Rwanda.

Members and congregations of the Brethren in the DRC and Rwanda have been affected, with damage to homes and church buildings reported from the eruption and ensuing earthquakes.

Roy Winter, executive director of Service Ministries, is working in collaboration with Congolese Brethren leader Ron Lubungo, Goma pastor Faraja Dieudonné, and Rwandan Brethren leader Etienne Nsanziimana.

A COVID-19 handwashing station outside the EYN Ministers Conference earlier this year.



Post this page

You are welcome to photocopy this page. For more Newsline stories and to subscribe to Newsline's free email news service go to www.brethren.org/news

Personnel notes

David Shetler retires Dec. 31 as executive of Southern Ohio and Kentucky District. During his 11-year tenure, the district sold Camp Woodland Altars, established several endowment funds, and created new commissions and task teams. He represented the Council of District Executives on the denomination's Mission and Ministry Board 2014-2018 and Leadership Team 2016-2018. He was a member of the Ministry Advisory Council that assisted with the 2014 Ministerial Leadership polity paper of Annual Conference, and he contributed to the 2017 report "Authority of Annual Conference Regarding Accountability of Ministers, Congregations, and Districts." An ordained minister of more than 40 years, he also directed Admissions and Student Development for Bethany Seminary from October 1996 to June 2003.

Norman and Carol Spicher

Waggy concluded an interim assignment as directors of Global Mission on May 14. They served part-time starting March 2, 2020. Their accomplishments included developing country advisory teams, facilitating Zoom gatherings of the Global Church of the Brethren Communion, and speaking for a Moderator's Town Hall.

Walt Wiltschek begins Sept. 1 as Illinois and Wisconsin District executive, half-time. An ordained minister, he pastors Easton (Md.) Church of the Brethren, is an academic advisor at Chesapeake College, and is at-large editor for MESSENGER. He edited MESSENGER from January 2004 to Feb. 1, 2010. He worked on the denomination's communications staff for more than 10 years, beginning in August 1999. From 2010-2016 he was chaplain and director of church relations for Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind.



Bethany celebrates classes of 2020 and 2021

Bethany Theological Seminary celebrated the classes of 2020 and 2021 during a hybrid in-person and online commencement on May 8. The seminary honored 13 graduates from the class of 2020, who did not have a commencement ceremony because of the pandemic, and 21 graduates in the class of 2021. This year's class included the first students to earn certificates while attending classes at the Technology Center in Jos, Nigeria.

The seminary this fall launches a new Master of Arts in Spiritual and Social Transformation for students pursuing nonprofit leadership, social services, or spiritual direction. The school also has received a \$50,000 planning grant from the Lilly Endowment to provide students with intercultural and antiracist learning opportunities.

Bethany plans face-to-face teaching and learning during the 2021-2022 academic year, at its campus in Richmond, Ind.

Class of 2020

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: Eric William Bader (Columbia, Mo.), Amy Beth Lutes (Nashville, Tenn.), Joanna Davidson Smith (McPherson, Kan.), Rachel Elizabeth Ulrich (Richmond, Ind.)

Master of Arts, concentration in Peace Studies: Duane Edwin Crumrine (Martinsburg, Pa.), Paul Bala Samura (Freetown, Sierra Leone)

Master of Divinity: Raul Gregorio Rivera Arroyo (Vega Baja, P.R., and Kettering, Ohio), John Andrew Fillmore (Caldwell, Idaho), Susan K. Liller (New Carlisle, Ohio), Thomas Michael McMullin (Minburn, Iowa), Katherine Lynn Polzin (Defiance, Ohio), Jack Richard Roegner (Davenport, Neb.), Elizabeth Ullery Swenson (Olympia, Wash.)

Class of 2021

Certificate in Biblical Peacemaking: Sanamo Kpanah (Demsa, Nigeria), Maina Pindar (Jos, Nigeria), Aimu Sunday (Jos, Nigeria), Esther Zira (Kwarhi, Nigeria)

Certificate in Intercultural Biblical Interpretation: Vivek Ashokbhai Solanky (New Delhi, India, and Naperville, Ill.)

Certificate in Just Peace and Conflict Transformation: Charles D. Jackson (Champaign, Ill.), Nolan Ryan McBride (Elkhart, Ind.)

Certificate in Theopoetics and Theological Imagination: Timothy Paul Harvey (Roanoke, Va.), Steven Troy Headings (Bay City, Mich.), Charles D. Jackson, Meridith Anne Owensby (Cincinnati, Ohio), Alexandra Elizabeth Thorpe Toms (Chambersburg, Pa.)

Master of Arts, concentration in Peace Studies: Patricia Doka Amos (Jos, Nigeria), Rachel Elizabeth Ulrich

Master of Arts, concentration in Theological Studies: Jack Richard Roegner

Master of Arts: Theopoetics and Writing: Julia Baker-Swann (Fresno, Calif.), Gene George Bradbury (Sequim, Wash.), Carol Diane Davis (Canton, Ill.), Somer Brady O'Neill Eckert (Alexandria, La.)

Master of Divinity: Amanda Sheree Bennett (Rancho Cucamonga, Calif.), Mary A. Garvey (Huntingdon, Pa.), Steven Troy Headings, Charles D. Jackson, Katherine Ruth Peterson (Middletown, Ohio), Vivek Ashokbhai Solanky, Alexandra Elizabeth Thorpe Toms



We're making college affordable.

At Manchester University, we understand that the COVID-19 pandemic has created economic uncertainties and financial anxiety for many students and their families. Our students - many of whom are the first in their family to go to college - work hard to pay for their education.

Every dollar matters.

That's why we've taken action to make a college education more affordable:

- **We're waiving the \$250 enrollment deposit for fall 2021.** Instead, students who are ready to commit to Manchester simply complete an Intent to Enroll form online.
- **We're freezing undergraduate tuition** for the 2021-2022 school year to ensure affordability and predictability for students and families.
- **Our Indiana Tuition Bridge Program** combines state and federal grant funding with Manchester scholarships and bridges the gap to affordability, eliminating out-of-pocket tuition expenses for up to four years for qualified Indiana students.
- **The Multicultural Excellence in Leadership Scholarship** is a new, full-ride scholarship, renewable for a total of four years, designed to lift up exceptional and talented students who identify as a racial or ethnic minority.
- **The Connections Award** gives an additional \$1,000 to students who are members of the Church of the Brethren or who have a family member who attended Manchester.

In addition, our academic scholarships range from \$12,000-\$22,000 per year. Because of the generous scholarships and financial aid we offer, **a Manchester student pays, on average, only 37% of the advertised annual list price!**

Learn more about affordable excellence at Manchester.edu.



Manchester
University

www.manchester.edu

Brethren Higher Education

Bridgewater College
www.bridgewater.edu

Elizabethtown College
www.etown.edu

Juniata College
www.juniata.edu

University of La Verne
www.laverne.edu

Manchester University
www.manchester.edu

McPherson College
www.mcpherson.edu

Bethany Theological Seminary
www.bethanyseminary.edu

BCA Study Abroad
www.bcastudyabroad.org

See the true self in others

I was very moved by Wendy McFadden's column in the May MESSENGER and want to thank her for it. I grew up in central Kansas and was a member of the Church of the Brethren from birth. Its teachings on nonviolence and service have always been important to me. I have not been a member for many years but still receive MESSENGER and like to catch up on what is happening.

I want to praise you for taking up the topic of race. Speaking openly and in print about race is not something that was done in the past in the church. In McPherson, Kan., when I was growing up there was one Black family and one Jewish family. We did not think about race much unless we saw it on TV, and that was one step removed.

After college, I moved to Hollywood, Calif. It was a relief to go to the supermarket and see people from all over the world. My landlord was Filipino and my neighbors were all Armenian. Life was very rich. I worked with several Japanese American women and Mexican American men. I became very interested in Zen Buddhism and started to practice at a Zen Center of Los Angeles. Buddhism suited my outlook.

All of us should keep your article in mind, especially the last two paragraphs. It is so easy to see differences and ignore what we have in common. In Zen we have the term "true self." When I asked a teacher what the term meant he said, "The one that sees and hears but has no history." In my dealings with other people, and when I reflect on my own life, I try to keep this teaching in

mind and give priority to it. See the true self in others first.

Terry Ryodo Rothrock
Idyllwild, Calif.

We don't feed under your tree

The May MESSENGER arrived and, looking forward to reading the articles, we read the publisher's column. We were dismayed and shocked by Wendy McFadden's message, feeling it was lumping everybody in one category. McFadden lumped us all under one blanket of "Whites are all bad." We are all racist, white supremacist, and uncaring for our fellow neighbors. That is the message we got.

We firmly disagree. We feel the publisher is using a Brethren publication to express her views and state them as facts.



Excellence in healthcare matters. Since 1965, Bridgewater Retirement Community has striven for leadership and innovation in senior healthcare, earning Medicare's 5-star rating and ranking in the top 8% nationally. Innovative. Compassionate. BRC's record of excellence speaks for itself.

Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Support | Nursing Households
302 North Second St. | Bridgewater, VA 22812 | 800.419.9129 | brc-energy.org 

BRIDGEWATER
RETIREMENT COMMUNITY
energy FOR LIFE

LOVE
 JESUS
 grows
 in faith
 CHANGE
 THE WORLD

Sunday
 School that
 lights the way.

SHINE
 LIVING IN GOD'S LIGHT

ShineCurriculum.com

Our congregation, East Dayton (Ohio) Church of the Brethren and Fairview Brethren in Christ, is a blended church ministering to an area of street people, addicts, the poor in spirit, those with no hope, and diverse or blended families. What race are they? Who cares. They are in need of support, and we give freely.

J. Calvin Bright, our minister for many years, was born to missionary parents in China. As a young boy his job was to go to the ash heap in the mornings to pick up newborn babies before the dogs got to them. His parents and others started an orphanage for discarded babies, where they were educated and loved, becoming loving Christians. Rev. Bright was imprisoned and tortured because of his religious beliefs. He was eventually released to come home. His health never recovered, but he continued preaching, teaching, and helping the people in the area. He treated everyone as an equal. During the time of desegregation in Dayton, he with other ministers rode the school buses with the students, helping them feel safe. Black, white, Asian, etc.—no difference. Is this part of your poisonous tree?

We don't feed under your tree. Where is God and Jesus? We believe the majority of people under God's grace are wonderfully non-judgmental and accept everyone for who they are.

Rick and Anne McKinley
 Dayton, Ohio

Are we Christians or not?

While visiting the Mennonite Heritage Center in Harleysville, Pa., I saw a display defining Anabaptism. There were two kinds of Anabaptists: conservative and progressive. They defined conservative as 1) trusting the church more than individual judgment; 2) separating or expelling members over lifestyle differences; 3) avoiding worldly associations. Progressive was defined as 1) trusting individual authority; 2) trying to maintain unity despite lifestyle differences; 3) encouraging friendships with the world.

This display was followed by words of wisdom from people ministering in different times. Pastor Hendy Matahelemual from Philadelphia (2020) said this: "I am Anabaptist because I am willing to be transformed to be more like Christ every day."

On page 26 of the May MESSENGER, Jeremy Ashworth dealt with the No. 1 question everyone wants answered: Are you Christians or not? Part of this answer rests on our willingness to live a radical hospitality to involve those who are marginalized and disowned by our society. Thank you, Brethren Volunteer Service and On Earth Peace, for living a radical hospitality.

Ron Lutz
 Harleysville, Pa.

CLASSIFIEDS

The Mennonite Heritage Center, Harleysville, Pennsylvania, is seeking a full-time Executive Director who supports our mission of "educating, inspiring, and witnessing to the church and community by collecting, preserving, and sharing the Anabaptist/Mennonite story." This leadership position will include responsibility for fundraising, budget oversight, expanding community relationships, supporting, and articulating Anabaptist history, and staff supervision. To learn more about our organization, see www.mhep.org. Position is currently open and available for immediate hire. Annual compensation of \$55,000 to \$65,000 plus competitive benefits will be offered considering experience and education. Please send resume, including phone number, to edsearch@mhep.org.

If a **broad, inclusive, diverse, and accessible congregation** appeals to you, check us out! Living Stream Church of the Brethren has been offering **live participatory worship online every Sunday evening** since 2012, connecting people in real community from all over the US and beyond. We worship at 5:00 pm Pacific / 8:00 pm Eastern. For more information or to see for yourself, go to www.LivingStreamCOB.org.

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

Metzger, Everett, 100, Silver Lake, Ind., April 25
Zollinger, Alice, 101, Virden, Ill., Dec. 17

Franks, Abram Garcia, Michael Hyjurick
Virden, Ill.: Robert Cassady, Becky Graves, Terri Stecker, Sandra Talbert

New members

Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.: David Miller, Kathleen Miller, Karen Schlack
Mount Wilson, Lebanon, Pa.: Hunter Anderson, Todd Geist, Tracey Geist
New Enterprise, Pa.: Jake Sensening, Lainee Sensening, Aiden Wadel
Uniontown, Pa.: Charles

Wedding anniversaries

Cole, Kendall and Charlot, Virden, Ill., 60
Cupp, Wayne and Betty, Dayton, Va., 55
Diehl, Richard and Connie, Uniontown, Pa., 66
Fuge, Chuck and Helen, Harrisburg, Pa., 50
Greenway, Thomas and Ruth, Tryon, N.C., 70

Reichert, Fred and Eileen, Auburn, Ill., 65

Deaths

Batalona, Leonie, 91, Grabill, Ind., April 16
Batson, James B., 87, McPherson, Kan., April 12
Bolz, Ernest, 77, Wenatchee, Wash., May 4
Bossinger, Barbara J. Yoder, 85, Lewistown, Pa., March 28
Cacciatori, Carol Sue Boyd, 83, Virden, Ill., Sept. 2
Conrad, Rick A., 54, Davidsville, Pa., May 1
Critchfield, Kathryn Louise Shippey, 82, Boswell, Pa., April 11
Detwiler, Irene Marie Kenaga, 93, Goshen, Ind., March 13
Gilbert, Barbara J. Kessler, 73, Peoria, Ill., Jan. 25
Herr, Thelma Mae (Tootie) Alexander, 92, East

Petersburg, Pa., April 24
Ilnicki, Alberta Ruth Hubbard, 79, Fort Wayne, Ind., March 2
Kaylor, Ruth E. Heisey, 90, Elizabethtown, Pa., May 6
Kochler, Ila Jane Love, 86, Somerset, Ohio, Jan. 29
Lockwood, Donna S., 85, Delaware, Ohio, March 15
Macinskas, Sara Price, 100, Harleysville, Pa., April 10
Miller, Galen LeRoy, 103, Wenatchee, Wash., Feb. 13
Moeller, Elmer F., 89, Elgin, Ill., Feb. 19
Pence, Bernice Maurine Brandt, 94, La Verne, Calif., Jan. 17
Shaulis, O'Leva Lucille Sargent, 85, Somerset, Pa., April 19
Thompson, Phyllis Darlene Yount, 86, North Manchester, Ind., Nov. 4
Wenger, Carl I., 88, Myerstown, Pa., April 30

Ordained

Hobbs, David, N. Ohio Dist. (New Philadelphia, Ohio), April 25
Michael, Kathleen, Shen. Dist. (Montezuma, Dayton, Va.), April 18
Murchie, Mark, W. Pa. Dist. (Scalp Level, Windber, Pa.), May 2
Rhodes, Daniel, W. Pa. Dist. (Moxham, Johnstown, Pa.), April 18
Robinson, Brian, Shen. Dist. (Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.), April 11

Licensed

Farrar, Diane, Shen. Dist. (Sunrise, Harrisonburg, Va.), April 18

Placements

Hobbs, David, from interim pastor to pastor, New Philadelphia, Ohio, May 1

We're ready. Are You?

Discover how Hillcrest can set in motion a renewed mind and spirit with new relationships and possibilities while living in beautiful surroundings.

Whether in person or virtually, visit Hillcrest today. At Hillcrest you will find diverse living arrangements, set in the beautiful tree-lined streets of La Verne, California.

We're ready!



2705 Mountain View Drive, La Verne, CA 91750-4343
 (909) 392-4111 www.livingathillcrest.org
 Certificate of Authority #069 DHS #990000001 DSS #19201682



Surround yourself
in *Friendship*
and *Community*

Discover *Interests*
and
New Pursuits



Discover new paths
to
Health and Wellness

Pent-up emotion

by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

A lot of emotion is being released as pandemic restrictions are phased out. Although the pandemic continues to grow and spread in many countries—we grieve for hard-hit places like India, Brazil, Venezuela—here in the US we’re seeing excitement and exuberance.

Many people, however, are still boxed in by anxiety, as Salman Rushdie noted in the *Washington Post*. His op-ed focused on seeing COVID-19 as an illness and not a metaphor for general social ills, or a political weapon. I was intrigued by his conclusion, the idea that if there is any solution for the social damage done by the pandemic, it will be love:

The social damage of the pandemic itself, the fear of our old social lives, in bars and restaurants and dance halls and sports stadiums, will take time to heal (although a percentage of people seem to know no fear already). The social, cultural, political damage of these years, the deepening of the already deep rifts in society in many parts of the world, including the United States, Britain, and India, will take longer. . . . It isn’t easy to see how that chasm can be bridged—how love can find a way (“What’s irretrievable after a pandemic year,” *Washington Post*, May 25, 2021).

How many have experienced an outpouring of emotion recently? It happened to me in May, at the baccalaureate service at Juniata College. The baccalaureate is a worship service to bless the graduating class. I was there not because my son was graduating—he just finished his freshman year—but because he was singing in the choir.

The service was outdoors on a gorgeous evening. I was filled with pleasant expectation of meaningful statements of blessing and encouragement for the graduates, and, of course, lovely singing by the choir.

The wave of emotion took me by surprise when the processional music began, and the long line of colorfully robed faculty and graduates walked forward. It was the strangest mix of grief, loss, and joy. What’s going on with me? I wondered. I tried to hide my tears from the people around me, and desperately searched for a tissue.

The procession was formally seated and president James Troha rose to speak. As he went to the podium, I realized that I was hearing another kind of music from the tree

above me. A bird had been singing along to the processional, becoming louder and louder, and it kept right on singing through the president’s speech.

In that otherwise hushed space, the bird song, the trees moving to the breeze, the faded gold of the early-evening sun—it felt like the words of blessing were echoed and celebrated by God’s creation, and nature herself was joining in.

Being an analytical sort, I spent the next several minutes trying to figure out what that unexpected emotion meant. Where did it come from?

I remembered that my son never had a formal, in-person graduation ceremony at the end of high school last year.


I realized the baccalaureate was the first large worship gathering I’d been at in-person for 14 months—after a lifetime of attending church just about every week.

It came to me that I’d spent more than a year worrying about surviving the pandemic so that I could be there for my husband and son.

How many rituals have we missed? How many formal occasions, how many worship experiences? How many losses are not yet grieved? How many joys have not been celebrated? How many blessings have gone unspoken or unheard during our pandemic year?

Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen has said about the pandemic that the church must provide future opportunities for the rituals we have missed. Pent-up emotions need permission to surface, be expressed, be shared—and they need to be sung about, prayed over, blessed.

Perhaps we have a role to play in helping the church create such opportunities. May we meet and welcome those pent-up emotions with love, as Salman Rushdie hopes, and with blessing for each other and for ourselves.

“Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or abuse for abuse; but, on the contrary, repay with a blessing. It is for this that you were called—that you might inherit a blessing” (1 Peter:8-9). 

Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



HOW MANY RITUALS HAVE WE MISSED? HOW MANY FORMAL OCCASIONS, HOW MANY WORSHIP EXPERIENCES? HOW MANY LOSSES ARE NOT YET GRIEVED?

Mission Offering

*Suggested date:
September 12*

[www.brethren.org/
missionoffering](http://www.brethren.org/missionoffering)



The **Mission Offering** highlights our passion in the Church of the Brethren to partner with our sisters and brothers around the world to care for the vulnerable, share the gospel, and transform communities.



Learn how *Your Gifts Do Great Things* at
www.brethren.org/greatthings



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

Office of Mission Advancement
MA@brethren.org

GUIDE FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES

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



Brethren Press®

800-441-3712 • brethrenpress.com