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MESSENGER

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

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on the cover

*"In the woods, we return
to reason and faith.
There . . . I am part
and parcel of God."
—Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Cover photo by Jan Fischer Bachman

Healer of our every ill

The word “extrajudicial” is a strangely dispassionate-sounding word. Extras are usually a bonus. If credit is good, then extra credit is better. So, even if we know that “extra” in this case means “outside of,” the term “extrajudicial killing” does not sound like lynching.

The racial terror of lynching is addressed in the National Memorial for Peace and Justice in Montgomery, Ala., where 800 six-foot suspended columns convey the heaviness of bodies hanging. When you enter the open-air memorial, the steel columns are at eye level. As you proceed, the ground descends so that eventually the monuments hang high overhead. Each monument carries the names of the men, women, and children killed in one county.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

The accounting of the victims ends with 1950. But, as the late theologian James Cone says in *The Cross and the Lynching Tree*, you don’t need a rope or a tree to lynch someone. He observes grimly, “The struggle to survive in a white supremacist society was a full-time occupation for black people.”

When two white men were arrested in May for the killing of Ahmaud Arbery, a black man jogging through the neighborhood, their actions were part of a long line of extrajudicial killings that have taken place since the lynching era.

Also in May, a black EMT named Breonna Taylor was killed in her bed by police officers who stormed her apartment. The police were at the wrong address, but shot her eight times and then charged her boyfriend with attempted murder for firing back in self-defense.

My friend Lisa Sharon Harper, founder of Freedom Road, has narrated a five-minute video for Red Letter Christians called “Black People Are Tired.” The lament by an anonymous writer begins, “We can’t go jogging,” and continues through a long list of activities that are unsafe for black people. It ends with “We’re tired. Tired of making hashtags. Tired of trying to convince you that #BlackLivesMatter. Tired of dying. Tired. Tired. Tired. So very tired.”

Staying safe in a pandemic is difficult. It is even harder to rid ourselves of the additional deadly viruses of racism and poverty. Observes Cone: “Personal suffering challenges faith, but social suffering, which comes from human hate, challenges it even more.”

As our society presses toward a scientific cure for that which stalks us, may we also hasten toward a social and spiritual cure for our other ills.

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One thousand and counting

Mary Scott Boria has sewn 1,000 face masks—and counting—to fight the COVID-19 pandemic: masks for hospital workers, prison inmates, anti-violence street workers, senior citizens in public housing, postal workers, police detectives, disabled people, grandchildren, and others. Masks were sent to Boulder, New York City, Los Angeles, Phoenix, Puerto Rico, Chicago, suburban Chicago, and other locations.

A long-time member of Chicago's First Church of the Brethren, Boria always loved fabric, and sewing has been an important part of her life. Across the years she created many artistic and creative pieces, like the Pentecost banner she

made for First Church. At one point she owned four sewing machines. She also has connections to the Textiles Department of the Chicago Art Institute.

Her project to sew face masks started in March when a friend used Facebook to express her frustration about not finding a mask for her disabled brother. Boria said to herself, "I can make a mask," and she improvised two for her friend. The friend, in turn, wrote a Facebook post appreciating Boria's mask-making gifts and other people started requesting masks. Masks were hard to come by in those days and the requests exploded.

Soon, everyone was making masks and supplies became hard to come by. People wanted to help Boria and soon were dropping off lengths of fabric (and nourishing soup) on her porch. She became a model for others who joined the campaign.

The whole story revolves around Boria's history as someone in her 60s who has spent her life invested in the causes of civil rights, community development, and social justice. Her network of friends is deep and wide, and now all virtually interconnected—so it's not surprising that she has been asked to help provide masks for frontline responders and others vulnerable to this invisible scourge, and that she felt called to respond. Boria has found that mask-making gives her a mission and purpose, a reason to rise early and work all day.

When she heard friends who are invested in prison reform make the case for inmates being allowed to wear masks, she worked to provide those masks. Her challenge as of early May involved making 2,000 masks for the Cook County Core HIV Center. The administrator was gearing up to test all the clients and asked Boria to provide masks to keep everyone safe. To accomplish this large project she solicited help from neighbors and friends, some to wash the fabric, others to cut the squares, others to iron, some to help sew. Junior highs to senior citizens—these volunteers were eager to help and make a contribution to the cause. —Joyce and John Cassel



Mary Scott Boria at work sewing face masks to battle COVID-19.

Mount Wilson Church of the Brethren

in Atlantic Northeast District often posts signs inviting the community to activities. This spring, without activities, an empty parking area, and minimal interaction with neighbors, the congregation found a new way "to tell on our mountain that Jesus Christ is alive!" Kassidy Buck, the youth group member who painted this sign, chose hydrangeas because they are colorful and will catch drivers' attention. There is something about those blue spheres that could remind people of virus forms, with hints of transformation from death to life. The church trusts that we who have experienced Christ's living presence can live out of that transforming love, no matter what is happening around us. —Joan Huston



Serving hope

We try to approach everything as a working part of a community,”

said Corlan Ortmayer-Harrison of La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren’s approach to its food ministries. She is spearheading an effort to prepare hot meals for Hope for Home, an organization that offers an on-campus living situation in the nearby city of Pomona for some 150 men and women, offering a 90-day program for adults who are homeless to get into permanent housing. The program connects with agencies that offer help of all kinds, including mental health services, life skills training, and more.

“Some shelters just shelter in place. Their notion is: just feed them and house them and send them on,” Ortmayer-Harrison said. Hope for Home, however, “really helps them get past whatever is their barrier.”

La Verne has been one of the churches providing hot meals once a month to Hope for Home. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, some of the other church-

es were unable to continue their commitment, so Ortmayer-Harrison and her family stepped up to prepare two meals a month. Then, the next month, they provided three meals. Going forward, she is considering whether to plan for four meals each month. As of May, she reported, “We are now serving 510 meals this month.”

The timing is right, coming on the heels of an extensive remodel that upgraded the church kitchen to commercial quality. Previous to the pandemic, she would have been in the kitchen with “a determined group of volunteers,” church members who had worked together regularly. Now that number is down to three— Ortmayer-Harrison, her husband, Robb Harrison, and daughter, Rayna Harrison—who can safely cook together in an enclosed kitchen space. They cook the meals, put them in the back of their car, and do a quick drop-off at the Hope for Home gate—no longer allowed in to serve the meals in person.

The work is supported financially by other church members, many sending in



La Verne community garden caretakers Mike and Michael Wolfsen.

extra donations right now. “It moves me that in their priority list, others are still included,” Ortmayer-Harrison said. That kind of generosity is “a cornerstone of our faith,” she said of her congregation. Also contributing is the local school district, Bonita Unified, where her husband is on staff and helped arrange a large donation of food.

Another of the church’s efforts to share food is the “Peace and Carrots” community garden located on the church property. Caretakers Mike and Michael Wolfsen are delivering produce to the area food bank, Beta Center, which is affiliated with the Inland Valley Hope Partners in Pomona. Every member involved with the garden gives a portion of their bounty to be delivered weekly to the food bank. As of May, the garden had donated 1,100 pounds of fresh food this year.

Ortmayer-Harrison is just one of the La Verne members who “couldn’t stand the thought of anyone not having a meal when we have so much. The congregation makes it happen,” she said, “and I just get to do what I love to do.” —**Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford**

(Left) Rayna Harrison with boxes of meals for Hope for Home.

(Right) Corlan and Robb Harrison preparing meals in the La Verne church kitchen.



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.



“My heart, O God, is steadfast, my heart is steadfast; I will sing and make music. Awake, my soul! Awake, harp and lyre! I will awaken the dawn.” —Psalm 57:7-8 (NIV)

The sounds of music

This year marks the 250th anniversary of the hymn “The God of Abraham Praise,” written by Thomas Olivers (who accepted Christ after hearing a sermon by evangelist George Whitefield) as a paraphrase of a Jewish text by Daniel ben Judah. It originally had 12 stanzas. You can find it at No. 162 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*.

The publishing dates of some other well known hymns include:

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God	1528	Praise God From Whom (Doxology)	1695
Joy to the World	1719	O For a Thousand Tongues	1739
Amazing Grace	1779	For the Beauty of the Earth	1864
To God Be the Glory	1875	Spirit of the Living God	1926
Move in Our Midst	1951	How Great Thou Art (US version)	1953
Because He Lives	1971	In the Bulb There Is a Flower	1986

Some other hymns, such as “Be Thou My Vision” (prior to 600) and “All Creatures of Our God and King” (estimated in the 1200s) are much older, but the exact date is unknown.

Sources: ChristianHistoryInstitute.org, BibleUniverse.com, *Hymnal: A Worship Book*, Hymnary.org

“My heart, which is so full to overflowing, has often been solaced and refreshed by music when sick and weary.” —Martin Luther

“Music is an agreeable harmony for the honor of God and the permissible delights of the soul.” —Johann Sebastian Bach

“Where words leave off, music begins.” —German poet Heinrich Heine

“Music is the great uniter. An incredible force. Something that people who differ on everything and anything else can have in common.” —author Sarah Dessen, in *Just Listen*

“Music is the wine that fills the cup of silence.” —English musician Robert Fripp

“Music was my refuge. I could crawl into the space between the notes and curl my back to loneliness.” —Maya Angelou

Sources: Cmuse.org, goodreads.com

Phrases of praises

Can you identify the hymns in which the following phrases appear?

1. That Christ has regarded my helpless estate
2. The rivers of sorrow shall not overflow
3. Strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow
4. Lord, how your wonders are displayed where'er we turn our eyes
5. Well-spring of the joy of living, ocean-depth of happy rest



Kelsey Murray

ANSWERS: 1. When Peace Like a River (It Is Well with My Soul); 2. How Firm a Foundation; 3. Great Is Thy Faithfulness; 4. I Sing the Mighty Power of God; 5. Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee.



Bruderhof Community

Kindle our hearts

Some Brethren found new light with a mid-century migration to the Bruderhof

by David Mow

*Kindle our hearts to burn with thy flame.
Raise up thy banners high in this hour.
Stir us to build new worlds in thy name.
Spirit of God, O send us thy pow'r!
"Move in our Midst," 1951
hymn by Kenneth I. Morse*

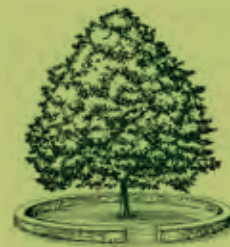
It was **March 1987**. I had moved my family from England to Pennsylvania shortly before my father, Merrill Mow, died of cancer. We laid him to rest in our New Meadow Run Bruderhof cemetery next to his mother, Anna Mow.

As his eldest son, I felt the loss keenly, and at the same time my own son, clearly not adjusting to a new school in a new country, was acting out his frustration. I tried to help him, but we were

ABOUT THE BRUDERHOF

The Bruderhof is marking its centennial this year. The movement was founded in Germany in 1920, and today includes more than 2,900 people living in 23 locations across four continents. That includes 16 US locations in six states, nine of them in New York. Woodcrest, in Rifton, N.Y., is the oldest in the US (1954) and has more than 300 residents; Crossroad, in Minneapolis, was just established in 2018.

The Bruderhof website (bruderhof.com) says, "We are a fellowship of families and singles, practicing radical discipleship in the spirit of the first church in Jerusalem. We gladly renounce private property and share everything in common. Our vocation is a life of service to God, each other, and you."



both floundering: me in my grief and he in his insecurity. Enter Dick Wareham, my son's teacher, who, with gentle encouragement and a fatherly hand on my shoulder, helped my son—and me—begin rebuilding our worlds.

Dick was already a legend in our

house. He had grown up in the Church of the Brethren, as had my parents. Youth leader, seminary graduate, basketball hero, firmly rooted in the teachings of the New Testament, and direct descendant of Alexander Mack, Dick sprang from the church's very heart.

It is hardly surprising that Dick shamed his family when, in the 1950s, he abandoned the Brethren to join a new commune, Woodcrest, in New York's Hudson River valley. Even more startling: He was not the only Brethren young person to do this. More than 20 others, many of them seminary-trained ministers with their wives, also journeyed to the Bruderhof. As I look back over the decades, I no longer see it as an "abandonment" of their upbringing, but rather as a fulfillment.

Many of these young men and women had been in Dick's youth group or his classes at McPherson College in Kansas. As children and teenagers, all had learned their tenets of faith in church and at church summer camps. Oddly enough, when they moved to Woodcrest many were not initially looking for community life; they simply desired to live out their own faith, particularly the Sermon on the Mount. They knew these directives must be lived, not only professed.

Even as a child, Dick puzzled why there was one God and so many divisions and denominations, and why even in the church there were very wealthy members and those struggling to make ends meet. Growing up in Pennsylvania, he helped his father care for park grounds and a gym during the Great Depression, and he was a skilled athlete and the town's basketball hero. He could make almost every shot from near half-court, and he could pull the best out of anyone else, on or off the court. At 17 Dick went to Juniata College (Huntingdon, Pa.), where, though he joked that he graduated "summa-cum-dummy," he emerged as a basketball star who broke all scoring records.



Left: Chicago First Church of the Brethren youth group with Jim Horning, Merrill Mow, and Cosette Will. Above: Bethany basketball team with Dick Wareham.

But then came World War II and the draft, and things changed overnight. Dick was one of only two conscientious objectors from his home church and to his surprise was heavily criticized for it. He wondered why the Church of the Brethren, a peace church, should contest his stand. Perplexed and frustrated, yet longing to make his life count for peace, in 1945 Dick moved to Chicago and attended Bethany Seminary for the next three years.

That year Bethany had three of the top 20 college basketball scorers in the country, and Dick Wareham was one of them. Dick loved the team, but he wondered about his studies. He later said:

In my second year I began to realize that I wasn't cut out to be a pastor, so I turned to my favorite teacher, Anna Mow, just back from the mission field in India. She was full of enthusiasm and a very genuine person with a hearty laugh. Without batting an eye, she said, "Well, why

don't you go into college teaching and coaching and get involved with the young people?"

That is exactly what Dick did.

My grandmother knew quite well that the Brethren youth needed some guidance. It might have been during this very conversation that her youngest son, Merrill, and his friend Jim Horning were up on a five-story roof dropping paper bags of water onto pedestrians below. And the church was still in an uproar over Merrill letting his pet rats loose during prayer and then causing disturbances during worship with his friends in the balcony.

Dick soon realized, "Actually, these guys needed somebody to love them. So I invited them into the gym and started a basketball team with them and, boy, they were really happy about it." The group of about 25 high schoolers was at first disruptive, but later they began to ask important questions of faith and meet on Sunday nights for lively discus-

"I was present at one retreat when Perry Huffaker and Ken Morse wrote 'Move in our Midst.' That meant a lot to me, to camp with these guys—it was a good experience for me." —Dick Wareham



sions. They even began sitting in the front row at church.

There were girls in the group too, and after some time Dick fell in love with one of them.

Years later, Dick told his family:

I struggled with this feeling a long time. I couldn't go to the pastor for advice, because Cosette was his daughter. So I went to Anna Mow and said, "I have a problem. What would you do if you were a seminary senior with a love for a high school girl?"

Anna said, "Who is it?"

I said, "Cosette Will."

Anna never even hesitated. "I'd marry her and bring her up to fear God!" Then she leaned back and laughed such a hearty laugh, reached out her hand, and dismissed me with "God bless you, Dick!"

Dick went to teach at McPherson College, and Cosette headed for Manchester College in northern Indiana to finish her degree before their marriage in 1950. Dick had promised his youth group in Chicago that they would get back together in a few years to see how far they had come in

A MANCHESTER CONNECTION

Gladdys Muir is best known for launching the world's first undergraduate peace studies program, at Manchester College (North Manchester, Ind.) in 1948. It was Muir who invited two brothers traveling from Paraguay to her weekly Saturday tea attended by my mother and Bob Wagoner. Later, during the 1954-1955 school year, Dick Wareham set up the first peace studies courses at McPherson (Kan.) College. —David Mow



their discipleship, and early in their marriage he and Cosette sent letters to over 60 young people, inviting them to a two-week retreat at a Missouri campsite. Only four people joined them—two other young married couples, Bob Wagoner and his wife, Shirley, and my parents, Merrill and Kathy Mow.

The six quickly found out that living in close quarters with the same people over an extended time was not as easy as living separately.

They talked and talked and talked by the hour, dreaming of a Brethren school or some sort of new venture where they could put their beliefs into practice. Then Bob and Shirley Wagoner announced that they were going to visit the Bruderhof communities in Paraguay.

The others were incredulous. They

were well aware of this 30-year-old group that had been forced to emigrate from Europe to South America during the war because of its members' commitment to each other and to non-violence. But was this wild idea about living in community all the time even possible in today's society? Or was that just another of the miracles of the early church?

At Manchester College they had met Bruderhof members visiting North America to raise funds and connect with other groups interested in full-time Christian living. My dad told me later that Bob, his college roommate, was one of the gloomiest, most skeptical people he knew, who had no trust that people could do anything good, anywhere, any time. But this time Bob

"The Brethren had assisted [the Bruderhof] financially in the initial construction of the hospital [in Paraguay]. . . . A large shipment of clothing arrived in Primavera from the Brethren Service Committee while we were there. There were large sacks of shoes, boxes of blankets, and a large number of bales of clothing—some of it brand-new. Since we are the only Brethren who have been here to date, their gratitude came especially in our direction, and we would like to pass this gratitude on to every Dunker who happens to read this. The gift itself meant much to them but in its coming from another brotherhood with which they feel a certain kinship of spirit, it had a double significance."

—Bob Wagoner, *Community in Paraguay* (p. 82)



Bob and Shirley Wagoner



Bruderhof Community

just felt he had to go there or he would never be at peace again.

The Wagoners had a fantastic trip. It took them over two months to get there since they traveled by land, shooting hundreds of pictures along the way. As soon as they arrived at the community, however, the exuberant, touristy letters changed. Bob wrote: "Raise the money somehow; come down here! The New Testament has become a completely new book for me." Bob's urgency spoke volumes.

They stayed on for several months and wrote often:

We have settled down to find out what the ordinary day-to-day life is. Like human existence anywhere, it has its commonplaces and drudgeries. . . . The work is hard, there are disagreements and personality clashes, and the children can be as naughty here as anywhere. But there is one tremendous difference between this and any other group of people I have ever seen: They have a common basis among them for meeting difficulties and overcoming them. The common basis is the Spirit of love, and "love overcometh all things."

Bob and Shirley found the gathering love of Christ that "gave rise to the Brethren and the whole Anabaptist movement. . . . Indeed, on several occasions Shirley and I have almost felt as if we had been transported back through



Merrill and Kathy Mow with their children.

Dear Dwight and Norann,

Would we recommend this life to anyone? Yes, I emphatically would recommend it to anyone who could stand it.

Christian community is not just sinking into the eternal bliss of living in a congenial group. . . . So in a physical sense I would say that the adjustment is relatively easy, but in a spiritual sense it is a never-ending struggle with self. And it is the most joyful and abundant life I have ever known or conceived.

Love, Merrill and Kathy

—excerpt from letter home by Merrill and Kathy Mow, Jan. 15, 1956



Above: Woodcrest in 1960. Top: A soccer game in front of the original Woodcrest house.



A BRETHREN MIGRATION

Church of the Brethren members who joined the Bruderhof include:

Dick and Lois Ann Domer	August 1954
Merrill and Kathy Mow	June 1955
Wayne and Loretta Shirky	September 1955
Welton and Kathleen Snavely	June 1956
Donna Ford	June 1956
Dick and Cosette Wareham	July 1956
Dwight and Norann Blough	October 1956
Paul and Esther Mason	September 1957
Jim and Audra Horning	September 1957
Glenn and Marlys Swinger	June 1959

Three additional Brethren couples came at a later date:

Dale and Carole Neal
Cordell and Marlene Bowman
Joel and Deborah Gish

history and were watching the early church at work.”

When the Wagoners returned from Paraguay, Bob was a ball of fire, according to my dad. Immediately he stirred up hot controversy back in the seminary. People argued with him, but Bob was a changed person. Previously he would have lost his temper if an argument went against him, even stomping out of the room in protest. Now he had love, patience, and understanding for other people. He would wait and hear them out, and then he would stand his ground. Bob wrote in one report:

I feel very strongly that the presence of the Bruderhof in the world is a



Woodcrest Community in 1958 with several Brethren families.

“Our aim is to live as disciples of Jesus—to give up everything for the kingdom of God. We wish to be witnesses . . . to be people who do not proclaim themselves, but Christ.”

—Eberhard Arnold, Bruderhof founder

Bruderhof Community

silent but nevertheless sharp rebuke to us. It is a reminder of where we came from. Either we accept the rebuke, it seems to me, and creatively re-examine our position, or by default let the Bruderhof and other radical groups take up the Anabaptist tradition of the gathered “holy community” and carry it on.

My parents, like a number of others, had to see for themselves this community the Wagoners had experienced. In the early 1950s, the Bruderhof had begun a new place in upstate New York, which was much more readily visited than Paraguay. Two months before I was born in 1955, my parents stored their household goods and boarded a train to New York for a year’s visit to Woodcrest. They never left.

Immediately letters flew from my parents to Dick and Cosette and to other young couples they knew, like Jim and Audra Horning, Wayne and Loretta Shirky, and Welton and Kathleen Snavely. My dad wrote:

Language is hopelessly, hopelessly inadequate. So many of the ills of the churches stem from too much talk about Christ and not enough living of Christ. The life here cannot be described. I can say all I wish and I won’t convey it. The Christian life

cannot be expressed or described. It must be experienced. Therefore, if any of you can make it, by any stretch of time or finances, do visit us here.

Dick and Cosette were still in McPherson, intently seeking God’s will and opening their home to other young people. His old basketball teammate Glenn Swinger and his wife, Marlys, Dwight and Norann Blough, Paul and Esther Mason, Donna Ford, and Jim Hershberger all spent time with them. Evenings, weekends, whenever they could, they talked, asked questions, read and wrote letters. All of them visited Woodcrest, and by the end of the 1950s all of them had joined the Bruderhof. This remarkable influx of younger couples and single people came at a crucial transition time for the Bruderhof, a much-needed renewal of the spirit that was alive in its 1920 beginnings.


Bob Wagoner had originally hoped that others would go, experience the Bruderhof, and come back to begin a community that would be Brethren in character. He was disappointed that so many families who had felt the same as he did never returned.

It is a mystery why some are called irresistibly to a



Wareham, Swinger, and Blough families.

new way of life while others of the same group, church, or family are not. This can result in misunderstanding and controversy, with both sides sincere and wanting only the best for all. Over the years we have experienced that dedicated listening, humility, and respect for different callings can eventually overcome such painful misunderstandings.

As I look back over our hundred years of history, the contribution of those who came from the Church of the Brethren is immeasurable; it was clearly led by God. Today there are more than 600 descendants of the Church of the Brethren in the Bruderhof communities. Our roots are inextricably entwined, and our branches reach for the same light. May the wind of the same Spirit of God still lead us today. 

David Mow and his wife, Louisa, are residents of the Spring Valley Bruderhof community in Farmington, Pa. David has lived at eight different Bruderhof communities since his parents first traveled to Woodcrest.

In celebration of its centennial, the Bruderhof has published Another Life Is Possible. The book “uses the stories of one hundred Bruderhof members to show how a shared life provides answers to isolation, materialism, and inequality,” with images from British photojournalist Danny Burrows. Available from Brethren Press.





Lassa

How Brethren medical mission workers helped identify a killer virus in Nigeria

by Jeanine Wine

“In these times, the unpredictability of viruses creates a situation which is as delicate as a hand grenade with the pin pulled. The only answer is constant vigilance.” —Dr. Wilbur Downs, head of the Yale Arbovirus Research Unit, as quoted by John Fuller in his book, *Fever!* (1973).

No medical worker on today’s front lines has learned the meaning of “pandemic” better than Esther Hamer, R.N., and John Hamer, M.D., both Hoosiers and graduates of Manchester University in North Manchester, Ind. Their heroic actions led to the

identification of Lassa Fever, making them instrumental in eliminating the global explosion of a killer disease.

The ease of world travel in what was known as the jet age, in the mid-20th century, brought the threat of pandemic. Within hours of take-off, an infected traveler from one country could spread a disease to another. These concerns didn’t just involve earthly superbugs. It was feared that pathogens might be brought to Earth by astronauts as well. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) helped create a quarantine protocol for Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin, and Michael Collins, who were kept in isolation for 21 days following their flight

to the Moon. That being the case, what effect might an unknown virus from Africa have on the world?

In 1969, the Hamers were working in a small Church of the Brethren mission hospital in the village of Lassa, in north-east Nigeria. People came to the hospital with wounds, snakebites, and yellow fever. Women came to have their babies. This little hospital received male patients with hydroceles, swollen testicles weighing up to 60 pounds. There was little that this medical facility hadn’t seen.

Laura Wine was part of the medical team at Lassa. An experienced nurse from Chicago, she was energetic and

Left: Esther Hamer in the pharmacy in Lassa, Nigeria.

FEVERS OF UNKNOWN CAUSES WERE COMMON IN THE TROPICS, YET DR. JOHN HAMER COULDN'T FIND ANYTHING COMPARABLE IN MEDICAL JOURNALS. WAS HE DEALING WITH AN UNDISCOVERED VIRUS?

vivacious. One Sunday morning, Laura experienced an unusual back pain, but worked through the discomfort to deliver a baby. But then each day brought new symptoms: sore throat, fever, a cluster of ulcers in the throat. Nothing responded to treatment. By Friday, Laura's kidneys started to fail. Fevers of unknown causes were common in the tropics, yet Dr. John Hamer couldn't find anything comparable in medical journals. Was he dealing with an undiscovered virus?

He pushed such thoughts aside as he focused on Laura's survival. She needed to be taken to a better equipped hospital in Jos, 400 miles away. Travel was complicated by Nigeria's civil war, potholed dirt roads, and 115-degree heat. But with Esther holding Laura in the back seat, John maneuvered a Land Rover through 50 miles of rough terrain

to meet a single-engine plane, just large enough for four people. By this time, Laura was showing signs of cardiac failure, and Esther kept vigilant fingers on her pulse throughout the flight.

At Jos, a doctor from another mission group, Jeannette Troup, reviewed Laura's case and prescribed tests and treatment. Even after their grueling trip, Esther took an eight-hour shift as Laura's private-duty nurse. Despite all efforts and prayers, Laura Wine died with the Hamers at her side.

John's thoughts returned to the unusual nature of this case. He enlisted Dr. Troup's help in drawing two large syringes of blood, and over her reluctance, insisted that an autopsy be made. John would later assist with this autopsy at the Church of the Brethren Hospital at Garkida. Biological samples would be frozen and later hand-carried

to labs in the United States.

In less than three weeks, another nurse in the hospital in Jos developed the same symptoms as Laura's and died from the horrific, unknown disease. Before Laura's arrival in Jos, this off-duty nurse had been gardening. Reaching for a rose, she punctured her finger on a thorn. Later that day, she had covered her finger with gauze to swab Laura's ulcerated throat. The nurse remembered feeling a stinging sensation as fluids seeped through the gauze and into her wound. This time there was no convincing required. A worried Dr. Troup, assisted by a nurse named Pinneo, performed an autopsy and collected more samples.

Pinneo was the next to fall to the disease, but refused to die. Accompanied by a thermos bottle filled with blood and tissue specimens, she was flown to the US and admitted to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York. The samples were sent to Dr. Wilbur Downs, head of the Arbovirus Research Unit at Yale University, and to the CDC hot lab in Atlanta. The race for discovery was on!

Yale confirmed that a totally new virus had been found. It was named Lassa after the village where Laura Wine, the first identified patient, had lived. This lab research, however, exacted a high price. A chief researcher at Yale became deathly ill, saved only by the antibodies that had developed in Pinneo's blood. When a young lab technician, totally uninvolved with the project, mysteriously fell ill with the virus and died, the atmosphere at Yale was that of shock and fear. Research at Yale ended abruptly, and all live Lassa speci-



John Hamer performs surgery in Lassa, Nigeria.

John Hamer visits the Centers for Disease Control lab in Atlanta.



TODAY, WE FIND THE HAMERS' INVESTIGATIVE SPIRIT AND RELENTLESS DETERMINATION MIRRORED IN THE WORK OF DOCTORS, NURSES, MEDICAL PERSONNEL, AND SCIENTISTS ON THE FRONT LINE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

mens were sent to the hot lab at the CDC in Atlanta.


Lassa Fever also was being identified in outbreaks throughout West Africa. Even Dr. Troup died after accidentally slicing her finger during another autopsy. The animal carrier of the disease had to be found. The CDC teamed with the labs at Ibadan

University in southern Nigeria. Hundreds of animals were trapped, and samples of their blood were rushed to the CDC. Finally, four years after Laura's death, the carrier was found: the wild rat *Mastomys natalensis*, an animal that West African villagers eat for food. Rats have no boundaries, and outbreaks of Lassa Fever

spread with the rats. Cases are still being combated today.

When the Hamers crossed paths as college students, they had no idea they would meet again at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio. They didn't realize that their medical instruction would take them to rural Nigeria, where vipers loomed in the tall grasses and bats hung over the surgical bed. They were unaware that their faithful service to the Nigerian people, whom they loved so much, and their training in medicine and science would lead them to uncover such a significant discovery in the world of virology.

The Hamers returned from Nigeria in 1969 and then, for another 18 years, they ministered to the needs of others through John's family practice in Fort Wayne, Ind. Upon retirement, they moved to Timbercrest, about a mile from John's childhood home. John died in 2019, and Esther continues to live a life of dedicated service.

Today, we find the Hamers' investigative spirit and relentless determination mirrored in the work of doctors, nurses, medical personnel, and scientists on the front line of the COVID-19 pandemic. They are brave servants of humanity, conquering heroes who are fighting for our lives. 

Jeanine Wine is archivist of the Manchester University Archives and Peace Studies Church of the Brethren Collection.

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Lassa Fever and COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2)

by Harriet Hamer

Lassa

Studied fairly extensively.

Index case in 1969 in the village of Lassa, Borno Province, northeast Nigeria.

Virus family is Arenaviridae, taking its name from “arena” for “sand” particles inside the virus. RNA single strand x 2. Prone to multiple mutations.

Size is 110-130 nanometer in diameter (1 nanometer = 0.0000001 centimeter).

Transmission is zoonotic, from animal to human. The animal “reservoir” for Lassa Fever is the rat *Mastomys Natalensis*. The virus is “shed” or present in feces and urine. Human-to-human transmission occurs via virus ingestion or inhalation from body fluid contact; contaminated surfaces/food via open cuts, sores, or secretions; or inhaled aerosolized particles. Not by casual skin-to-skin contact. Healthcare transmission common.

Epidemiology: Lassa Fever is endemic (a constant baseline infection) to primarily western sub-Saharan Africa, which is home to the rat *Mastomys*. It causes a severe hemorrhagic fever in patients. It causes local epidemics (a rapid spread to a large area within a short period of about two weeks), usually in the “dry season” from November to March. There are about 100,000 to 300,000 infections per year, and about 5,000 deaths per year. The case-fatality rate (CFR) is 1 percent, meaning 1 percent of those who get Lassa Fever die. Recently there have been increasingly severe epidemics; in early 2019, a CFR of 23 percent was reported in Nigeria. Hospitalized patients die at a rate of 15 percent. There is a high rate of third trimester pregnancy deaths and 95 percent fetus mortality due to spontaneous miscarriages. Continued surveillance is crude.

Signs and symptoms onset from one to three weeks after contact. Some 80 percent of cases are mild or undiagnosed with general malaise, weakness, headache, and/or fever. About 20 percent of cases are serious with bleeding, vomiting, shock, face swelling, trunk pain, neurologic, respiratory distress, multi-organ failure. Deafness is the most common complication.

Recovery may take 2 to 21 days.

Diagnosis is carried out with an ELISA (enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay) blood test that detects antigens and antibodies. Autopsy tissues also are used. Culturing is high risk.

Treatment includes use of the antiviral drug Ribavirin, early in the course of the disease, as well as supportive care. Immunity is presumed to be lifelong. Immune convalescent plasma is possible.

Prevention includes personal protective equipment (PPE) and sterile procedures for healthcare providers, secretion precautions, and avoidance of rodent/bush meat contact. There is no vaccine, but research is in progress.

COVID-19

New, not well studied.

Onset/index case in late 2019 in the city of Wuhan, and possibly other provinces in China.

Virus family is Coronaviridae, taking its name from “corona” for the crown-shaped protein surface protrusions. RNA single strand x 1. Mutation likely, but status unknown.

Size is 120-180 nanometer in diameter (1 nanometer = 0.0000001 centimeter).

Transmission is zoonotic, from animal to human. The animal reservoir is likely the bat, but since this is a new coronavirus there is ongoing research on the origin. Human-to-human transmission is via virus aerosolized droplets from coughs, sneezes, or talking; or by touching a contaminated surface and then transmitting to the mouth, nose, or eye. Not via blood transmission. Highly contagious. Healthcare transmission is possible.

Epidemiology: COVID-19 has caused a pandemic (an epidemic rapidly spreading across a large region or the world, with a global health impact). There were 3.09 million global cases as of April 30, 2020. The CFR is 2 to 4 percent. As of April 30, 217,769 deaths were confirmed. Hospitalized patients die at a rate of 15 to 33 percent. There is high severity in older adults and those with serious medical problems. Pregnant women have no added risk. Accumulating surveillance data.

Signs and symptoms onset from 2 to 14 days after contact. COVID-19 is highly contagious. It has a wide range of symptoms, from asymptomatic to mild to severe. Patients present with fever (80 to 99 percent), shortness of breath, cough, loss of smell/taste, chills, muscle aches, headache, sore throat.

Recovery takes about 2 weeks for a mild case, 3 to 6 weeks for severe cases.

Diagnosis is carried out with a nasal swab to detect antigens from a current infection. A blood test of antibodies is used to detect a prior infection.

Treatment includes the antiviral drug Remdesivir, which if used early may decrease disease severity, as well as supportive care. Immunity unknown. Immune convalescent plasma is under study.

Prevention is by social distancing greater than 6 feet apart, use of PPE for healthcare providers, masks for all, covering coughs and sneezes, frequent hand washing, frequent surface cleaning/disinfecting, not touching your face, avoiding large groups. There is no vaccine, but research is underway.

Harriet Hamer, daughter of medical mission workers John and Harriet Hamer, is an anesthesiologist in Indiana and member of the Church of the Brethren.

MAKING A (VIRTUAL) *joyful noise*

BRETHREN MUSICIANS TAKE THEIR GIFTS ONLINE

During the coronavirus shutdown, when congregations have been unable to meet in person for worship and people have been largely confined to home, a number of Brethren musicians have been sharing their talents online as a gift to the church and others. MESSENGER asked some of them to share about their experience:

Shawn Kirchner, piano/vocals
La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren; Facebook posts

I've been doing a nightly **vespers series** of hymns (mostly), and more recently a series of morning songs, that began as an impulse to share a moment of peace in a time of anxiety. Folks have thanked me, but some have also expressed concern about me keeping my spirits up, and I've found myself responding that by "tending to" the hymns, I've been "tended by" the hymns, much like tending a fire that in turn warms us and keeps our spirits kindled.

A couple of years ago I got going on the idea that Protestant hymnody was a "replacement" for religious iconography. In plain churches on the Plains, unadorned with visual depictions of a "loving Savior," the hymns themselves, in text, tune, and harmony—sung into being by the gathered congregation—



essentially *became* the icon of assurance that folks needed for their peace and comfort.

Early on in the lockdown, I had a conversation with my pastor in which I expressed concern that our faith tradition had failed its people, spiritually, in the sense that we hadn't encouraged folks enough in their own "practice of peace." They had relied on the strength of the gathered community to be their strength, but perhaps didn't have their own "upper room" to which they were quite accustomed to go: a place where they sought, and received, peace.

I'm in awe of my friend/student Seth Kinzie, only in his early 30s, who recently told me that he had calculated that he had probably spent more than 5,000 hours in sitting meditation, having embraced Buddhist tradition. Seth "sits" for an hour every day, through thick and thin, calm and storm. He knows how to "be." He seeks, and finds, stillness . . . by being still.

I don't have this kind of daily prayer/meditation practice, but I've always had music as my "place of refuge." And I was raised inside the hymn tradition that has tons to offer in this regard. My mom would always hum or sing hymns as she did dishes at night, and later, when I was older, I would play along, essentially communing with her in spirit, and learning—in probably the same way she learned from her mother—an inner "practice of peace."

Anna the Prophetess, who appears



at the end of the Nativity narrative in Luke 2, is noted to have "never left the temple, but worshiped there . . . night and day." Right now we're forced to stay home and have a chance to draw as close to the Anna pattern as we can stand, tending the "home fires" that tend us. But thank goodness to be able to "lean on the everlasting arms" of our elders in the Spirit, whose strength lives in their hymns passed down, bequeathing peace and healing for troubled minds.

Randall Westfall, vocals/strings
Camp Brethren Heights,
Rodney, Mich.; YouTube channel

While serving on the **Outdoor Ministries** **Association board**, I had the opportunity to visit 16 of the Brethren camps. And while I was at each of those camps, their landscapes inspired me to write original tunes for each one. It

“MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE UNTO THE LORD, ALL YE LANDS. SERVE THE LORD WITH GLADNESS: COME BEFORE HIS PRESENCE WITH SINGING” (Psalm 100:1-2 KJV).

became apparent during the stay-at-home order period that I should record demo versions of those tunes and begin sharing them with others.

During this time of uncertainty, our Brethren camps have been discerning how they can “best” provide spiritual formation experiences for this summer. Thus, these tunes would be an outlet for folks to experience the beauty and joy of our Brethren camps in a new way. The title of the project is “A Living Sanctuary.” The title comes from the closing stanza of the song “Sanctuary”: “I’ll be a living sanctuary for you.”

It has been a joy and a gift to release these tunes, and my hope for others is that they would invite everyone into a deeper experience of God’s primal liturgy reverberating throughout all creation.

You can watch and listen to the songs, as well as the stories behind them, on the Outdoor Ministries Association YouTube channel.

Friends with the Weather, vocals/ various instruments
Manchester Church of the Brethren, North Manchester, Ind.
Sing Me Home Festival (Facebook)

Friends with the Weather—a band including Brethren artists Chris Good, Seth Hendricks, and Dave Hupp—this spring partnered with Manchester Church of the Brethren to deliver an online streaming “festival” of concerts and talks that have included Carrie Newcomer, Abdul El-Sayed, and Drew Hart. It launched April 12. In their announcement, they said: “What a moment we are living in. What a time

to be launching a music festival.” Good shared some reflections on the venture:

I have always believed that music has such a unique ability to move the soul, both for comfort and inspiration. The idea of the festival has been years in the making, but recently took flight as the partnership with Manchester Church of the Brethren became a reality. What was originally envisioned to be an inaugural celebratory gathering in October 2020 has radically transformed, evolved, and rooted down deep into what feels like a more resonant, spirit-filled space. If there ever was a moment to “Sing Me Home,” this is it!

There’s nothing that can replace the connection, intimacy, and energy of an in-person live music experience. I miss that so much, both as a performer and as a music fan. But I have to admit that the magic of these live streams has surprised me, as I think it has for many. I’ve witnessed moments of poignant vulnerability, community connection, grace and solidarity, comfort and inspiration.

I never could have imagined having so much of my community and live music experience through my digital device, yet these moments are undeniably real and powerful as we are all physically distant yet yearning for social connection. Our hope is that this can continue to serve as a space for people to come together to be inspired and restored during these challenging times.

Stream all programing and archives

for the festival, envisioned as “an inter-generational cultural celebration emerging at the crossroads of music, social justice, and spirituality,” at facebook.com/singmehomefestival.

Carol Hipps Elmore, vocals/piano
Oak Grove Church of the Brethren, Roanoke, Va.
Facebook posts

I’ve often played the piano during times of joy, anxiety, anger, sorrow, and fear. I play through my emotions.

Soon after COVID-19 cases began to arise, even touching our own congregation, I started going into the sanctuary to just play through hymns and songs that soothed me. I found one new hymn that spoke to me deeply about where we were in these times. I decided to post it on Facebook, thinking it may be comforting to some others.

I received comments that it was healing, and then folks began requesting hymns and songs that are comforting to them personally. While it felt very weird to record and put hymns on Facebook, if it was helpful to people, it’s something I could do. Singing is free. Music can bring comfort, healing, confession, praise, a closer view of and connection to God. Music can hit your very soul.

Our Church of the Brethren heritage teaches us that we “seek the mind of Christ” in community. We learn much of our theology through music. But “Christ the Lord is risen today!” was never meant to sing alone. It confirms to me how important singing together is in worship. I look so forward to that day returning!

Ellen Whitacre Wile,
vocals/piano/guitar
Easton (Md.) Church of the
Brethren; Facebook posts

My first memory is a musical one. I remember when I was two or three years old exploring found sounds in our house by knocking and striking different objects to discover how and whether they conveyed pleasing sounds and reveling in that exploration. As I grew, I learned more and more about music, and today the main avenue of my sharing that knowledge is through my faith and with my church family.

Two scriptures have always impressed me. Matthew 18:20 guides me and reinforces my upbringing of gathering to celebrate life and God and Jesus Christ. Now, with hunkering down and being separated from people in general and especially separated from friends and family—including faith family—I feel compelled, as Psalm 100 instructs, to reach out and share my celebrations (“Make a joyful noise”) and concerns (“God’s mercy is everlasting”) through music.

Music brings people together with a closeness that surpasses any other. Music is where people find commonality and inspiration to give them strength. I think I felt the need to continue that relationship by posting songs on Facebook and participating in the mini-worships by phone provided by our church. I am grateful for that opportunity!

Nancy Miner, piano
Highland Avenue Church of the
Brethren, Elgin, Ill.; Facebook posts

I was scheduled to provide the music for my congregation’s worship service on March 22. Knowing that the service would need to be adapted for online worship, I reached out to our pastor to see how I might assist her.

Not yet ready to try adding recorded elements to her worship planning, she encouraged me to instead share the music I had prepared via Facebook Live. So I set up my iPad (albeit backwards!) and went “live” for the first—and what I thought would be only—time. Online



comments about that video led me to play something daily throughout Lent and on Easter Sunday.

In those early days of working from home, I found that taking time out in the middle of my workday to play the piano provided solace and grounding for my soul. The overwhelming response to my videos speaks to the healing powers of music in this time of anxiety and grief. The lyrics of the music I had inadvertently chosen for that first Sunday morning? “No storm can shake my inmost calm while to that rock I’m clinging. . . .” How can I keep from singing—or playing?

Are there other Brethren musicians whose online contributions have been meaningful to you during this time of pandemic? Send a note about them to messenger@brethren.org.

A UNIQUE RECORDING GOES ‘BRETHREN VIRAL’

Jacob Crouse, vocals/strings
Washington (D.C.) City Church of the Brethren, YouTube post

I write and arrange music for the Dunker Punks Podcast, a show about the countercultural and “out there” parts of Anabaptist lifestyle, ideas, and activities. Each week we have different folks from across the country tell their story, so it seemed fitting when the need arose for a virtual love feast during this year’s Holy Week to do something similar.

Brethren clergy and leaders each contributed a piece of that episode, and as the show’s audio and music editor I put together an arrangement of the Brethren “anthem,” “Move in Our Midst,” as a sending hymn.

This was a particularly dark Holy Week for a lot of people, and not being able to attend a love feast service and sing in harmony with one another affected my arranging of the song. I

chose the campy instrumentation of banjo, cello, guitar, and bass to keep the accompaniment light and moving at a quicker tempo, which helped convey a hopeful air to send people out into the Easter weekend.

I also recorded video of each piece and put them together to make a YouTube video to share and direct people to the Dunker Punks love feast service. That video went “Brethren viral,” and it was so gratifying to hear all the feedback from so many people for a day’s work of recording and editing. I spend many days recording and editing but rarely get that kind of recognition, so it gives me new energy to keep making music and working on a podcast that reaches many people.

Find the piece on YouTube; search for “Jacob Crouse Move in Our Midst.”



Foraging

by Frances Townsend

Marion Broadwater's eyes twinkled as she reminisced. Over 50 years earlier, when she was new to Root River Church of the Brethren, she had been invited to go to the forest with Dorothy Burkholder and her children to gather wild gooseberries. One child's diaper was hanging loose, the other kids were grubby, the bushes were thorny, the day was hot, but Dorothy was just delighted as she showed her new friend the abundance of free fruit. For the rest of her life, Marion remembered being there to witness Dorothy's joy.

Foraging and hunting is a special part of the rural culture in which many Brethren have grown up. One of my early memories of spring's arrival is of dandelion greens gathered before they bloom, cooked up with bacon, onions, and a bit of vinegar. My mother taught me the proper way to harvest and prepare them before I was school age.

After that comes morel mushroom season. Then wild strawberries. We never bought or raised "tame" strawberries because our old pasture fields growing back into woods were full of wild ones. They are tiny, and time consuming to prepare, but we had such joy at harvesting them, eating them fresh, and making jars of strawberry jam. Fourth of July is black raspberry season. In the fall we collected bushels of black walnuts.


After I moved to northern Michigan I found out people here harvest and hunt, too. Mary Joseph of Onekama was in her 90s and still wanted to go out in early spring to find watercress in the clear, unpolluted streams. I found out how important the fall hunting season had been to elderly members of the Marilla congregation, with women hunting deer alongside the men. Filling the freezer was the goal, not recreation.

Fred Pries of the Onekama congregation grew up in a family that depended heavily on hunting and foraging. "Don't shoot anything you're not going to eat," his parents

told him. He harvested so many rabbits that his mother had to can the meat. He and his siblings worked, then fished until dark to feed the family. They gathered sassafras roots, dandelions, wild berries, elderberries, frogs for frog legs, crayfish, hickory nuts, mushrooms. Fred's parents did not have the money to buy all that food at the store. All of that knowledge and skill has helped Fred and his family through lean times, and his freezer still has wild food in it.

Being this connected to the wild world helps a person appreciate that world and work to care for it. A brushy area at the edge of a field may look to some like a waste place that should be cleaned up, but I look to see if the trees might be sassafras or hawthorn with their fruits, and think of the birds and rabbits hiding there. I may be a bird watcher instead of a hunter now, but having eaten my share of wild fruits makes me more aware of whether a habitat has food for other creatures, too.

So much of this may be going by the wayside in our increasingly urbanized and time-short culture. Who has time to clean tiny strawberries or crack those wild walnuts when we can go to the store and buy tame ones? I hope we don't lose this knowledge and skill, however, because it is like losing bits of who we are or could be. And it would mean losing some of our understanding of God the creator, who loves the creation. God, according to the book of Job and other books of the Bible, has a relationship with the creation quite apart from its utility to humans. God loves the world.

The more aware we are of the natural world, and our place in it, the more likely we are to find God there in God's own wild and beautiful garden. 



Frances Townsend

I HOPE WE DON'T LOSE THIS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILL, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IT IS LIKE LOSING BITS OF WHO WE ARE OR COULD BE. AND IT WOULD MEAN LOSING SOME OF OUR UNDERSTANDING OF GOD THE CREATOR, WHO LOVES THE CREATION.



A cornerstone of love

Monitor's ministry team models mutuality

by Monica Rice

More than 15 years ago, Monitor Church of the Brethren—a rural congregation near McPherson, Kan.—made a shift.

Facing a pastoral transition in 2005, the congregation of about 70 members considered its location, financial commitments, and the gifts of congregants. Nearby Community Church of the Brethren in Hutchison had a successful model of plural ministry (as opposed to a single salaried pastor), and so Monitor spent time consulting with their congregational neighbor as they explored their own possibilities for team ministry.

Together as a congregation, Monitor chose to put in place a pastoral team. As they assessed their strengths, they realized that several active congregants were already licensed or ordained ministers in the Church of the Brethren. Those who were credentialed and interested in joining the team were invited to be part of the first pastoral team at Monitor. One long-time minister was more skeptical than others about how this would work logistically. He held off joining the team immediately, but later officially became part of it and contributed gifts of visitation and caregiving as his primary form of engagement.

In early March, during a conversation over tea, the five current members of this passionate and creative pastoral team highlighted how much they appreciate that each of them can share his or her strengths with the congregation. Leslie Frye, one of the founding team members, said that much of the time a strength one teammate is lacking is a strength that another holds. This was expressed strongly in



courtesy of Monitor Church of the Brethren

a statement that no one pastor has “the weight of all responsibility for everything.” It allows for creativity and for each member of the team to participate in ministry in a variety of ways.

The team is intentionally structured to model the Brethren value of the priesthood of all believers. Instead of highlighting a lead pastor with others in supporting roles, all ministers engage in ministry equally, though not uniformly.

This created one of the only major concerns at the time of establishing the team. There were questions about who to call when needs arose and who would take responsibility for congregational decisions. The 2005 proposal to establish team ministry included a decision to highlight a “Team Contact Pastor” who would be available to field calls for pastoral care needs, administrative needs, and convene the team for regular meetings. What has actually happened through the years is that most ministry decisions have happened organically, and congregants call on the team member they are most comfortable with when seeking pastoral care.

None of the founding pastors could have anticipated the

Current team members are John Hoffman, Joshua Leck, Leslie Frye, Connie Burkholder, and (not pictured) Shana Leck.



courtesy of Monitor Church of the Brethren

challenges that arose in their personal lives after establishing the team. For a period of time, multiple team members or their spouses were experiencing grief from personal loss or unique and extreme health concerns simultaneously.

Connie Burkholder, who moved to central Kansas in 2007 and connected with the congregation for several years before joining the pastoral team, recounted that for a bit of time she was ministering to all of the other team members along with the congregation because each was facing a personal challenge. The most public of those challenges was when team member John Hoffman received a kidney transplant from fellow congregant Shana Leck. Shana's husband, Joshua Leck, was already a part of the team during the operation, and Shana herself was recently welcomed onto the team after her licensing this past March.

Hoffman reflected on the challenges that have come, both personal and congregational issues. "The church is kind of like a marriage," Hoffman said. "You come together because you love one another, but it is not always perfect."

One of the challenges the whole team agreed on is that they have found it difficult to find a regular time to meet over the years. This is due to busy schedules, but also is a tribute to the fact that often their ministry team structure works quite seamlessly, and so they don't feel the need for a lot of pastoral team meetings.


Another topic that receives little attention is compensation. While the cost of a paid lead pastor was a factor in the initial decision to move to team ministry, payment and compensation don't drive the decisions by any individual

pastor or by the congregation as a whole. Burkholder said that a pulpit supply stipend is given for each service if that pastor requests it, but some team members choose not to be paid. The congregation also covers mileage for church-related travel and expenses for conferences or continuing education, as requested.

"And here's what I've heard and witnessed," Burkholder said: "Not having a salaried pastor has allowed Monitor to do well in budgeting outreach ministries!"

Even while acknowledging some challenges, the team is overwhelmingly positive and grateful for their ministry model. They celebrated the strong deacon group at Monitor, making it easier to care for pastoral needs. A variety of voices are present in worship with multiple pastors and lay ministers sharing the message, and other congregants sharing responsibility for worship leadership.

The team's reflections returned several times to the sentiment that each pastor is able to share their own gifts while allowing others to express their unique gifts, too. One pastor said it this way: "I feel responsible to the team and the church, but also at ease because someone else is handling things." This mutuality is a cornerstone for the team model's success at Monitor.

Ultimately, everything circles back to the bond of love among the team and the congregation. Hoffman summed it up simply: "I just love the Monitor Church. Period." The evidence of that love shows itself in many years of a thriving church body sharing joys and sorrows and challenges and triumphs, and living in the bond of love as they continue in ministry together. 

Monica Rice is director of alumni and constituent relations at McPherson (Kan.) College and recently began attending Monitor Church of the Brethren.

Western Plains district executive Sonja Griffith officiates at the licensing service for Shana Leck held earlier this year.



courtesy of Monitor Church of the Brethren

Trust

by David Valeta

Many know the following verses by heart:

*Trust in the Lord with all your heart,
and do not rely on your own insight.
In all your ways acknowledge him,
and he will make straight your paths.*
—Proverbs 3:5-6

This is a great passage, full of hope and promise! We need promises of hope in hard times, but we all know how difficult it can be to trust. In our congregations, sometimes opinions and emotions can run high and break trust.

We find this in the Scriptures, too. Genesis is full of stories of the shattered trust between humans and God (Adam and Eve, the flood narrative), and between humans (Cain and Abel, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers). Abraham and Sarah, recipients of the divine promise, have seasons of lack of trust. Moses, Saul, David, Jonah, Job, Peter, and Thomas all wrestle at times to trust God. Why would it be any different for you and me?

I am writing these words at a time of great uncertainty and suffering because of the coronavirus. While no one knows what the future will be like, one thing is certain: there will be other difficult times. It is one of the reasons the

psalms retain their resonance generation after generation.

It is common to think of the book of Psalms as primarily a book of praise. Indeed, psalms of praise are what we probably know best. “O Lord, our Sovereign, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” (8:1). “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me bless His Holy Name” (103:1). In *Spirituality of the Psalms*, Walter Brueggemann classifies these as “psalms of orientation.” They express gratitude and praise for God’s ordering of life. When life is filled with blessings, it is easy to trust and praise God.

But we know that life is not always good. Mennonite author David Augsburger states, “Trust is a two-way street. Two-way honesty. Trust, by its very nature, aims at interpersonal truth. . . . Trusting follows truthing; truthing

For further study

To read: *Open and Unafraid: The Psalms as a Guide to Life*, by W. David O. Taylor, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2020. Available from Brethren Press.

To watch: *Bono and Eugene Peterson: The Psalms*, Fourth Line Films Production, 2002. Available on YouTube.

GOD MOURNS, GRIEVES, SUFFERS, AND IS EVEN WILLING TO DIE FOR US. IT IS THE PRICE OF BIRTHING A FREE CREATION. THE PSALMS REMIND US THAT THE SPIRIT OF GOD LAMENTS WITH US AND GROANS WITH US.

increases trusting” (*Caring Enough to Confront*, p. 70). If one wants a truly trusting relationship, then one must be willing to confront, to speak truth.

Augsburger calls this “care-fronting.” Interestingly the Scriptures contain accounts both of God confronting humans (God questions Adam and Eve, God confronts Jonah under the withered bush, Jesus offers his wounds to Thomas) and humans confronting God (Abraham interrogates God about destroying Sodom, Moses pleads with God not to kill worshipers of the golden calf, even Jesus cries Psalm 22 from the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”). Maybe Jesus’ plea gives us a clue as to the importance of truth-telling and care-fronting.

The psalms are a good place to explore trusting and truth-telling. “The Psalms are a kind of First Amendment for the faithful,” says Ellen Davis. “They guarantee us complete freedom of speech before God, and then . . . they give us a detailed model of how to exercise that freedom, even up to its dangerous limits, to the very brink of rebellion” (*Getting Involved with God*, pp. 8-9).

I like that. I really like that because my life and the life of the world can be messed up too much of the time.

More than one-third of the psalms are prayers of complaint, anguish, and lament, and yet these are the least used psalms in times of corporate worship and private devotion. The psalms are evidence that lament is just as important as praise.

Brueggemann labels these complaints and laments “psalms of disorientation.” They are cries to God when everything is falling apart. “Why, O Lord, do you stand far off? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble?” (10:1). Sometimes it is because of sin and poor choices that we experience judgment (Psalm 51). Other times our enemies are so many and so successful that we cry out in pain and frustration for God to vindicate God’s name and smite our enemies, even their infants (Psalm 137).

Many of us can relate to these feelings. This is the necessary truth-telling before there can be trust. Psalm 88 contains perhaps the most wrenching wail of despair and anger toward God with all hope abandoned: “O Lord, why do you cast me off? Why do you hide your face from me? . . . I am desperate” (14-15).

As the world is reeling from the COVID-19 pandemic, how can we be set free so that trust can be rebuilt, reimagined? The psalms can help us voice our pain, our grief, our loss. We can cry out to God with raw emotions and

express our lack of trust in a world that seems to betray us.


The prophet Habakkuk had more reason than most to be up front with God in his truth-telling. The Babylonians had devastated the land, destroyed the temple, and were even lauded as the instrument of God’s judgment. There was much Habakkuk did not understand, and he voiced bitter complaints.

Yet in the end he confesses his trust in God: “Though the fig tree does not blossom, and no fruit is on the vines; though the produce of the olive fails and the fields yield no food; though the flock is cut off from the fold and there is no herd in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will exult in the God of my salvation” (3:17-18).

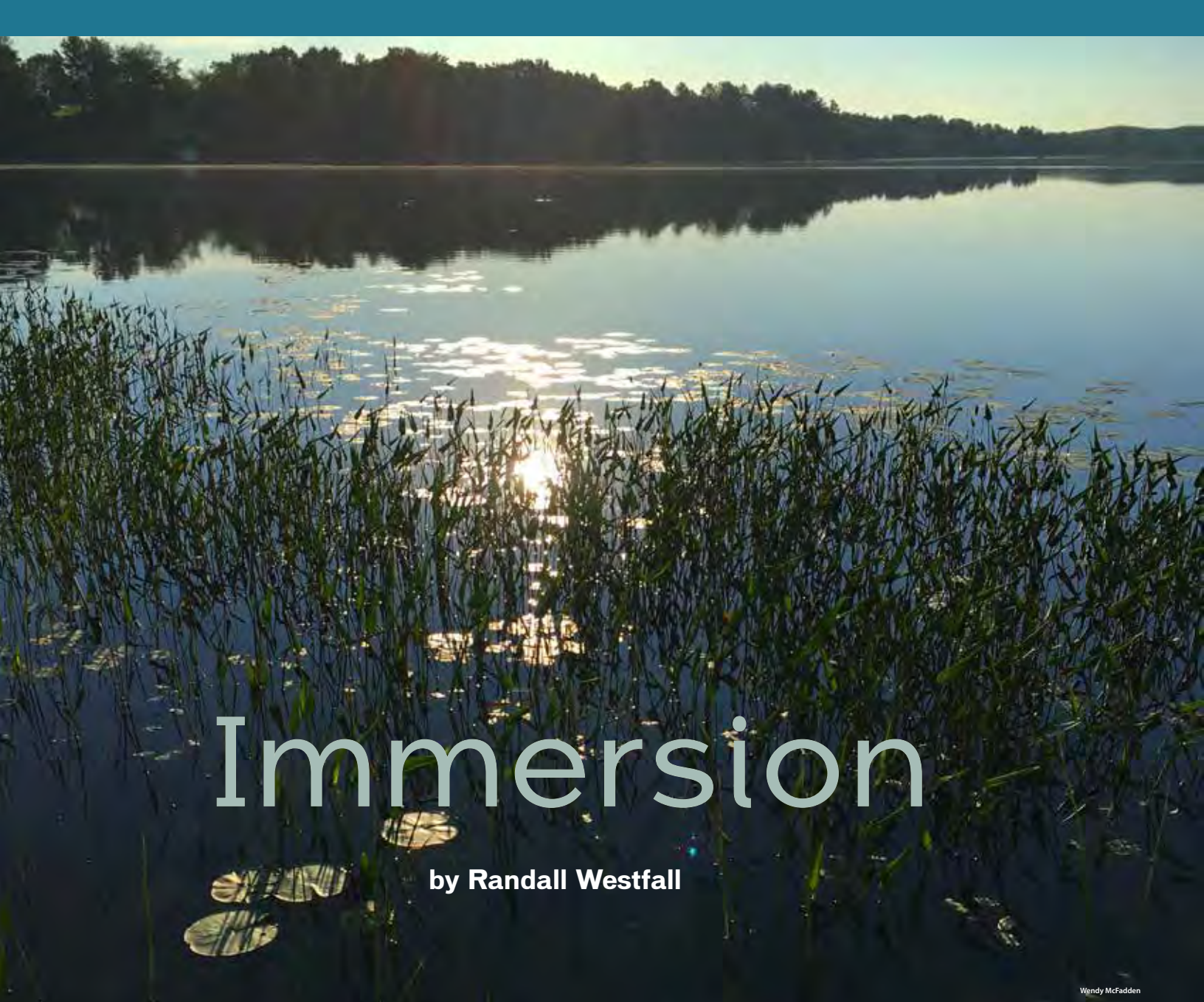
This type of ultimate trust is found in passages Brueggemann classifies as “psalms of reorientation.” “I will extol you, O Lord, for you have drawn me up, and did not let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to you for help, and you have healed me” (30:1-2).

This restoration of trust is not simply a return to previous ways, the status quo, but to a reordering of life that is good for all, especially those on the margins. “Happy are those whose help is the God of Jacob . . . who executes justice for the oppressed; who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free; the Lord opens the eyes of the blind. . . . The Lord watches over strangers; He upholds the orphan and the widow, but the way of the wicked he brings to ruin” (146:5-9).

The psalms describe the whole range of human response to life’s good and hard times. They also describe the variety of ways God responds to this wayward creation. In *The Cloister Walk*, Kathleen Norris describes her deepening of Christian faith during sojourns in Benedictine communities. She found ways for the psalms to revive trust. As she daily heard the psalms prayed and sung by the community, she realized that God behaves just like we do. God mourns, grieves, suffers, and is even willing to die for us. It is the price of birthing a free creation. The psalms remind us that the Spirit of God laments with us and groans with us.

Finally, a word for us Brethren: We are going through a time when trust is tattered and frayed. This is sad because we have so much more in common than the differences that would divide us. My prayer for us is that our truth-telling be done in the spirit of care-fronting so that trust may be rebuilt. The psalms can help us navigate the process of trusting, truth-telling, and care-fronting. 

David Valeta has a Ph.D. in biblical interpretation. He is on the preaching team at Prince of Peace Church of the Brethren in Littleton, Colo., where his wife, Gail Erisman Valeta, is pastor.



Immersion

by Randall Westfall

Wendy McFadden

Immersion: *To plunge into. To surround or cover. To engross. To absorb.*

Ten years ago, I spent time on the western slope of the Cascade Mountains near Seattle in a “wilderness immersion program.” While I was part of that community, I came alive. It wasn’t a religious organization, but I soon found my faith reignited and a greater sense of calling awakened in my life. It was more real than anything I’ve experienced in my 30 years of being in the church.

Quite simply, this way of living and being had become absorbed into my heart, my body, and my spirit. The week prior to my graduation, the school’s founder shared with us his vision: that there would be an immersion program in every community.

This vision got me thinking about Jesus, his disciples and the great commission.

We’ve long understood that Jesus called his disciples to form community. What we haven’t always understood was just what that process looked like.

In reading the Gospels, I see clearly that Jesus was giving his disciples an immersion experience. They didn’t just talk about the Torah without living it, and they didn’t just live it without talking about it. They were experiencing and practicing Torah in a way that hadn’t been done before. An “invisible” school was taking place, quite deliberately, and in the process they began living out the Torah in a way that made it and them come alive! As a result, the disciples and followers were absorbed into Jesus’ way of being.

The immersion model is essentially one of self-discovery, whereby the instructor or mentor guides the student by asking edge-stretching questions that nurture self-sufficiency, curiosity, and fascination. This is the true wisdom found in


immersion programs: The school remains “hidden” within the community’s life together.

This is integral to how we live out Jesus’ command to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18). We immerse them in an invisible school of love, mercy, grace, peace, and justice.

But we haven’t been very good at making disciples. We haven’t been very good at immersing ourselves and others into this way of being alive. We seem to believe that the immersion of our baptism is enough.

So what might an immersion program look like in the church today?

I’ve come to believe that all history and institutions wax and wane in various ways. The modern focus of the North American church seems to be institutional, but that institution appears to be crumbling before us. Perhaps this is an opportunity to reimagine what the church might look like.

It may very well look like the journey Jesus took his disciples on. It may be an immersion experience. 

Randall Westfall is director of Camp Brethren Heights in Rodney, Mich.

Find the camps

Take a virtual trip across the Church of the Brethren

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

- Alexander Mack
- Bethel
- Blue Diamond
- Brethren Heights
- Brethren Woods
- Carmel
- Colorado
- Eder
- Emmanuel
- Emmaus
- Galilee
- Hammond’s Mill
- Harmony
- Hope
- Inspiration Hills
- Ithiel
- Koinonia
- La Verne
- Mardela
- Mount Hermon
- Myrtlewood
- Peaceful Pines
- Pine Lake
- Placid
- Shepherd’s Spring
- Swatara
- Wilbur Stover

Pastoral prophet

Sister Helen Prejean's *River of Fire* can comfort you as you live through church reform. I urge you to dive into these pages or seek out the audio book. Prejean's words are best in her lively drawl, and being with her writing is like sitting near her in a small room. You may stay with her book (I did) as the hours pass, light moves across the walls, and finally you must stop to eat or rest.

Prejean writes with the intimacy and availability preachers strive for, and the energy and attention that journalists seek. Whether the topic is devastatingly grand (accompanying persons to their execution in the bestselling *Dead Man Walking*) or simply routine (*River of Fire* is *Dead Man Walking's* spiritual memoir prequel), Prejean quickly gains readers' trust and earns their attention. Why read another spiritual memoir in an era when most people think their individual experience will fascinate



ANNA LISA GROSS

and edify others? Because Prejean explores her motivation and memory with skill and honesty. Readers will strive to live with more insight and love in light of her witness.


Prejean's life of deep faith, unwavering commitment to prayer, and steadfast service to others are all evident in her memoir—not simply in her stories, but in her attitude. Her writing is a powerful and passionate expression of the already and not yet that Christians face—the kin(g)dom of God is already and not yet here and Jesus is already and not yet with us. The world (including each of us) is both broken and beloved.

It's always true, yet this era is tumultuous to the extreme, and we need pastoral prophets like Prejean to shine a light on our crooked path through church conflict and reform, social despair, and national identity transition.

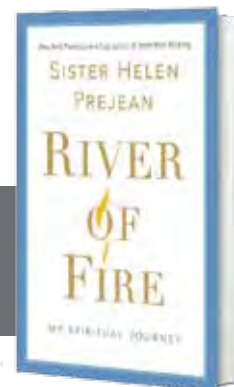
Prejean writes as a white person who grew up in a culture even more boldly white supremacist than ours is today. Without any drama, self-pity, or humble-bragging, she confesses the racism she was raised in and still benefits from. She brings readers into her struggle to live another way.

Similarly, the church she devotes her whole being to is drenched in sin, and she names brokenness even while she loves the church and cares for its future. Learning about Vatican II through Prejean benefits any of us whose hearts are broken by conflict and sin in the Church of the Brethren or the wider church. She loved the church pre-Vatican II and devoted her life to its care as a nun. Then Jesus called her into the heart of the gospel good news, and she awakened to his call that she, like him, care for the poor. Through radically different cultures and expectations for nuns, for Catholics, and for Christians, Prejean grounded her life in prayer and service. Even though her faith and values have radically changed, too, her passion for Christ, the church, and its people doesn't waver.

That is good news! Reform without scorn, transformation without cynicism—we need pastoral prophets like Prejean who care for and challenge us simultaneously. Prejean does all this while she's down in the muck with us. She teaches through her own mistakes, and it's so raw I wonder if she even intends to be teaching, or if we're simply listening in on a sincerely spiritual life.

If you're wondering how churches can transform, if you're wrestling with your own participation in a despairing church and world, if you're listening for God's call in your life, Sister Helen Prejean will be your spiritual companion through these pages. 

Anna Lisa Gross is interim pastor at Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind.



ABOUT THE BOOK

Title: *River of Fire: My Spiritual Journey*. **Author:** Helen Prejean. **Publisher:** Random House, 2019. Available from Brethren Press.

Annual Conference will not be held this summer

Annual Conference will not be held this summer, as decided by the Standing Committee of district delegates, acting on a recommendation from the Leadership Team and Program and Arrangements Committee. The Conference was scheduled for July 1-5 in Grand Rapids, Mich.

It had become apparent that COVID-19 would prevent the denomination from safely holding a large gathering in July. This will be the first time in 233 years of recorded annual meetings that the Brethren do not meet in person.

The decision deferred the 2020 theme, program, leadership, business agenda, and bal-

lot to next year's Conference scheduled for Greensboro, N.C., on June 30-July 4, 2021. The host facilities in Grand Rapids waived more than a half million dollars in cancellation penalties in return for Annual Conference agreeing to return to Grand Rapids in 2024.

The Nominating Committee is contacting those on the ballot to request their permission to be considered in 2021. People in elected positions with terms expiring in 2020 are asked to extend an additional year until the 2021 election.

The Conference Office is offering full refunds to registrants, with an option to donate fees back to the Conference fund.



EDF announces COVID-19 pandemic grants

Church of the Brethren congregations and districts may apply for grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund (EDF) to respond to humanitarian needs in their communities caused by the COVID-19 crisis. The program was created by Brethren Disaster Ministries with an initial EDF grant of \$60,000.

Congregations may apply for up to \$5,000. Districts may apply for up to \$25,000. Grants may be used to provide food, shelter, emotional and spiritual care, care of church leaders, support for children, and more. Grants are available only to Church of the Brethren congregations and districts in the US and Puerto Rico. See www.brethren.org/covid19.

Additional EDF grants

- \$35,000 supports **Eglise des Freres d' Haiti** (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) to provide 800 of the most vulnerable families in its congregations and communities with three months of food, face masks, soap, and cleaning supplies.
- \$20,000 supports the **Shalom Ministries' flood relief efforts** in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), where heavy rainfall on April 16-17 caused significant flooding that affected many Church of the Brethren members including pastor Ron Lubungo. Shalom Ministries is providing supplies to 500 households including mattresses, cooking pot, plates, cups, silverware, and a tarp provided by the United Nations refugee agency.
- \$14,000 supports **Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria** (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) for two months of pandemic response. EYN requested \$7,000 per month to help widows and students stranded at Kulp Theological Seminary by travel restrictions and lock-down orders.
- \$14,000 is helping **Iglesia de los Hermanos—Una Luz En Las Naciones** (the Church of the Brethren in Spain) care for members who are single parents, in single-income homes, or unable to work. Being recent immigrants or temporary workers, some are not eligible for unemployment or COVID-19 relief.
- \$6,000 supports a program of **Fundacion Brethren y Unida** (FBU) in Ecuador to increase production of organic fruits, vegetables, and grains to address food needs; provide emergency food assistance for four months to 40 families; and provide a training program for proper cleaning and disinfection of foods.

A COVID-19 poster in Nigeria features EYN staff liaison Markus Gamache

Workcamps and NYAC go virtual

The Workcamp Ministry has canceled all workcamps this summer, and instead will offer weekly times of online connection and fellowship from the end of June to the beginning of August. Participants have the choice of a refund or making a donation back to the Workcamp Ministry.

Similarly, the National Young Adult Conference (NYAC) took place online this year, with an in-person conference planned for May 28-31, 2021. The Young Adult Steering Committee offered several free, virtual connecting points for young adults in late May.



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Brethren homes receive large grant for COVID-19

A half-million dollars has been distributed from the Health Education and Research Fund to church-related retirement communities through the Fellowship of Brethren Homes, a network of 21 retirement and assisted-living communities with connections to the denomination. The \$500,000 grant will be shared among the 21 communities in amounts relative to the dues they contribute to the fellowship.

Retirement communities have been especially vulnerable to COVID-19. Fellowship leaders reported that costs have risen significantly, for example to purchase personal protective equipment (PPE) for staff, and for increases in wages.

The Church of the Brethren has managed the Health Education and Research Fund since 2009. Total fund value as of the beginning of April was \$2.3 million.

In related news, **Brethren Village in Lititz, Pa., suffered an outbreak of COVID-19** in April and early May. On May 7, the community reported the final death in an outbreak that claimed seven lives among residents in skilled nursing memory support. A total of 13 residents and 11 staff contracted the disease. As of May 7, the community had “zero COVID-19 positive residents on our campus and all team members who have tested positive have recovered from the virus and returned to work,” according to an online statement that also expressed sympathy to families who lost loved ones.



Children's Disaster Services (CDS) in a shift from hands-on to distant support has developed an individual Kit of Comfort for children affected by disasters. It is a “mini version” of the Kit of Comfort that teams of CDS volunteers take to disaster sites. The individual kit will provide activities and resources to children when no communal play spaces are allowed and families are housed in hotel rooms, not shelters.

Brethren Faith in Action changes help churches and camps

COVID-19 has created financial stress for camps as well as congregations. In response, the Mission and Ministry Board has made amendments to the Brethren Faith in Action Fund guidelines.

Through Dec. 31, camps are now eligible for a one-time grant up to \$5,000. The matching requirement of 50 percent remains in place. A camp may apply for a waiver of the matching fund requirement.

Congregations continue to be eligible for grants of up to \$5,000. Now they also may apply for a waiver of the matching fund requirements. See www.brethren.org/faith-in-action.

Personnel notes

Shawn Flory Replogle started April 13 as interim director of organizational resources for the Church of the Brethren, working collaboratively with the treasurer in the Finance Department. He is working remotely from his home in Kansas. He is a graduate of Bridgewater (Va.) College and Bethany Seminary and holds a master of science in organizational development from Friends University. His leadership positions with the denomination include a term as Annual

Conference moderator in 2010.

Michigan District has appointed a district executive team as of May 15: **Dan Rossman** of New Haven Church of the Brethren is part-time volunteer director of pastoral and congregational support. **Beth Sollenberger**, district executive minister for South/Central Indiana District, is interim district executive consultant for pastoral placement and credentialing. **Wanda Joseph**, chair of the district leadership team, represents the district on the

Council of District Executives.

Matt and Betsy Kuecker have begun as directors of Camp Pine Lake in Northern Plains District. Matt Kuecker has served as property manager for more than 10 years. The couple were camp managers 2009-2013.

Camp Eder in Fairfield, Pa., has announced new leaders: **Dennis Turner** as co-director and maintenance manager, **Mike Kovacs** as co-director and program director, and **Thaddeus Smith** as hospitality supervisor.

Remembering the 1943 Conference

My wife and I just received the May 2020 issue of the Messenger. I read it cover to cover and really enjoyed the article on Annual Conference. I was reminded that Annual Conference was held in McPherson, Kan., in 1943 during World War II. It was a “delegate only” Conference. Local newspaper coverage was thorough. W. W. Peters, then moderator, was president at McPherson College.

I have scanned those newspaper articles and attach two pictures. One was taken in our sanctuary at McPherson Church of the Brethren. One picture appeared on the front page of *The Gospel Messenger*. It depicts all the living moder-



Annual Conference in 1943 at McPherson Church of the Brethren.



The living moderators at the 1943 Annual Conference, left to right, back row: Rufus D. Bowman, 1940; V. F. Schwalm, 1938; James M. Moore, 1930; D. W. Kurtz, 1926, 1932, 1936, 1939; C. D. Bonsack, 1933; C. E. Davis, 1941; J. W. Lear, 1927; front row: Paul H. Bowman, 1937, 1942; Otho Winger, 1921, 1923, 1925, 1928, 1931, 1934; C. C. Ellis, 1935, 1944; W. W. Peters, 1943; J. J. Yoder, 1924.

ators of Annual Conference up to that date, with the exception of one who was ill.

The McPherson church is celebrating the 100th anniversary of the construction of its main building. For nearly 40 years before that, our church met on the McPherson College campus as well as in a rural

area east of McPherson, beginning about 1885 with a love feast.

Art Hoch
McPherson, Kan.

Correcting the Heifer history

I always look forward to each issue of MESSANGER. Thanks for Wendy

Come to National Junior High Conference!

June 11-13, 2021

Elizabethtown College
Elizabethtown, PA



photo by Glenn Regel

www.brethren.org/njhc

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McFadden's lovely poem on "Waiting" and the pieces in the May issue related to COVID 19. They are much needed at this time. I particularly liked Nathan Hollenberg's thoughts in "Physically Distant but Socially Connected." Right on!

And the Ocean Grove article served as a source of discussion for me and my mother. She and my father attended one of those conferences in the 1950s when (if both of our memories serve us right) he was on Standing Committee for a year.

A correction is needed in the piece on Brethren and health care, for which I was cited as a source. Castañer was not the site of the first Heifer Project cattle shipment in 1944. The first shipment went to farmers around the island of Puerto Rico. It wasn't until the second Puerto Rican shipment in 1945 that the CPS unit in Castañer received their heifers.

Peggy Reiff Miller
Goshen, Ind.

Remembering love feast

I remember the love feast when I was a young boy at Palestine Old German Baptist Brethren Church. Brothers sat in the back of the church and sisters at the front, with the ministers' table in the center. Children, young folks, and visitors would sit in the back or around the sides of the meeting house. The church would be full as many visitors came from other states to attend the communion meeting.

Love feast started with self-examination services. Footwashing was next, followed

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by a simple meal of sop and meat. Passing of the communion bread and the cup was next. And then there was prayer, and it finished with a hymn.

I wondered as I watched, what are the Brethren thinking about during the love feast? The love feast was conducted in a very solemn and quiet atmosphere. This left a lasting impression of the importance of the love feast in the life of a Christian.

Many years later I experienced my first communion at Beech Grove Church of the Brethren in Ohio. At self-examination services I was overwhelmed by the thought of Jesus suffering and dying on the cross for my sins. After footwashing, eating the meal together, and partaking of the bread and juice, I felt like I was a part of a large Christian family.

Donovan Boyd
Greenville, Ohio

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

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

Centenarians

Scofield, Dorothy, 100,
Independence, Mo., April 23

New members

Blue Ridge, Va.: Autumn
Delp
Little Swatara, Bethel, Pa.:
Cody Haag

Wedding anniversaries

Beal, Albert and Phyllis,
Friedens, Pa., 68
Kline, Adam and Shirley,
Myerstown, Pa., 66
Kurtz, Robert and Beatrice,
Lititz, Pa., 68
Miller, Harold and Peggy,
Friedens, Pa., 50

Morris, Jimmy and Betty,
Stanardsville, Va., 50
Nicely, Brocky and Arlene,
Staunton, Va., 50
Utterback, William and Sue,
Rohrersville, Md., 50

Deaths

Austin, R. Monroe, 89,
Reading, Pa., March 30
Bard, Jayne Verdier, 97,
Chambersburg, Pa.,
March 12
Barkley, Minnie G. Ott, 100,
Pittsburgh, Pa., March 17
Beachley, Ronald E., 92,
Chambersburg, Pa.,
March 23
Boyer, Andrew Willard, 34,
Milford, Ind., Nov. 16
Broadbelt, Richard B., 92,

Reading, Pa., Feb. 15
Clawson, Norman C., 85,
Chambersburg, Pa.,
March 22
Diehl, Robert Francis, 91,
Farmington, Pa., April 14
Emerich, Jennifer L., 48,
Bethel, Pa., Jan. 16
Evans, Rose D. Butner, 95,
Douglassville, Pa., Jan. 12
Garland, Roy Evan, 88,
Lititz, Pa., March 15
Hauptrecht, Mabel Dorothy
Hite, 86, Ashland, Ohio,
April 7
Johnson, Helen A.
Brumbaugh, 86,
Martinsburg, Pa., March 20
Kercher, Robert J., 93,
Reading, Pa., Feb. 23
Kintzer, Mary E. (Betty)
Stricker, 89, Shillington,
Pa., Dec. 30
Martin, Estella Catherine
Mills, 84, Hagerstown,
Md., April 19
Marzolf, Rose Marie
Frymyer, 93, Lititz, Pa.,
March 10
May, Josephine E. Buzzard,
92, Johnstown, Pa., April 3

McConahy, Anna Ferne
Rhodes Long, 92,
Martinsburg, Pa., Feb. 26
Oakes, Robert Worth, 88,
Rohrersville, Md., Feb. 7
Pisle, Leon R., 91,
Shippensburg, Pa., Feb. 12
Romie, Ruth Arlene
Radebaugh, 85, Troy,
Ohio, March 31
Shearer, Light Wilson, Jr.,
87, Palmyra, Pa., March 30
Sholl, Bonnie S., 58,
Lebanon, Pa., Jan. 7
Smoker, Earl F., 94,
Ephrata, Pa., Feb. 19
Tyndall, Robert R., 86,
Springboro, Ohio,
March 31
Weaver, Carol R., 77,
Lombard, Ill., March 29
Welch, Beverly Alice, 95,
Hughson, Calif., March 27
Widders, David Paul, 54,
Carlisle, Pa., Jan. 15
Wood, Jane Marchant, 87,
Boones Mill, Va., April 14

Ordained

Rhoc, Dennis, Mid-Atl. Dist.

(Johnsontown, Hedgesville,
W.Va.), March 29

Placements

Banaszak, Linda, from
chaplain, Village at
Morrisons Cove,
Martinsburg, Pa., to pastor,
Hollidaysburg, Pa., April 13
Garrison, Dennis, interim
pastor, Myerstown, Pa.,
March 18
Grossnickle, Karen, pastor,
New Beginnings,
Myersville, Md., Jan. 11
Huston, Ervin, interim pastor,
Lebanon, Pa., April 1
Petty, Shayne (Chibuzo),
pastor, Brook Park
Community, Brook Park,
Ohio, March 30
Reyner, Stephen, pastor,
Good Shepherd,
Bradenton, Fla., Nov. 24
Smith, Susan, from pastor
of education and outreach,
Celebration of Christ, Saint
Petersburg, Fla., to pastor,
Antelope Park, Lincoln,
Neb., April 15

TURNINGPOINTS

Today, we have a sponge cake

In an *On Being* podcast, Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen tells a story about her grandmother. Although her grandparents were quite poor in Russia, they often fed members of their community. Given that theirs was the rabbi's home, neighbors often stopped by. Her grandmother was skilled at making food supplies stretch.

In America, every corner of her grandmother's icebox was filled with food because she had known hunger in Russia.



NANCY SOLLENBERGER HEISHMAN

Remen remembers the family story: "If someone opened the door of the icebox without caution, an egg might fall out and break on the kitchen floor. Her grandmother's response to these accidents was always the same. She would look at the broken egg with satisfaction and say, 'Aha. Today, we have a sponge cake.'"

"Perhaps this is about our wounds," observes Remen. "The fact is that life is full of losses and

disappointments, and the art of living is to make of them something that can nourish others."

Her own life is testimony to this truth. When she was diagnosed with Crohn's disease at age 15, the news was devastating. Her mother was with her when the shock hit home. "She did not comfort me or cuddle me. She took my hand, and she reminded me of this family story. And she said, 'Rachel, we will make a sponge cake.'"

Out of this experience, Remen believes that "the way we deal with loss shapes our capacity to be present to life more than anything else. The way we protect ourselves from loss may be the way in which we distance ourselves from life."

I first came across Remen's story as I was preparing a sermon for the retirement celebration of a dear friend from seminary days. Because he was facing into terminal cancer, the occasion was bittersweet. In many ways, Peter L. Haynes epitomizes for me the essence of a treasured pastor.


Until his untimely death in early May, I experienced him as a joyful, creative, playful, humble, wise, genuine, and passionate follower of Christ who loved his church family of many years and had inspired a generation of young people to love camping, church life, and Jesus Christ.

Yet, Pete's life was not without suffering, tragedy, and loss. In a recent social media post, he commented that "death is part of the picture sooner or later, but I'm still rooting for the second, but prepared for the first."

Living in these days of a pandemic, we face into the reality of death, loss, and suffering, some of us way more than others. Life is truly precarious and precious in ways we never knew before. Especially those on the front lines of response and service to others root for "later" but must be fully prepared for "sooner."

If it's true that being fully present to the losses of life can shape us into spiritually healthy and resilient persons, then by all means, let us seize those moments with courage. It is the losses and daily "little deaths" in the midst of life that have the capacity to give us practice at carrying Christ's life within us. More than mere pluck, picking up that proverbial broken egg as the start of a fine sponge cake is a way of looking for the life of Jesus in the midst of the brokenness and death within life.

As Paul wrote to the Corinthians, "we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, but it is so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. We are always carrying in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies" (2 Corinthians 4:10-11).

There will inevitably be a significant number of life's broken eggs filling up the basket on your journey and mine. Through divine grace and human grit, may they become the very ingredients that God uses to serve up the tasty, nourishing life of Jesus within us for the sake of the world. 

Nancy Sollenberger Heishman is director of the Church of the Brethren Office of Ministry.

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*"Praise the Lord!
I will give thanks to the
Lord with my whole heart."*

Psalm 111:1

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