

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

JULY/AUGUST 2020 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Dear Class of 2020

BECAUSE OF COVID-19
SHE CANNOT WORK.
WHEN SHE DOESN'T
WORK, HER CHILDREN
AND FAMILY DON'T EAT.



Market seller
in Nigeria

Photo by Roxane
and Carl Hill

Special COVID-19 Emergency Disaster Fund grants are providing life-sustaining food, medical and hygiene materials to vulnerable and poor people in countries around the world and here in the U.S.



Food and hygiene recipients
in Rwanda, April 2020

Photo courtesy of Pastor Etienne
Nsanziimana (right, with mask)

With your help, we can be a source of hope and sustenance to those struggling to survive in these difficult times.

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Artwork by graduate Shaun Bowman Deardorff

6 When should we go back to church?
Interview with Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen

10 A different vision for 2020
Brethren camps adapt to a pandemic
by Linetta Ballew

14 Dear Class of 2020

20 The art of authentic ministry
Veritas congregation builds creative community
by Walt Wiltschek

departments

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2 FROM THE PUBLISHER | 24 SIMPLE LIVING |
| 3 THE EXCHANGE | 25 NEWSLINE DIGEST |
| 4 IN TOUCH | 28 LETTERS |
| 9 MEDIA REVIEW | 31 TURNING POINTS |
| 22 BIBLE STUDY | 32 POTLUCK |

on the cover

An array of Church of the Brethren graduates from high school, college, and beyond.

In the name of Jesus

One of the first two English slave ships to carry West Africans to the New World was named *Jesus*. Its captain was Sir John Hawkins, known as the first English slave trader. According to journalist Michael Eli Dokosi, he persuaded West Africans to gain salvation by boarding the Good Ship *Jesus*, as it was sometimes known, and then sold them in what is now the Dominican Republic. Can there be a worse case of taking the Lord's name in vain?



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

As part of the reckoning that we're seeing in many parts of the world, Hawkins' hometown of Plymouth, England, announced in June that it will change the name of Sir John Hawkins Square. While there had been complaints over the years, the need for change became more urgent in today's bracing air.

Hawkins sailed *Jesus* to the New World in 1562. Four hundred and one years later, white supremacists bombed the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., and killed four girls. In the blast, there was strange damage to a window that depicted the familiar image of Jesus knocking at a door. The entire window survived except for the white face of Jesus, which was blown away.

What does it mean for the white face of Jesus to be blown away?

The image of Jesus that is likely most familiar to Christians in the US is Sallman's *Head of Christ*. That 1941 painting of a blond, blue-eyed Jesus has been reproduced more than 500 million times—much more, if you count its appearance on merchandise. The original painting was well-intentioned. But the way this and other images of a white Jesus have been used in America is not harmless. One could say that we have broken the commandment by making a graven image—a white God.

Perhaps the early Brethren were right to keep their meetinghouses unadorned. Perhaps they were less tempted to make God into their own image.

What images and structures do people of faith need to examine today? In our churches, what monuments have we constructed? Not all monuments are made of stone. Are we willing to look unflinchingly at the ways Christians over centuries have taken the name of Jesus in vain?

Wendy McFadden

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“To remember the past is to commit oneself to the future.”

—quote by Pope John Paul II inscribed inside the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum

“We are still living in the aftershock of Hiroshima; people are still the scars of history.” —English playwright/poet Edward Bond

HIROSHIMA: 75 years later

Aug. 6 marks three-quarters of a century since the first atomic bomb was dropped on the city of Hiroshima, Japan (the second fell on Nagasaki three days later). The resulting explosion destroyed about 90 percent of the city and killed about 80,000 people on impact, with many more later falling victim to effects of radiation sickness.

Today the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Museum and Park sits near the site of “ground zero,” centered on the Genbaku Dome (or “Atomic Bomb Dome”)—the only structure left standing in the area after the bombing. A statement by UNESCO says, “It symbolized the tremendous destructive power which humankind can invent, on the one hand; on the other hand, it also reminds us of the hope for world permanent peace.” The museum opened in 1955. A memorial service with paper lanterns is held on Aug. 6 each year. Survivors of the bombing are known as “Hibakusha.”

The Brethren connection

The World Friendship Center (WFC) opened in Hiroshima in 1965, about a mile from the bomb’s epicenter. Its motto: “To foster peace, one friend at a time.” Founded by Quaker peacemaker Barbara Reynolds, the center offers accommodations for visitors, tours, stories by bombing survivors, a Peace Ambassador Exchange, a Peace Choir, English conversation classes, and other educational and service events.

Over the past four-plus decades, more than 50 people have come to the WFC to serve as volunteer resident directors via the Church of the Brethren, most of them serving through Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS). Current volunteers at the WFC (since August 2019) are Roger and Kathy Edmark of Lynnwood, Wash.

For more information on the WFC, visit wfchiroshima.com/english. For more information on the BVS project there, visit brethren.org/bvs/projects/1129.html.

About Hiroshima

Population today: More than 1.1 million, making it the 11th largest city in Japan

Location: Southwestern end of Honshu (the largest island), about 500 miles from Tokyo

History: The city’s origins date to the late 6th century and early 7th century.

Highlights: In addition to the Peace Memorial Museum and Park, the city is known for its rebuilt Hiroshima Castle, Manga Library, the Mazda Museum, and its baseball team, the Hiroshima Carp.

Brethren Voices

The Brethren community television program *Brethren Voices*, operated out of Peace Church of the Brethren in Portland, Ore., highlighted the World Friendship Center in an episode earlier this year. Hosted by Brent Carlson, it opens with the song “One World” by Mike Stern (later reprised with some Japanese voices) and includes an interview with current WFC volunteers Roger and Kathy Edmark. View the episode at www.youtube.com/watch?v=TVQCNmwL8Sk.



Photo by Fabiola Fernandez

Churches speak out on racism

Church of the Brethren congregations spanning the country have spoken out about racism and police violence following the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and many others. Here are excerpts from three church statements:

Harrisburg, Pa.

Harrisburg First Church of the Brethren issued this statement:

“As followers of Jesus we stand in solidarity with our black brothers and sisters enduring racial violence and systemic oppression. We denounce anti-black racism resulting in police brutality, mass incarceration, and unjust legal systems that disproportionately harm black and brown people. We denounce the evil ‘principalities and powers’ at work in our world that seek to kill, steal, and destroy people made in the image of God.

“As a congregation we commit to doing justice and peacemaking in the way of Jesus. For the times we as a church have

been complacent about the suffering of others, we confess our complicity. By God’s grace we repent and courageously align ourselves with the Spirit’s activity and the Messiah’s reign on earth. And in obedience to God we seek to set things right where every valley is lifted up and every mountain is made low. Jesus teaches us how to struggle against oppression through his example of standing in solidarity with those who were considered ‘the least’ and ‘the last’ in his society. And because Jesus affirmed that poor people’s lives mattered, that Samaritans’ lives mattered, and the lives of those crucified by Rome mattered, we affirm that black and brown lives matter too, and are precious to God.

“As a congregation we commit to deepening our faithfulness to Jesus through holy listening, through intentional learning, and through discerning congregational public action.”

The Harrisburg church’s statement concluded with commitments to particular actions including “creating intentional intergenerational space where the sto-

ries of our black and brown brothers and sisters are received with love . . . deepening our understanding of the history and present systems of racism in the United States, as well as the complicity of the western church in the legacy of white supremacy . . . taking public action because we are called to do justice, love mercy, and to walk humbly with God.”

The statement concluded: “We know that faith without works is dead and discipleship requires a love willing to respond to the suffering of others. We pray for a prophetic witness that pleases God and participates in seeing justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.”

Roanoke, Va.

A statement from Central Church of the Brethren was created and publicized by its Race Education Team, and was headed by three emphatic lines in capital letters:

“RACISM MUST END!
“RACISM MUST NOT BE
TOLERATED BY ANYONE!
“RISE UP! STAND UP!
JUST SAY NO!

“In recent days and weeks this nation has seen something more horrible than a virus that takes the breath away. We have seen a trifecta of racism caught on video that takes away the breath of conscience and decency. We must examine our souls and our actions to stop this racist virus and learn to stand in solidarity with the victims, those who have been killed and oppressed.

“As members of an historic peace church, we believe that Jesus calls us to love our neighbors as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:38), and to do unto others as we would have them do unto us (Matthew 7:12). If there is no sign of love and justice in our hearts, then there is reason to at least question whether Christ is in our hearts and whether we are people of God.”

The statement named three recent events: the murder of 26-year-old Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, “ambushed by armed white men who were threatened by his jogging while black through their neighborhood”; the police killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis; and in New York the calling of the cops by a white woman, Amy Cooper, against a black man, Christian Cooper, when he asked her to comply with the rule to leash her dog in the park.

“As witnesses to these deplorable incidents, we must acknowledge a heritage of toxic white privilege and our

own racism and work to dismantle it,” the statement continued. “We must learn that all life is precious regardless of the color of the skin. To do this, as Franciscan friar Richard Rohr claims, we must acknowledge that our blind adherence to ‘individualism’ and ‘bootstrap mentality’ prevents us from empathizing with people in need and from recognizing systemic racism and oppression. White privilege blinds us to racism and its effects. . . .”

Citing 1 John 4:20-21, the statement concluded with calls to action and repentance:

“We call for an end of acts and beliefs of racism. An end to injustice. We call for all people to treat each other with humanity, dignity, and respect. If you need to re-examine your thoughts and actions concerning racism and justice, NOW is the time to do so.

“Call out racism wherever you see it or hear it, whether it is individual racism, social racism, structural racism, or systemic racism! Let your community know that you will not tolerate racism in any form! If you are Christian, affirmatively recognize that every human is God’s creation and worthy of justice and respect.”

La Verne, Calif.

A statement from La Verne Church of the Brethren also named the deaths of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd, noting that they “show the continued disregard by law enforcement and the judicial system in our society when serving and protecting our African-American and minoritized communities. No clearer picture of this exists than the contrasting attitudes of the New York Police Department’s disparate treatment of white persons in a park who earned compassion and civility by receiving face masks, while people of color were being beaten for not social distancing just five miles away by the same department.

“The La Verne Church feels that the



continued ignorance of these issues is contrary not only to the laws of our land, but to the fundamentals of a Christian faith our leaders profess our country was founded upon. As a member of one of the three historic peace churches, this congregation strongly condemns not only the actions above, but society’s willing acceptance of these acts.”

La Verne issued a call to other Church of the Brethren congregations “to stand with us to jointly condemn these acts and call out racial injustice in their communities. The La Verne Church calls upon our Brethren colleagues to continue to be guided by the 1991 Report of Committee on Brethren and Black Americans (Hayes, et al., 1991) that calls out ‘racism as a sin—a sin against God and against our neighbors—and mount a concerted effort to combat it.’”

The church highlighted one particular recommendation out of the 14 in that Annual Conference report: “We recommend that congregations stand in solidarity with black Americans and other victims of racial hate by speaking out against overt expressions of racially motivated violence and offering assistance to its victims.” (p. 5)

The statement closed by committing the congregation to the work of anti-racism “for the long haul, even when acts of racial injustice are not in the headlines. We are committed to continual education of ourselves and others. We are committed to participate in and stand in solidarity with racial justice coalitions locally and nationally. We are committed to dismantling racism through our actions, words, relationships, and practices.”





When should we go back to church?

Jan Fischer Bachman interviewed Dr. Kathryn Jacobsen for MESSENGER. A professor of epidemiology and global health at George Mason University, Jacobsen has provided technical expertise to the World Health Organization and other groups. Her research portfolio includes analyses of emerging infectious diseases, and she frequently provides health and medical commentary for print and television media. She is a member of Oakton Church of the Brethren in Vienna, Va.

Q How worried do we need to be about coronavirus?

A The virus that causes COVID-19 only started affecting humans a few months ago, so we're still in the early stages of trying to understand the virus and the disease it causes.

We knew early on that coronavirus was quite contagious, because we saw how quickly it spread through cities in Hubei province in China, on cruise ships, and in small towns in Italy. We could also

see that it caused severe illness and death in a lot of the people who contracted it. While the case fatality rate is highest in older adults and among people with various types of existing medical conditions, COVID-19 can also be fatal in healthy young and middle-aged people.

More recently, we've started learning about how the virus can damage the lungs, cardiovascular system, kidneys, and other organs. Some young adults with coronavirus are having strokes, and we've become aware that some children who contract the virus become critically ill. A lot of church members are in high-risk groups, but anyone who contracts the virus is at risk of an adverse outcome.

Q Why did coronavirus become a pandemic?

A As scientists gathered more data about cases, we discovered that many people with the infection have mild symptoms or no symptoms at all but are still able to pass the virus to

other people. If everyone who contracted the virus got sick enough to stay in bed for a few days, we could easily identify cases and isolate them. But that's not what happens with coronavirus.

Some coronavirus carriers feel good enough to keep doing their normal routines, and everyone they encounter is at risk of getting infected. That's how the virus was able to spread across the globe so quickly. One infected person who feels completely healthy could attend church and inadvertently infect up to dozens of other churchgoers.

Q Are some places safer than others?

A If there are not a lot of coronavirus cases in the general population in a particular place, the likelihood of someone at church being contagious is relatively low. However, we aren't doing enough population-based testing to know the actual rate of disease in many places. If we only test people who are so sick that they might need to be hospitalized, we are missing a lot of cases. And if we look at case counts rather than rates of disease, rural areas will look less affected than cities even if they have a higher per-person rate of disease.

We know that coronavirus cases are still occurring in every state. New cases are still being diagnosed in most counties. The stay-at-home orders were intended to buy time to build up testing and treatment capacity. They slowed the rate of new infections, but they didn't drop the transmission rate to close to zero.

As businesses reopen and more people are interacting with one another,



WHEN CHURCH LEADERS ARE MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT WHEN AND HOW TO REOPEN, THEY NEED TO CONSIDER THE WELLBEING OF THEIR CONGREGATIONS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES AT LARGE.

we expect that the number of infections is going to increase. Places that haven't had a lot of cases yet may end up having outbreaks a few weeks after their stay-at-home orders are lifted. By the time an outbreak is detected, many people will already be infected even if they are not yet symptomatic.

Q How soon can congregations or small groups start meeting in person again?

A It is difficult to answer this question because the risk of coronavirus is not uniform across states and counties and cities, and because the public health control measures that governors, mayors, and other officials have put in place are not the same everywhere. The threat from coronavirus will persist until we have an effective vaccine, but most churches are not going to want to wait that long to resume meeting in person.

When church leaders are making decisions about when and how to reopen, they need to consider the wellbeing of their congregations and their communities at large. One contagious person can make many other people sick. The likelihood of one person in a small group having the virus is low, but if there is one infected person in the group the likelihood of others becoming infected is high. Those infected people may be older adults or people with chronic health issues that put them at risk of serious complications from COVID-19, or they may live or work with people at high risk of complications.

We don't want churches and small groups to become hotspots of infection

in their communities. We don't want church members to become infected at church and carry the virus into nursing homes, factories, shops, and other workplaces. We don't want to add to the burden being shouldered by healthcare workers, and we don't want to play a role in contributing to more loss of life.

Q How do we keep our churches clean?

A The CDC's initial recommendations for preventing coronavirus infections focused on disinfecting surfaces. Cleanliness is still important, and churches will need to continue to sanitize doorknobs, handrails, faucets, and other surfaces that are frequently touched.

But we've also learned that the virus may stay suspended in the air longer than we initially thought it did. In rooms with poor ventilation systems, virus particles may spread across the room and be breathed in by other people. The CDC recently published a case investigation that concluded that one call center employee had infected almost 100 coworkers in other cubicles on the same floor of an office building. People with coronavirus infection expel the virus when they talk or sing or even just sit in a pew breathing.

The CDC is now recommending that most people wear some type of face covering when they are away from home, even if they feel healthy, so that if they are infected some of the viral particles they breathe out will be trapped in the fabric. The recommendation to wear face coverings in houses of worship is likely to be in place for at least several more months.

Q What if we meet for just a short time?

A The longer people sit together and breathe the same air, the greater the likelihood that a contagious person will infect others. But there probably isn't much difference between a 50-minute worship service and a 70-minute service. Either way, that is a long time to be sitting in a sanctuary or classroom with poor ventilation.

Q What if the congregation meets outside?

A That's definitely safer than meeting inside. Outdoor gatherings still need to follow the physical distancing guidelines. We don't know exactly how far apart household groups need to be to avoid sharing germs. Six feet isn't a magic number. The safe distance might be 10 feet. It might be farther, depending on factors like wind and humidity. Churches can ask people to bring their own chairs and sit farther apart than seems necessary. No handshakes or hugs. No shared food and drinks. No passing of hymnals or other objects.

Q Can we just keep meeting online?

A Of course! A lot of churches have gotten used to meeting virtually, and for many churches online gatherings will remain the best option for worship, Bible study, and other church activities for at least a few more months.

Even after statewide and local restrictions on group gatherings are eased, churches in hotspot areas and churches with a lot of older members

LET'S TRY TO BE PATIENT. LET'S BE CONSIDERATE ABOUT THE FACT THAT MANY PASTORS, CHURCH MUSICIANS, AND OTHER CHURCH LEADERS ARE IN RISK GROUPS.

will want to consider whether staying online is the best way to protect the church body. Online is the best default option until a local church has evidence that it can open with minimal risk to members and visitors.


Q How quickly can we get back to normal?

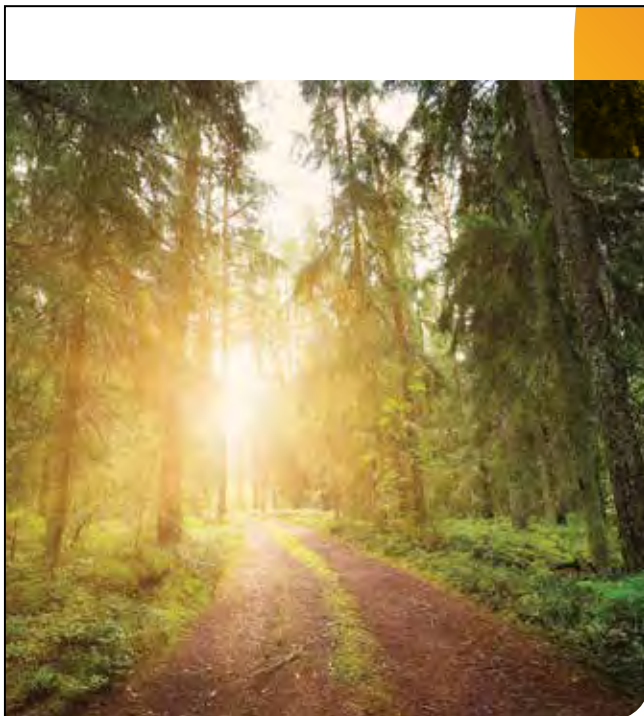
A **Let's try to be patient.** Let's be considerate about the fact that many pastors, church musicians, and other church leaders are in risk groups,

have household members in risk groups, or have other reasons to be anxious about returning to the sanctuary or fellowship hall when COVID-19 cases are still occurring locally. Parishioners can choose to stay at home, but pastors will have a hard time practicing social distancing once church buildings reopen.

And let's remember that the decision about when and how to reopen churches isn't just about churches. We don't want church gatherings to contribute to spikes in cases that might

harm local businesses and overwhelm healthcare facilities. We don't want church meetings to seed outbreaks in surrounding areas. To be a good witness to our neighbors, we have to think about how to help slow the transmission of coronavirus in our communities at large.

In a few months, we'll know a lot more about the science of coronavirus and the specific actions we can take to operate safely. Until then, we should be cautious about how we move toward a new normal. 



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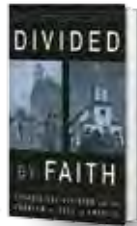
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Learning about racism

The editors of MESSENGER would like to recommend a long list of books, films, and other resources that we have found important in our learning about racism. But sometimes short is better. When asked for just one to recommend to readers, we chose these.

Divided by Faith

by Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith



This book, done from a sociological perspective, is two decades old (2000) but still quite relevant. It looks at the history of the white evangelical church with racial justice issues (specifically the black-white divide), from its often-sordid history with slavery and other abuses to more contemporary bridge-building programs. The authors note religion’s potential to be part of the solution but give unvarnished analysis to the ways it has too often been part of the problem.

I particularly appreciated its close look at the church’s seemingly well-intentioned efforts to address racial divides that stopped at the surface level, leaving the underlying unjust structural issues intact or even reinforced—the painful fruits of which are clearly being seen in recent events. —Walt Wiltschek

The New Jim Crow

by Michelle Alexander



If you want to begin to understand frustration with the criminal justice system and the militarization of the police, the book to read is *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness* (2012). Back when I first read this eye-opening book, I found it so compelling that I would read sections out loud to anyone within earshot. It’s packed with well-researched information, and my copy is well-marked.

To learn more about the injustices of the criminal justice system, read *Just Mercy* (also a recent movie), by Bryan Stevenson, which has an easy-to-read narrative style. For an examination that’s theological as well as historical, read Dominique Gilliard’s *Rethinking Incarceration*, which builds on both Alexander and Stevenson. —Wendy McFadden

Me and White Supremacy

by Layla F. Saad



Some years ago, I began realizing how much I had to learn about racism and started in on reading, discussing, participating, and joining. During this time, I went through the one-month *Me and White Supremacy* workbook (published this year in book form, but back then as a pdf).

One of the things I realized was that, for me, this work was optional. By contrast, Layla Saad writes, “Imagine how Black, Indigenous or People of Color feel about having to face [white supremacy] down *every day*” (emphasis added). That difference demonstrates how carefully our society has been constructed to protect and prioritize the comfort of white people.

Working through this book has helped me in my work on the MESSENGER editorial team; I have noticed when writing centers whiteness and photos come across as anti-Black. I still make mistakes, but I am trying to both listen and stop being silent.

As Saad writes, “This is truth work. . . . This is love work. . . . This is commitment work.” It is difficult and uncomfortable. But if you are ready to move forward, pondering the questions in this book will help you begin to dismantle white supremacy in yourself and society. —Jan Fischer Bachman

Say Her Name: The Life and Death of Sandra Bland



An HBO documentary by Kate Davis and David Heilbroner, *Say Her Name* (2018) takes viewers on an emotional roller coaster as it follows the legal battle waged by Sandra Bland’s family to find out the truth about her death.

Bland died in Waller County, Texas, after she was arrested for a minor traffic violation while on her way from the Chicago area to take a job at her alma mater, Prairie View A&M University. Three days after her arrest, she was found hanging in a jail cell. Her death was ruled a suicide—but that seemed suspect to her family and friends. The politically active Bland was a social media personality in the Black Lives Matter movement for her “Sandy Speaks” video blogs.

Bland’s own passionate words and compelling videos are a stark contrast with images of the small jailhouse in which the truth was walled off from the outside world. In the hands of the filmmakers, that jail becomes a powerful image of the way systemic racism locks up the truth of the Black experience. —Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

For more books on race, go to www.brethrenpress.com.



A different vision for 2020

BRETHREN CAMPS ADAPT TO CHALLENGES OF A PANDEMIC

by Linetta Ballew

When Church of the Brethren camps gathered last fall at Camp Swatara (Bethel, Pa.) for the Outdoor Ministries Association (OMA) Annual Retreat, hopes for 2020 were high. Camps anticipated full retreat/rental group calendars, recruitment for staff and volunteers

was under way, and amazing programs were envisioned. That all changed as COVID-19 spread across the country.

By late March, camps—designated as non-essential businesses—were closed to comply with stay-at-home orders. Employees worked from home, stayed socially distant from one another, and modified routines.

Then the retreat/rental group cancellation calls started to come. Program registrations slowed to a trickle. Camp leadership applied for government loans and grants to make ends meet and support their staff. Camps missed volunteer workdays to prepare their properties for upcoming seasons. Calendars became filled with

HOW TO HELP

If you are able, the Church of the Brethren Outdoor Ministries Association is strongly encouraging continued and additional giving and donations to Brethren camps as they work to weather this crisis and provide programs for the future.

- Visit your camp's website and find out if it is offering any virtual or limited in-person activities, such as hiking or other activities for family groups.
- Check whether your camp is holding any volunteer days or has other specific needs.
- Make note of upcoming fundraisers and put them on your calendar.

- See if your camp is offering online sales from its gift shop, or other creative services.
- If you already paid a registration fee for a program or event that was cancelled, consider making it a donation.
- Watch for future camps and programs when they can be offered again.
- Spread the word about your local camp in your congregation. Consider inviting campers and volunteers to share their stories.
- Keep your camp and its staff in your prayers. Perhaps send them a note of encouragement.

Zoom calls and webinars and trying to plan and prepare for the future. There simultaneously seemed to be nothing to do and lots to do, and it all took twice as long.

Crucial spring fundraising events—such as Camp Blue Diamond’s (Petersburg, Pa.) Camp Dinners, Camp Bethel’s (Fincastle, Va.) Sounds of the Mountain Festival, and Brethren Woods’ (Keezletown, Va.) Spring Festival—were converted into alternative efforts to make up for lost income or postponed. Cautious preparations for the summer season continued as the watching and waiting began.

For almost two months, camps sought guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), American Camp Association (ACA), and their state and local health departments to understand what would be expected of summer camp operations. As those guidelines and regulations were released, camps weighed the strong desire to figure out how to still hold summer camp with the reality that wearing face masks for large portions of the day, switching from family-style to staff-served buffet meals, using disposable products, daily temperature checks, reducing group sizes, and staying six feet


A TRUNK-ATED SEASON

Elephants have been observed to have complex emotions, such as love, joy, and—perhaps most uniquely—grief. For people, these last several months have certainly been a time of mixed emo-

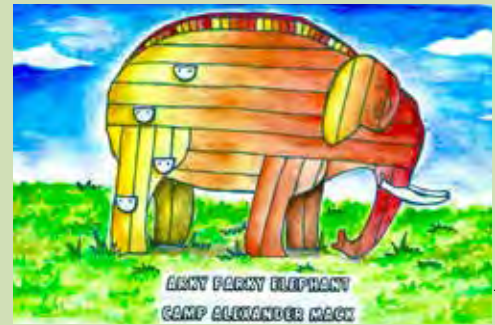
tions. Lives and lifestyles have been changed; isolation and anxiety have been ubiquitous; health and safety have been of high concern.

Church of the Brethren camps have been no exception. We miss our guests, our campers, and the ways that we interacted in the past. So as a camp, how do we keep people connected through these times?

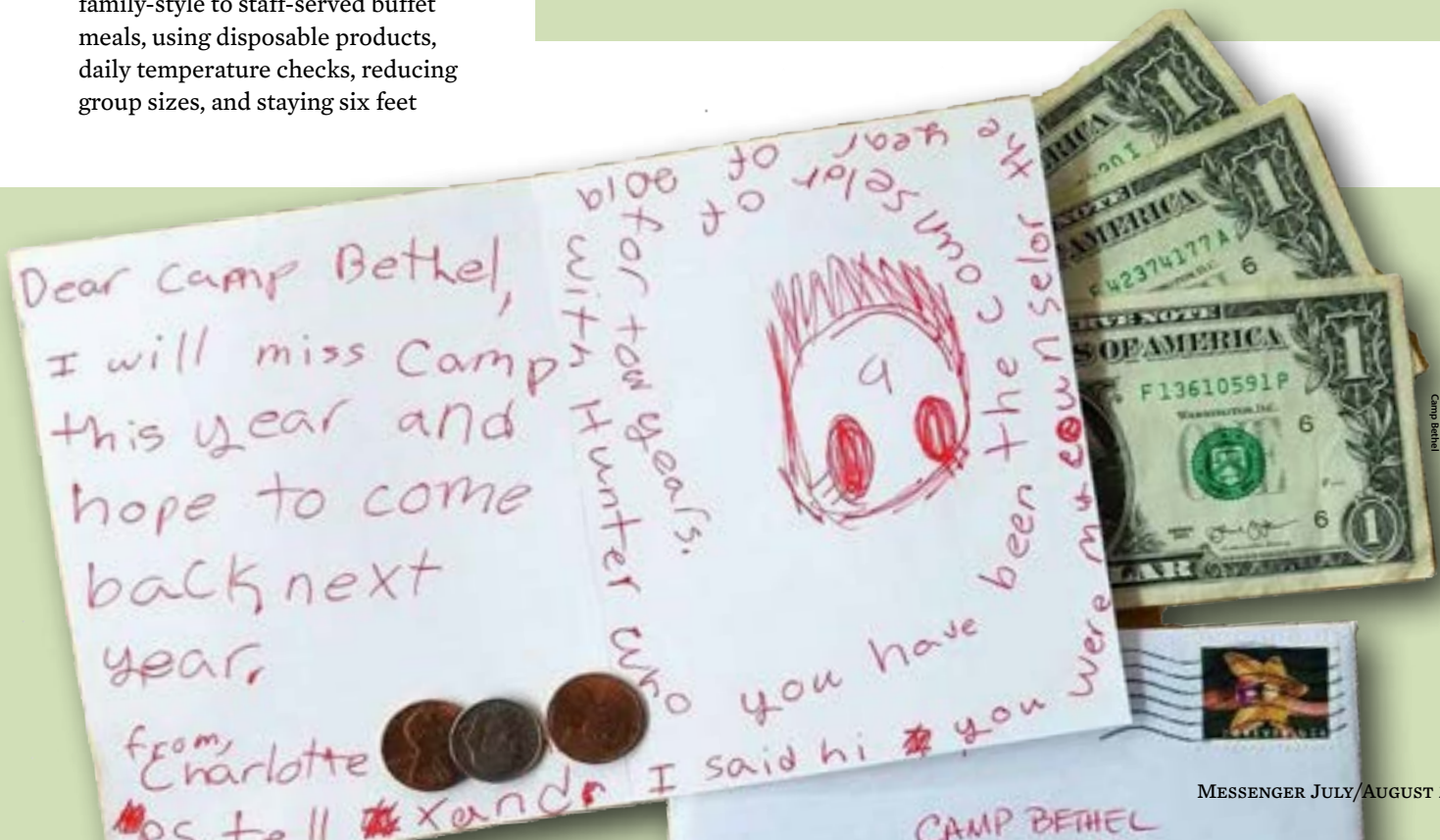
At Camp Mack (Milford, Ind.), we have hosted virtual campfires on Facebook each Sunday since the end of March, where we have invited friends to sing along with us to their favorite camp songs each Sunday. In a recent issue of “Mackabilia,” Camp Mack’s monthly newsletter, we shared a hand-drawn coloring page of an elephant, one of the wooden animals in our “Arky Parky” playground, and encouraged readers to share their colorful creations with us and each other.

Columbia City (Ind.) Church of the Brethren mailed the coloring page out to 19 children in the congregation who had registered for camp this summer to keep the spirit of camp going. As the artwork is displayed on refrigerators, viewed in emails, or used as the cover of a card, we hope it might be a reminder that through all the changes of today, camp is praying for them and is still a sanctuary space for ministry, even at a distance. 

Deanna Beckner is guest services director for Camp Alexander Mack, and occasional elephant artist.



Camp Mack



Camp Bethel



Camp Eder

apart—even while playing games and in the pool—would not feel anything like camp. Some called it “unfeasible,” others “irresponsible,” to try to hold a summer camp program that could ensure the health and safety of campers, staff, and volunteers given

the risks and requirements.

Beginning with Camp Alexander Mack (Milford, Ind.) in late April and continuing through the end of May, one by one camps announced they had made the difficult decision to suspend traditional summer camping programs

for children and youth in 2020. Camp Harmony (Hooversville, Pa.) might be the only Brethren camp still planning to offer an in-person option for children and youth this summer, with a delayed opening in late June.

As camps pivot away from the

DID YOU KNOW? 10 facts about 10 camps

by Zoe Vorndran

California: Founded in 1924, Camp La Verne was among the first camps to be developed in the Church of the Brethren.

Florida: Camp Ithiel was developed using surplus army barracks and the Seneca congregation meetinghouse.

Idaho: Camp Wilbur Stover is named after a Church of the Brethren missionary to India.

Illinois: Camp Emmanuel was initially known as Camp Bethany and had its first camp sessions in 1949.

Indiana: The development of Camp Alexander Mack was inspired by L. W. Shultz’s study on the benefits of the camping movement.

North Carolina: During its beginning years from 1934 to 1952, Camp Carmel met in various meetinghouses and barns. It was originally named Camp Carolina.

Ohio: One of the founders of Inspiration Hills was Alma Moyers Long, one of the youth instrumental in beginning Brethren Volunteer Service.



Camp Pine Lake

Pennsylvania: Camp Eder was named after the river in Schwarzenau, Germany, where the first Brethren were baptized. (It also has a Schwarzenau Lodge.)

Washington: Camp Koinonia is jointly administered by the Church of the Brethren, United Church of Christ, and Disciples of Christ.

West Virginia: At Camp Galilee, tents, a former hotel, and a bowling alley were the main facilities until the mid-1960s.

Zoe Vorndran just completed a year as intern in the Brethren Historical Library and Archives. For a list of all the Brethren camps, visit oma-cob.org.

A DIFFERENT VISION IS NEEDED FOR 2020, SO THEY ARE CREATIVELY FINDING NEW WAYS TO CONTINUE THEIR MINISTRIES AND STAY CONNECTED TO THEIR CAMPER, CHURCHES, AND COMMUNITIES.


known and beloved traditional summer camp experiences, they are practicing what they've preached and living out the values and skills they've taught to generations of campers. For years, camps have challenged the young and old to try new things, to go one step further, to move from their comfort zone to be able to stretch and grow. Camp leaders are doing just that now, because they know their mission and goals are too important to set aside. A different vision is needed for 2020, so they are creatively finding new ways to continue their ministries and stay connected to their campers, churches, and communities.

Some camps are offering alternative programs like on-site day events and family camp programs that allow for social distancing or online connections, while others are mailing materials to campers or posting resources on social media. OMA joined ecumenical partners to offer a virtual camp portal available to Brethren camps at a reduced rate. At least four camps—Camp Mack, Inspiration Hills (Burbank, Ohio), Camp Blue Diamond, and Brethren Woods—are using that platform for their online programming. Brethren Faith in Action grants were opened to camps by the Church of the Brethren Mission and Ministry Board to help provide extra financial support for these innovative outreach programs.

Many camps are also using this season as a time of renewal, sabbath, and jubilee. While camps are less busy hosting guests and running programs, a variety of maintenance

projects are being worked on to improve and strengthen camp properties as they seek to be good stewards of the resources entrusted to them.

It won't be perfect, and it never has been. Camp has always been a place where trying and failing is better than never trying at all. A place where learning from mistakes and trying again is the norm. A place where the craziest ideas are able to be voiced and given space and nurture to grow.

A place where experiments and innovation are encouraged. And while it won't be perfect, it will be genuine. It will be authentic. It will be true to the heart of camp's mission: Christ-centered living, respect, community, stewardship, resiliency, leadership, hospitality, discipleship, and love—and nothing can stop that. 

Linetta Ballew is assistant director of Brethren Woods Camp and Retreat Center in Keezletown, Va., and current chair of the Church of the Brethren Outdoor Ministries Association board.

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Dear Class of 2020

by Eric Landram

There is something extraordinary about you and the rest of your graduating class.

This rising generation is something special. It is fearless in the face of a rapidly changing world. It is creative in the midst of old and outdated ideals. It is compassionate and innovative when faced with systems of hate, bigotry, and racism.

You stand up for what you believe in. You have adopted a spirit of advocacy for others, the planet, and the future. You have endured too many stories of school shootings, online bullying, and struggles in becoming a person in this day and age, but you have done it and the results look good.

To graduate is an accomplishment to be celebrated and respected. You have worked hard to get to this point through study, sports practices and tournaments, choir and band rehearsals, hours given through volunteering, and countless text messages to a friend struggling to get through the day due to unfair and unreasonable social pressures. The days seem long but the weeks are short, right?

You have overcome each and every obstacle, both seen and unseen, with dignity and determination. This is a significant step forward in the journey that will be your life and your life's work. There are so many of us who stand with you, proud beyond measure of the person you are, are becoming, and will become. You're ready to face the world and, believe me, the world needs you.

So your time has come and you are getting ready for big events such as prom, graduation, and parties with friends when suddenly a global pandemic hits. No apology will ever make up for those missed memories. Many of you didn't get the chance to say goodbye to your friends. That is a debt the rest of us will never be able to pay back to you. Thank you for your strength and for your humility in the face of this truth.

Given that I am writing this for our denominational magazine, I need to say something that is super important: The church needs you and your generation. Now more than ever, we need your creative and boundary-pushing ideas.

I must confess, the church isn't that good at listening sometimes. We can get bogged down and glamorize our heroes from our past so much that we miss the people working in the here and now, inspiring others to action. We can get caught in the trap of saying who is right, who is wrong, who is in, and who is out to the point where we become ineffective followers of Jesus.

Have patience and grace. Let your voice be heard and your dreams and visions become a reality. God is going to do—and is already doing—incredible things through you and your generation. God is using you to shape and mold the church for the future.

Many of you have been my personal heroes and have inspired me in my walk with Christ. I walk away from every conversation with such hope and optimism. Don't let anyone stand in your way or say "you can't." Lead by example and use your God-given gifts and passions. We'll try to do better at listening and empowering you, too.

The teacher in Ecclesiastes says, "There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven." This is your time and this is your new season. Life is full of highs and lows, and thank God we have each other so that we might share our stories with one another.

We all congratulate you on your accomplishments. We see you, we hear you, and we are excited to follow you. Go forth with God into the new world that we will build together. Happy graduation! 🎓

Eric Landram is pastor of Lititz (Pa.) Church of the Brethren.

THIS RISING GENERATION IS SOMETHING SPECIAL. IT IS FEARLESS IN THE FACE OF A RAPIDLY CHANGING WORLD. IT IS CREATIVE IN THE MIDST OF OLD AND OUTDATED IDEALS. IT IS COMPASSIONATE AND INNOVATIVE WHEN FACED WITH SYSTEMS OF HATE, BIGOTRY, AND RACISM.

Graduates step up to reflect on a surreal year

Priscilla Arceo

Santa Ana High School, California

Priscilla Arceo, valedictorian of Santa Ana (Calif.) High School and a member of Príncipe de Paz Church of the Brethren in Santa Ana, gave the student address for the nationally televised “Graduate Together: America Honors the High School Class of 2020” special that aired May 16 on CBS. Former US President Barack Obama and the NBA’s LeBron James were among the other speakers. “It just came out of nowhere,” Arceo told Los Angeles’ CBS-TV 2. Arceo, who plans to attend University of California-Santa Barbara in the fall, shared the following during her address:

When I was 6, my mom made a difficult decision, leaving my abusive father. It meant we would be safe, but it also meant we would be poor, and she would work shift after shift to pay our bills. I’m here because of my mom’s hard work and sacrifice, but all that she did for me wasn’t always seen or appreciated by others. That’s my biggest motivator, because when I’m successful and one day come back to help my community, her hard work will have been for something bigger than the two of us. Class of 2020, we’re all facing our

own challenges—as a generation, as a community and as a planet—but I know we can overcome this. We’ve shown the world what it means to be creative, resourceful, and resilient. I never thought I’d have to learn calculus over Zoom. We all lost out on prom and a proper graduation. We’re sad every day that we didn’t get to say goodbye to our classmates when schools closed down. And who knew we’d have to send “I miss you” postcards to friends who live just two blocks away? But I hope stories like mine remind you that when we get knocked down, we get up stronger. So Class of 2020, let’s celebrate ourselves for getting to this moment, and thank the people who helped us. We did it—together.

Justin Self

Manchester High School, Indiana

It has been a crazy last few months of our senior year. I’m sure it is not the way any of us expected our senior year to end. Many of the events we looked forward to were canceled: prom, graduation, our final

sports season, our last performance, and many other special moments. At times it was sad and frustrating, especially not knowing if the precautions we took were even helping, but eventually I recognized that staying home and following safety guidelines reflects our values. As young people, many of us do not face extreme danger from the virus, but the decisions we made had impacts beyond ourselves. By staying home, we were protecting the most vulnerable people in our communities. We were willing to sacrifice some of our big moments to save the lives of others. While it is unfortunate that we could not have a normal senior year, we might have gained more from the lessons we learned during this time than we would have from all the experiences we missed. We learned to be selfless and care for others, even if we do not know them personally. As we take the next steps on our journey, I hope we maintain these values of selflessness and care to help make the world a better place for everyone.

continued on page 18

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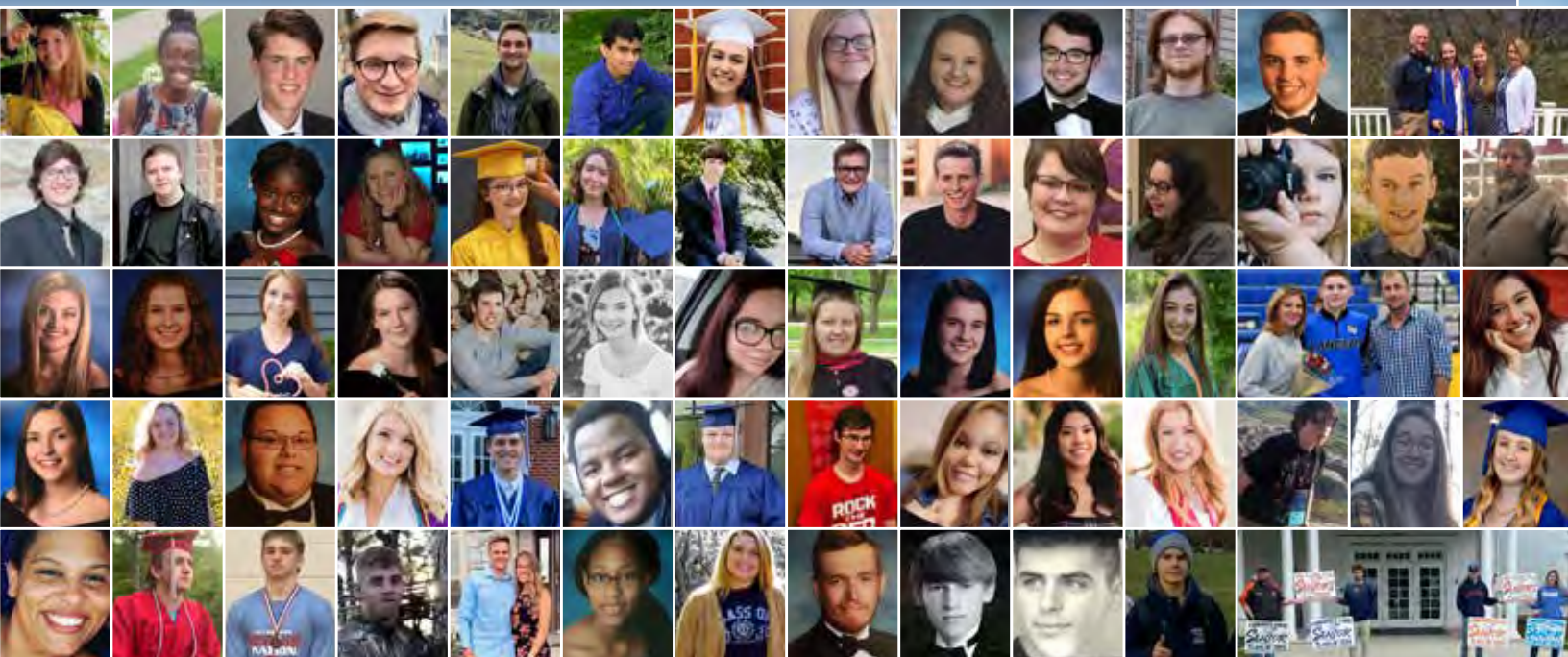
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MARIE BOTKIN • EMILY BROOKS • LAURA JO BROWN • KASEY REBECCA CARNS • JONATHAN COX • EMILY
CATHERINE GRACE FACKLER • CAITLYNN FONSECA • ERIN SIERRA GAINES • ROBERT TAYLOR GIBSON • ELIZABETH
MILLER E. KINES • OLIVIA KLINE • KAYLA KOOP • JOSHUA PAUL LAYTON • SHANA LECK • AMANDA FAY MA
CALEB ZIEGLER MILLER • NICHOLAS RYAN MINNICK • COLLEEN MURPHY • DANIEL NAFF • KRISTA PANONE
EVAN ANDERSON SCOTT • MINDI SINK • KAITLYN VAN ASSELT • SARAH WAMPLER • ASHLEY WENG



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A. BOYERS • CLAY BREIDENSTINE • BENJAMIN BRIGHT • JOEL BROOKS • KAYLA LYNN BROWN • CHRISTOPHER
ALEXANDRA DE LA ROSA • SHAUN BOWMAN DEARDORFF • DREW L DEFFENBAUGH • JORDAN DIEHL • STEPHEN
HOPE FINK • ISAAC JOSEPH FITZPATRICK • KAYLA FLAKE • ALAINA ELIZABETH FLORY • RACHEL ADALINE
GERHART • PHOEBE GESFORD • EVAN THOMAS GILLETTE • JORDAN DAVID GLANDER • DEREK AUSTIN GO
HECKEROTH • JACK HILEMAN • LEVI AUSTON HOLDERMAN • NOAH HOLLOWAY • NOAH HULLIHEN • LYDIA
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ALAINA MARIE MELLINGER • INDIA MILLER • JOSHUA C MILLER • SIERRA LYNN MILLER • JOSHUA CHARLES
NELSON • ALEXANDER NICHOLAS NYE • DYLAN OSINKOSKY • DAVEY PATTERSON • CASEY PECHT • SAMANTHA
RANDOLPH • ADIN JACOB REPLOGLE • KADEN RIGHTNOUR • JARED MADISON ROSS • ISAAC FRANKLIN
SCHULTZ • JUSTIN ROBERT SELF • LUKE SHEPPARD • TYLER DAVID SIMMERS • MINA ALEXIS SIMMONS • NATHAN
STRONG • RONNY ARTURO TAVAREZ • DYLAN TERRY • CARLIE THARPE • DILLON R TIPTON • VICTOR TR
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 MA DUFF • OGECHUKWU RUTHANNE EKWEALOR • TOBÉ JENNY EKWEALOR • LYDIA JANELLE ERBAUGH
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 RCUM • BENJAMIN BRYAN ANTHONY MCCRICKARD • AMANDA J. MCLEARN-MONTZ • ALEXANDRA MILLER
 • SARAH RAE PARCELL • MATTHEW CURTIS ROOP • MATTHEW FREDERIC ROOP • TREVOR SCHARPENBERG
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 HAN CADE WIGAL • JASMINE MARY WINGERT • LAUREL WOOD • ANIKA VI YODER • ZACHARY YOUNG

continued from page 14

Adin Replogle

Smoky Valley High School, Kansas

I have participated in Smoky Valley High School's drama club for four years. I started out behind the scenes, but a lack of male actors pulled me onto the stage. By the end of my senior year I was cast as the main villain in our school's performance of *Get Smart*. At the end of the very first performance, the cast faced a surreal reality: There would be no more performances because of COVID-19 restrictions. It didn't really sink in. I knew we wouldn't have any more performances, but it didn't feel over. How could it end after opening night? It took weeks for this numbness to wear off and be replaced by disappointment. Now, several months later, the disappointment of what might have been still lingers; some days it's less, some days it's more. I don't feel consumed by this great loss, but I suspect the feeling of incompleteness will never fully go away. This is what has defined the

class of 2020: things left unfinished. It is my hope, however, that this definition doesn't last. There will be greater performances than this to complete, and maybe even an encore.

Amelia Gunn

Bridgewater College, Virginia

Appropriately enough, at the beginning of this year, I decided that I would focus on the word "trust" because I knew my last semester at Bridgewater College was going to be met with impending change. It has been months since I left campus, and I have to say that trusting God looks very different now. This pandemic has made me feel unsettled, and now the Black Lives Matter movement is rising throughout the world. These times have given me an opportunity to take a long, hard look at my life, my privilege, and my actions thus far. I admit that I have not done enough to fight for social justice in the past. When this movement began, I realized that I needed to listen to black voices; this

was long overdue. I also realized that I have been given a voice that I must use to speak out for those who need it most, even when it is difficult to do so. I now know that I have a purpose beyond Bridgewater. I have a long journey ahead of me—one where I will continue to deeply love and serve God's children and fight against inequalities in our systems. God is moving fast, and now is not the time to drag my feet. It is time for us to realize that we are alive for such a time as this. We graduates have quite literally been shoved into the world without warning, and that has been uncomfortable. It has been difficult to trust God's plan in the midst of it all, but I pray that God will continue to make us uncomfortable, because being uncomfortable is a catalyst for change. If feeling uneasy means we will discover a better understanding of how to love the strangers, our neighbors, ourselves, and the people closest to us, then sign me up. It is about time we take action and change the course of our future, even if it came earlier than we might have expected.

A professor's perspective


by Julia Largent

When I first heard McPherson (Kan.) College was moving to remote learning, I was both stressed and relieved. Stressed because I've only ever taken online courses, not taught online. Relieved because I believed it was the appropriate thing to do for the safety of our campus.

Even though I was immensely sad the last day of classes before spring break, I was very much in a "get-everything-situated mode." Then one of my seniors stopped by my office, noting that he might not see me again and wanted to thank me. That's when it really hit.

It hadn't even dawned on me that remote learning also most likely meant no—or virtual—commencement. It had started to hit home how much this was impacting this semester. Not only was I sad that I wouldn't get to celebrate

with my seniors in May, I was also mourning the end to conversations and interactions with students in my classrooms. Moving online, I've tried to replicate some of this—but I knew it would never be the same.

I'm so proud of our students and how hard they have worked to make this semester still a good semester. I'm also proud of how my fellow colleagues have rallied together to support each other and our students. This semester has ended in a tough way—missing out on firsts and lasts—but it's also shown how strong the McPherson College community really is. 

Julia Largent is assistant professor of communication at McPherson (Kan.) College. A version of this article first appeared in McPherson's newspaper *The Spectator*.

Alton Hipps

College of William and Mary, Virginia


In mid-March, I left campus for what I thought would just be a week of spring break. That day turned out to be my last day on campus. The changes have only continued since then. While graduating into the uncertain and constantly changing world of today is daunting, graduating any year is far from a straight shot. Every year graduates struggle to figure out the next steps in their lives. Every year graduates think they have a solid plan, just to watch it fall through for reasons outside of their control. Every year graduates take jobs they are overqualified for or uninterested in just to pay their bills. While the world has changed and is changing, a disappointment today doesn't forecast the future any more than a disappointment of a graduate in the past. Graduates today, just like in the past, must be resilient. While there is more out of our hands, and less seems to be predictable, and the impact seems larger than ever, we will find our way in the change, or even because of the change, just as people have done before.

Katelyn Carothers, Ph.D.

University of Notre Dame, Indiana

I graduated with my Ph.D. in biology via livestream, sitting on the couch in my apartment on a rainy Sunday afternoon. This was my third graduation ceremony since 2010, but it was certainly the first in a sweatshirt and bare feet. To me, it didn't quite feel real, just another part of the March-April-May blur of working/schooling from home, and I'm sure many members of the class of 2020 feel the same. Something I have had to work on is allowing some space for sadness, frustration, and anger—for milestones missed and plans upended. Please don't shove these feelings away because you feel selfish for having them; this is not the Grief Olympics for

only people in the worst situations. But I would also say to you, please don't wait until the "real" ceremony six months or a year from now to celebrate your accomplishments. You made it through a final semester full of challenges we could hardly have imagined

even a few months ago. Eat cake, have a Zoom party with your friends in your caps and gowns, send thank-you emails to your teachers (PLEASE thank your teachers!). Joy is not toilet paper—when it's in short supply, we have the ability to make our own. 

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Courtesy of Veritas

The art of authentic ministry

Lancaster's Veritas congregation builds creative community

by Walt Wiltschek

The word “*veritas*” is Latin for truth or authenticity. And that’s exactly what Veritas in Lancaster, Pa., strives for: full authenticity in following Jesus Christ as a community.

It might look a bit different than your average Church of the Brethren congregation: art gallery showings, coffee-houses, open mic music nights, and occasional mornings doing service projects out on the surrounding streets are all a regular part of ministry. Even worship looks different, with participants—including a significant number of young adults—sitting at round tables and talking about the sermon in the midst of the service.

That all was appealing to Dani Longenecker, who came to Veritas about three years ago and now serves as treasurer and as a member of the “Servants Team”—the church’s leadership team.

“I was drawn to the smaller faith community, the more casual worship service, and the time spent each week discussing the sermon and its application,” says Longenecker, who grew up in the Church of the Brethren but then had

attended a Mennonite church before moving to the city of Lancaster. “We felt like we were a good fit for the Veritas community and vice versa.”

Ryan Braught, Veritas’ church planter and founding pastor, says the vision for it started around 2005, when he was serving as pastor of youth ministries and nurture at another Church of the Brethren congregation. As he explored the shifts occurring in the culture, he thought that Anabaptist theology could “richly speak into the current cultural climate.”

He began experimenting with ideas in that congregational context, and a couple of years later he decided to do an actual church plant. Veritas officially launched in Atlantic Northeast District in September 2009, eventually moving to its present location at “Community Room on King” in downtown Lancaster. It achieved fellowship status in the denomination in 2016 and congregational status in 2019.

Braught says the central focus of Veritas essentially has remained the same since the beginning, with just the verbiage changing over the years: a “confluence of mission, discipleship, and community.” The current iteration of those

values on the church's website says its vision is "to be family, pursuing truth with honest expression, as we follow Jesus into the margins."

As Braught explains it: "We want to be a community that lives like an extended family. We want to be a community that lives in the ways of Jesus. And we want to be a community that lives as missionaries in the places where we live, work, and play."

One way Veritas achieves that last part is through its "Fifth Sunday Day of Service," which, as the name implies, occurs on any month that has five Sundays, about four times a year. On those days the worship group—which averages 30 to 40 people most Sundays—leaves the building and heads out onto the streets, doing service projects with various local community organizations.

"As part of the Church of the Brethren, one of Veritas' core values has always been—in some way, shape, or wording—service," Braught says. "We were looking for an entry ramp into serving together, and we thought the time that the most people gather together is on a Sunday morning. What if we took time on a Sunday morning, and instead of talking about the importance of serving—both individually and corporately—we actually got out of our seats and served together?"

Recent projects (before the COVID-19 pandemic set in) included partnering with a local transitional housing nonprofit, helping another organization use recycled clothing to make "infinity scarves" that are sold to raise funds to fight human trafficking in Thailand, doing prayer walks around the city, and picking up trash at a local park.

"People just show up on that fifth Sunday, decide which service opportunity they would like to participate in, and then get to work," Braught says. "It allows for our conversations to not just be about the head, but allows them to work their way down to our hands and feet, allowing us to be the hands and feet of Jesus. It turns our attention outward into



our Lancaster community and helps us from becoming too inward-looking and focused. And it provides avenues of service for people to get involved in at other times."

For example, he says, one of Veritas' young adults started serving at Lancaster's Transitional Living Center on a regular basis after helping there on one of the Fifth Sunday outings.


Meanwhile, the art and music programs—typically on Fridays—fill a creative niche and draw a variety of people to Veritas' urban space, which is also rented out to other groups to raise funds for the church. Veritas partners with the city for other special events, as well, such as the ArtWalk weekends that take place each spring and fall.

It's "a unique outreach of the Veritas community to the artistic community in Lancaster," Longenecker says. "We connect through a once-a-month art exhibit as well as a coffee house monthly. Artists are also invited to share their experiences and specifics about their exhibit during a Sunday morning worship time."

Some of the exhibits are designed to raise awareness around particular justice issues. Braught says past shows have examined environmental stewardship and themes related to immigrants and refugees. An artist group within Veritas also puts together two shows a year around specific themes.

As for the round tables in the worship space, Braught says it avoids the "spectatoritis" that can occur when people sit in fixed rows, encouraging people to talk and interact—part of what he calls a goal to have a "participatory culture" and "multi-voiced gatherings." After the sermon—delivered by Braught or others on a "teaching team" that takes turns for several weeks each quarter—everyone talks about how to apply the words of the message.

And members of the Veritas community sometimes share their own stories of seeking to follow Christ and serve others, going back to those values of community, discipleship, and mission. They sometimes call it "in, up, and out."

As it says on Veritas' website: "It is easy to talk about faith and never get around to doing anything. So the continuing call is to 'walk the talk'"—a rather authentic thing to do. 



Learn more about Veritas at www.veritas.community, www.facebook.com/VeritasPA, or www.twitter.com/VeritasPA.

This year MESSENGER is focusing its Bible studies on 10 words that rose to the top during the church-wide conversations toward a compelling vision. Watch for a new word each month.



Grace

by Denise Kettering-Lane

S*ola gratia, by grace alone*, was one of the leading Protestant cries of the 16th century. Martin Luther—and a cohort of other Protestant reformers—stressed that salvation does not come through one’s good works, but rather solely through God’s acts on behalf of human beings. This is grace, a free gift God offers to humanity.

Over the years, the debate around salvation by grace alone has often become a debate *between* grace and works, placing the two in opposition to one another. We choose to believe in one of two perspectives: either a person experiences salvation through God’s grace or through the good works that she does. But which is true? In practical terms, it becomes an either/or conversation.

This Reformation-era conversation still echoes today, where some Christians stress God’s grace so strongly that

they resist any call to do good works out of the fear that we deceive ourselves into thinking we’re saved by these good works and the credit we’re racking up before God. Still other Christians—and I would hazard that many Brethren might be more likely to fall into this camp—so strongly stress a particular manner of living that we fail to recognize our fundamental dependence on God’s unmerited grace. Both groups risk falling into a ditch on either side of the narrow way, overlooking a vital element of the Christian life. Perhaps, though, this isn’t a question of balance, but of order—Christ is Savior first and then he is Lord. But he must be both. One flows into the other.

Ephesians 2:4-10 puts salvation, grace, and good works in conversation with each other. In Ephesians, Paul is clear that God has blessed both Gentiles and Jews alike and is

JUST AS GOD MAKES EACH OF US BELIEVERS INTO BEAUTIFUL NEW PIECES OF ART, WORTHY OF ANY GALLERY OR MUSEUM, WE ARE TO SHOW THAT BEAUTY TO THE WORLD. WE ARE TO EXHIBIT GRACIOUSNESS TO OTHERS.

attempting to address the concerns of both groups. In this early part of Ephesians, Paul stresses that those who were once dead in sin are now made alive in Christ. Animated by grace, God enables us, as new creations, to do good works. Grace not only implies forgiveness for sins but also re-creates humanity into something new in the model of Christ.

Verses 1-3 of the chapter highlight the problematic human condition. In short, humans prior to grace live in rebellion against God, focusing only on worldly concerns and giving in to our own desires. In verse 4, however, Paul emphasizes that God intervened in the situation to reverse this living death and make believers alive in Christ. The verse begins with the words “But God . . .,” highlighting God’s loving and merciful intervention on behalf of the believers. God is the active subject of the sentence. Love is the basis of God’s proffered grace and mercy.

God’s intervention is all about giving life, as highlighted in verse 5, when the new life in Christ and the experience of grace connect to Christ’s resurrection. Interestingly, there is no mention of dying with Christ in this passage, but rather a focus on new life and what that new life will be like for the believer. What God did in Christ in his resurrection is what God does for all believers by raising them with Christ. This act of liberation serves as an encouragement amid the struggle to live the life of faith.

The climax of the passage comes in verses 8-10, highlighting the idea of salvation by grace and the purpose of salvation. Those who were once dead are now alive. Unlike other Pauline letters, here Paul does not talk about salvation as justification or as a forensic/penal event. Instead, the emphasis is on grace: a free gift God bestows upon us. Salvation is liberation from sinful oppression—external and internal—in the here and now. God’s faithfulness rescues us who previously only knew death; thus salvation by grace places the impetus on God. God is the actor. God gives the gift—the grace—to humanity, not as a result of our own initiative or works. Humans, in their living death of sin, could not do works, but God acted, rich in liberating love.


Finally, in verse 10, we see the outcome of this act on God’s part: the saved are a product of God’s creative work through Christ. Salvation re-creates humanity into a work of art. And what art, in turn, do these newly created believers produce? Good works. Let’s be clear, however, that these works are not simply good deeds or virtuous exhibitions, but rather they are things we do to build up the body of

Christ and transform the darkness of this world into light. The good works are God’s gift, as well; they are the grace that flows through the human who experiences salvation. They are God’s works through us. God gets the credit for the good works, not the person who performs them. Not to do good works is a rejection of God’s re-creative power.

So what does this mean in the age of pandemic? This question has been on my mind as I have sat in my home over the past few months. In an atmosphere within both church and society where we are often tempted to give into either/or thinking—grace or works—this passage invites us into a both/and framework. As I have watched friends on social media tear each other apart because of disagreements; as I have watched care for the unemployed pitted against care for the dying; as I have watched the challenges faced by small churches and large, I have wondered what it means to embrace God’s grace joyfully with abandon and also to embrace others graciously: to receive love and to then love others.

It seems to me the heart of this passage is that grace, ultimately, is God’s freely given gift, so that we might give of ourselves in ways that mirror God’s own liberating and life-giving love. Just as God makes each of us believers into beautiful new pieces of art, worthy of any gallery or museum, we are to show that beauty to the world. We are to exhibit graciousness to others.

In a world that seems to be short of grace these days—as tempers flare, as we wrestle with issues of economic instability, as we mourn the loss of so many lives in such a short period—how can we be gracious? How can we openly exhibit the grace that God has freely offered and show that beauty to the world? Perhaps it is through extending a life-giving word by phoning a neighbor who can’t leave home right now. Maybe it is through sewing a mask to protect others, or through growing a garden to show God’s bounty. Could it also be voicing our legitimate concerns about racial inequality, injustices that the pandemic has further exposed?

Good works are not the things we do that make us look good, and they are certainly not what earn us salvation. But they do display in both loud and quiet ways how God is creating new life in and among us. How is God’s grace creating new life for you? 

Denise Kettering-Lane is associate professor of Brethren Studies and director of the M.A. program at Bethany Theological Seminary in Richmond, Ind.

Paying it forward

by Frances Townsend

Barn raisings don't happen in our neck of the woods much anymore, but it is not unusual to find folks together up on someone's roof, helping re-shingle. Barry Barto says, "People come out of the woodwork. Some of them can't get on the roof but they'll volunteer to throw old shingles into the trailer, or come to give advice."

Barto has a circle of friends he has counted on for mutual aid for decades. "It's never a case of 'You owe me,'" he says. "Everybody thinks they're behind. The help received always feels more valuable than the help given." Barto is a retired special education teacher who belongs to Onekama (Mich.) Church of the Brethren. His farm produces sheep, maple syrup, and wild deer.

Early spring, when the snow is still knee deep but temperatures cycle above and below freezing, is syrup time. Barto makes about 40 gallons a year, running a hundred sap buckets. Friends help feed the fire in the syrup shack or help collect the sap or allow him to tap their trees. At the end of the season, they are rewarded with a couple of jars of syrup.

Barto also works with friends to butcher. Joe Wave, retired pastor of Marilla Church of the Brethren, called him when pork producers downstate were selling market hogs very cheaply because COVID-19 closed down processing plants. So he got four, depending on Barto and his stock trailer to bring them up to the farm. Barto and Wave's family did a lot of pro-

cessing work that weekend and now everyone has full freezers.


Close to the house Barto and his wife live in is the original farmhouse. For over 20 years it was rented by another member of the congregation. When she had to move to assisted living, she worried about how she would clean the house to leave it ready for the next renters. Members of the church stepped in. We had a big work bee, happy to help her, the Bartos, and the new renters—a young family who are connected to the congregation.

Many shared jobs are tedious and energy consuming. However, the "Tom Sawyer effect" seems to hold, that it is more fun to help someone else with their difficult project than it is to do your own. Barto notes how shared projects bring people together in different ways. "When you receive help from people, it is so much easier to be tolerant of other people's views."

Shared projects also can enfold new people into the community. For example, some congregations have a person or a small group who are the "gatekeepers" of the church kitchen—but when they let others help in the kitchen it becomes a way to let people know they are now "family" and not just guests.

For Barto, that means thinking about his informal network and deliberately inviting others in. He reminded me that this extends beyond physical labor. Caring for the dying is another sort of labor, in which people show up, bring food, offer to run errands, and do whatever they can to help.

Mutual aid is a cornerstone of the simple life in any setting. Unfortunately, it is going by the wayside, in part because of technology and because we are wealthier. In the old days, many people were needed to raise heavy barn beams into place but now power equipment does that job. Other projects can be hired out. But as the work gets done a different way, we don't depend on our friends and much is lost.

"The 'paying forward' mentality—that's what you want your kids to see," says Barto. When we think of the children, we remember the future. Everything we do is building the world to come. When we do the work together, we build a better world. 

Frances Townsend is a pastor in Michigan serving Onekama Church of the Brethren and Marilla Church of the Brethren.



SHARED PROJECTS ALSO CAN ENFOLD NEW PEOPLE INTO THE COMMUNITY....
A WAY TO LET PEOPLE KNOW THEY ARE NOW "FAMILY" AND NOT JUST GUESTS.

Giving to denominational ministries falls behind

As of the end of April, giving to Church of the Brethren denominational ministries had fallen short of giving during the same months in 2019. The shortfall was significant, amounting to more than \$320,000.

Congregational giving for the first four months of 2020 totaled \$816,761, falling short of last year by \$220,031. Individual giving totaled \$306,961, behind by \$103,568.

The **core ministries fund**, which supports many fundamental areas of work and is considered crucial to denominational program, saw giving fall \$113,000 behind last year at the same time. Congregational giving totaled \$520,096, behind by \$93,036, and individual giving fell behind by \$20,087.

The **Emergency Disaster Fund** also

received less in donations as of April, totaling \$259,747 but down \$111,071 from 2019.

Donations to the **Global Food Initiative** totaled \$36,690 as of April, down \$12,663 from 2019.

The denomination's self-funding ministries also lost income because of the pandemic. As of April, **Brethren Press's** curriculum sales were down and gross sales were under budget by almost \$40,000. The **Annual Conference Office**, following the cancellation of the 2020 Conference, was in process of refunding registration fees and anticipated a significant deficit. **Material Resources** stopped operating for a time at the start of the pandemic and saw a significant decline in income, resulting in a net deficit of \$72,161 as of April.

EDF directs grants to congregations for COVID-19 work

Brethren Disaster Ministries has directed a first round of grants from the Emergency Disaster Fund to congregations doing pandemic-related humanitarian work, among other grants.

The COVID-19 Pandemic Grants program began in late April. Fourteen grants totaling \$58,100 were given to congregations across the US. An allocation of \$75,000 has been made for a second round.

Other grants:

- \$65,000 finances Brethren Disaster Ministries tornado rebuilding in the area of Dayton, Ohio.
- \$20,000 supports the coronavirus response of Church World Service.
- \$10,000 has been given to Bittersweet Ministries for feeding programs in Mexico.
- \$8,000 supports the Rwandan Church of the Brethren aid for vulnerable families.

On Earth Peace joins SCN, Leadership Team responds

During the On Earth Peace board meetings held April 2-4 via Zoom, it announced a decision to join the Supportive Communities Network (SCN) of the Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests. The April meetings also included conversation about strategic directions and the On Earth Peace commitment to anti-racism.

The Church of the Brethren Leadership Team responded May 18 with a statement noting the decision to join SCN raised polity questions. "Although On Earth Peace is a separately incorporated agency and can therefore make decisions apart from the discernment of Annual Conference, On Earth Peace's decision to join the Supportive Communities Network conflicts with On Earth Peace's official agreement to serve as an Annual Conference agency," the statement said, in part.

"When an Annual Conference agency

joins a special interest group that promotes and acts outside the agreements discerned by Annual Conference . . . it places itself over and against the decisions of the Annual Conference and no longer represents the whole of the church. . . . The Leadership Team believes that On Earth Peace's decision is of sufficient consequence to require On Earth Peace to enter into intentional, serious, prayerful engagement with the Standing Committee and the delegate body of Annual Conference. The Leadership Team believes an outcome of that engagement should be a determination of On Earth Peace's Annual Conference agency status."

The Leadership Team includes general secretary David A. Steele; Annual Conference moderator Paul Munday, moderator-elect David Sollenberger, secretary James M. Beckwith; and Cynthia S. Sanders representing the Council of District Executives.



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Seminary and academy celebrate graduates

Thirteen graduates of Bethany Seminary received diplomas this year. Bethany canceled in-person commencement but each graduate received a box with their diploma and celebratory gifts. Graduates also received a video greeting and personalized blessing from president Jeff Carter and dean Steve Schweitzer.



The Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership announced that 10 students completed their ministry training program. The six receiving certificates from Seminario Bíblico Anabautista Hispano de la Iglesia de Los Hermanos represent the first graduating class from SeBAH-COB. All academy graduates will receive certificates during celebrations in their districts.

Bethany's graduates:

Master of Divinity: John Andrew Fillmore, Caldwell, Idaho, with honors in Biblical Studies, Ministry Studies, and Theological Studies; Susan K. Liller, New Carlisle, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Thomas Michael McMullin, Minburn, Iowa; Katherine Lynn Polzin, Defiance, Ohio, with honors in Ministry Studies; Raul Gregorio Rivera Arroyo, Vega Baja, P.R., and Kettering, Ohio; Jack Richard Roegner, Richmond, Ind.; M. Elizabeth Ullery Swenson, Olympia, Wash.

Master of Arts: Duane Edwin Crumrine, Martinsburg, Pa.; Paul Bala Samura, Freetown, Sierra Leone.

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

The academy graduates:

Training in Ministry: Robert Eugene Hollenberg, Northern Indiana District; Kristie D. Prejean, Southern Plains District; Ernest B. Shoemaker, Virlina District; Mike Trott, Mid-Atlantic District

SeBAH-COB: Mayra Calix, Atlantic Northeast District; Nertha Castro, Atlantic Northeast District; Egda Franco, Atlantic Northeast District; Arlyn Morales, Atlantic Northeast District; Aida Sanchez, Atlantic Southeast District; Rebeca Zapata, Pacific Southwest District

Personnel notes

Jeanne Davies started June 1 as executive director of the Anabaptist Disabilities Network, following Eldon Stoltzfus' resignation for health reasons. Davies had been the ADN program director. An ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren, she has been pastor of Parables Community, West Dundee, Ill.

Pauline Liu began May 18 as orientation assistant for Brethren Volunteer Service, working for three months to help with summer orientation. She is a former BVS volunteer and a master's degree student at Northern Arizona University.

BVS orientation goes virtual

Brethren Volunteer Service has transitioned summer orientation to a virtual event on July 26–Aug. 7. Instead of the usual three-week, in-person orientation, Unit 325 will have a two-week virtual orientation while volunteers are quarantined after arriving at their projects. BVS staff will work ahead of orientation to help volunteers discern their project placements.

Retirement communities suffer COVID-19 outbreaks

At least three Church of the Brethren-related retirement communities have suffered COVID-19 outbreaks as of mid-June:

Brethren Village in Lititz, Pa., had an outbreak among residents and staff in April and early May. On May 7, the community reported the final death in the outbreak that claimed seven lives among residents in skilled nursing memory support. A total of 13 residents and 11 staff contracted the disease. In online statements the community expressed

sympathy to families who lost loved ones, and to the staff who cared for residents "as they would their own family."

Peter Becker Community in Harleysville, Pa., dealt with an outbreak that started April 21, when a first case was diagnosed in a staff member in skilled nursing. The outbreak affected 39 residents and 10 staff, and several residents died. The last death was reported May 26. Expressing sympathy to the families of those who died, the community reported stringent protocols including

placing affected staff in quarantine at home, notifying public health officials, following procedures recommended by the CDC, establishing an isolation wing for residents with COVID-19, and twice testing all residents in skilled nursing.

Cross Keys Village in New Oxford, Pa., started testing all residents and staff in its Health Care Center on May 18. As of May 22, three residents and six staff tested positive but none showed symptoms. The community announced it would continue testing as needed.



Manchester's residential campus awaits the return of students and colleagues to begin the Fall 2020 semester.

Manchester turns challenges into opportunities

When COVID-19 swept the country amid a bustling spring semester, Manchester University sprang into action and turned difficult decisions into student-centered opportunities – some unprecedented – addressing the physical, as well as financial health of MU families affected by the pandemic.

- For the well-being of the MU community, our campuses temporarily closed while students and colleagues adjusted to remote environments. Professors nimbly adapted to a new competency – online delivery of all courses.
- Students were refunded for room and board for the remainder of the semester – a move some other colleges and universities deemed to be too costly.
- Those who could not go home still had a place to stay, and the campus food pantry stepped up its game with an online shopping list and personal deliveries.
- To help remove barriers for new students to enroll at Manchester, our \$250 enrollment deposit was waived. Those who already paid would receive refunds.
- As a way to continually invest in our students, we introduced the Spartan 2020 Response, a bold initiative that covers tuition for incoming Indiana students from families that make \$65,000 per year or less.
- Current students got federal money set aside to help them in these difficult times, and Manchester has set up its own fund to help those who might otherwise fall through the cracks.

Like everyone, we're adapting to a "new normal" as we prepare to reopen in the fall. But putting students first – and living by our mission to graduate students who lead principled, productive and compassionate lives – has always been normal at Manchester.



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BCA Study Abroad
www.bcastudyabroad.org

Blessed to repeat Peter's vision

I want to commend On Earth Peace for joining the Supportive Communities Network of the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and

Transgender Interests. I fully support this as the right thing to do and a natural progression in their search for effective ways to fulfill their mission to the church.

If this fuels strong protest against On Earth Peace, we ought not be sur-

prised. Old prejudices and deep-seated fears are hard to recognize and deal with, especially when they are laced with proof-texts from scripture. Outrage against challenges to accepted social and religious norms are nothing new, going back at least to Galileo and Copernicus, and more recently to witch hunts and "monkey" trials.

Paul faced that when in his letter to the church in Galatia he wrote his harsh reprimand against those who insisted on maintaining the old covenant's requirement of circumcision for converts to Christianity. We sometimes forget that there was this undercurrent of theological controversy over baptizing non-Jewish converts without first circumcising them, which Paul regarded as a threat to the integrity of the gospel.

It's my conviction that the church in our time has been "blessed" with a repeat of Peter's vision of the sheet dropped down from heaven and the voice speaking again loud and clear: "What God has created, let no one regard as unclean." So I regard On Earth Peace as providing leadership to our church somewhat like that of the apostles at the Jerusalem Church Conference, where they presented the case for including gentiles in the Christian fellowship. They reminded the assembly that "we believe and are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they are . . . so if God makes no difference between us and them, why should we?" (Acts 15:6-11).

Horace Huse
Toledo, Ohio

How can we follow the Bible?

Our own On Earth Peace has joined the Supportive Communities Network. How is it that On Earth Peace could even consider this action? It goes against the teachings of the holy Bible. The Bible states that we should accept all into our fellowship. It puts us in the lead role of working with those who feel different than us. It says that we should lead these persons, not fall down and join them. How can we find common ground for the Church of the Brethren and follow the Bible when these actions take place?

Leroy M. Keeney
York, Pa.

Advertisement

An Open Letter to Our Friends –

We are living in strange times. An often repeated phrase in the last few months. We now know that we will not have the opportunity to meet you at our Annual Conference booth and chat about how you can be better prepared to participate in "*God's Adventurous Future*", the 2020 conference theme. Therefore, we would like to share more about *JS Replogle & Associates LLC*, and try to connect with you in other ways. Were you aware that:

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- ◆ Using technology, we have fewer overhead expenses, serve clients in 10 states and have the ability to assist nearly anyone?
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- ◆ We are inspired by our *fiduciary* responsibilities to our clients and receive no income or soft-dollar support from other agencies or organizations?
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As we, together, make our way through these "strange times" we hope that you and your loved ones are staying safe and protected. We encourage you to learn more about *JS Replogle & Associates LLC* and stay informed about current investment strategies by requesting one of our free newsletters. Call us or visit our website. Thank you, in advance, for making the decision to be better informed and for your trust and confidence in us.



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Outstanding

Wendy McFadden's "From the Publisher" columns are always interesting, but the most recent was outstanding and should be shared beyond the MESSENGER. In particular, she wrote: "Staying safe in a pandemic is difficult. It is even harder to rid ourselves of the additional deadly viruses of racism and poverty."

Amen, sister. Well done.

Carol Davis
Canton, Ill.

health. We will have to study his work to see where it can help our Bruderhof farms and gardens on which we depend much more in these days to produce our own food and food for local food banks.

What also inspired this letter is Chet Thomas' article and his great dedication to serving and helping especially the unemployed and uneducated youth at Project Global Village in Honduras. I am very sad that US aid has been cut to this and so many other projects and

international areas. We will certainly carry this special ministry in our prayers at the Bruderhof, and hope to help as our Bruderhof economy improves. Some of our young people have served in various ministries in Central America and on the Texas border at refugee centers, but we hope we can do much more as time goes on.

We pray for change and better and more peaceful times.

Martin Johnson
Maple Ridge Bruderhof, N.Y.

Inspired

Thank you for your April issue with many encouraging articles. What got my interest was the fascinating description of Richard Petcher's work in developing Petcher Seeds, that will improve soils and animal

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Remembering Ocean Grove

I graduated from high school in 1965 and was chosen by Manchester Church of the Brethren to be one of our delegates to the 1965 Ocean Grove conference. In the May MESSENGER there are pictures of the Ocean Grove Conference Center with an American flag between the pipes of the organ. I have no recollection of a flag in 1965 so am curious

what years those pictures represent. I can't imagine the Brethren having a conference with an American flag front and center.

The other item that stands out to me is the slogan "Win Men to Christ" in the picture on page 16. I can't imagine that phrase, ignoring half the world's population, being used today.

John Hartsough
North Manchester, Ind.

Omission

Thanks for the very nice article in the March MESSENGER about Brethren Service in Europe. However, you forgot to mention Dale Ott, who served for a long time as the director of the program. He still lives in Geneva, Switzerland.

Leanne Ford
Wenatchee, Wash.

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

Pobst, Anna Pauline, 105, North Manchester, Ind., May 9
Zollinger, Alice, 100, Virden, Ill., Dec. 17

New members

Germantown Brick, Rocky Mount, Va.: Kerri Dillon
Highland Avenue, Elgin, Ill.: Carroll Bailey
Lancaster, Pa.: Phyllis Whitacre
Valley Pike, Maurertown, Va.: Cassandra Lichliter, Karen Thorpe, Tony Thorpe, Debbie Wakeman, Greg Wakeman, Tyler Wakeman, Zach Wakeman, Lisa Wells

Wedding anniversaries

Bittinger, Stanley and Vivian, Kingsville, Texas, 71
Foust, Richard and Erma, Union, Ohio, 65
Gibble, H. Lamar and Nancy Ann, Saint Charles, Ill., 67
Groves, Stanley and Lucille Sines, Kingsville, Md., 65
Humes, Jerry and Nancy, Elgin, Ill., 60
Jasper, Richard and Gloria, Westminster, Md., 50

Johansen, Robert and Ruthann, Granger, Ind., 55
Kidwell, James and Esther, Knoxville, Md., 55
Lehman, Jim and Peg, Elgin, Ill., 50
Miller, Guy and Faye, New Windsor, Md., 60
Peffley, Joe and Judi, Lancaster, Pa., 50
Roush, Marvin and Judy, Elkhart, Ind., 50
Stone, Clyde and Geraldine, Havana, Ill., 55
Warrenfeltz, Bruce and Betsy, Boonsboro, Md., 50
Weller, Robert and Kay, Palmyra, Ill., 50

Deaths

Bantz, Floyd Eugene, 94, Lititz, Pa., May 12
Bauserman, Fred P., 89, Maurertown, Va., April 5
Blake, Robert P., 72, Elgin, Ill., May 2
Bookhamer, Sharon M. Sankey, 69, Gordonville, Pa., Feb. 29
Breeden, Winford Eugene (Wimpy), 87, Virginia Beach, Va., May 13
Brenner, Donald, 89, Lititz, Pa., May 20
Brown, Clifford E., 85, Keyser, W.Va., April 8

Brown, Shirley A. Moon, 80, Huntington, Ind., April 10
Burner, John, 80, Elgin, Ill., April 15
Cain, Evan R., 64, Virden, Ill., Oct. 29
Clemens, Gladys Ziegler, 91, Columbia, Pa., April 6
Draper, Lloyd E., 84, Grundy Center, Iowa, June 2
Driver, Verlena Kessler, 84, Fort Wayne, Ind., Aug. 29, 2019
Emrick, Sharon Hornish, 73, Williamston, Mich., March 29
Eppley, Shirley Fern Miller, 92, Sipesville, Pa., April 15
Fillmore, Norma Elva Deal, 98, Live Oak, Calif., May 17
Gemberling, Janet L. Coulter, 81, Aberdeen, Md., Aug. 3, 2019
Gianato, Joseph R., 74, Lancaster, Pa., May 4
Graham, Galen E., 96, Lititz, Pa., April 13
Grisso, Timothy Michael, 57, Jacksonville, Fla., April 29
Haynes, Peter L., 64, Glen Arm, Md., May 6
Holsinger, Gladys Elizabeth McNall, 101, Wheaton, Md., April 26
Holsopple, Mary Etta Stinebaugh, 97, Goshen, Ind., May 13
Hoover, Ronald Dean, 79, Cambridge City, Ind., April 9
Kline, Shirley A. Lancaster, 84, Myerstown, Pa., April 22
Lindeman, Doris Hauger, 85, Somerset, Pa.,

March 31
Little, Rita Sue Carr, 85, Westminster, Md., May 6
Lyle, Lois Ann Lisk, 88, Thornville, Ohio, March 18
Martin, Ralph H., 87, Manheim, Pa., April 22
Meyer, Virginia L. Hileman, 79, Geneva, Ill., Aug. 13, 2019
Miller, Carol Neighbors, 89, Elgin, Ill., July 8, 2019
Miller, Clarence Leon, 88, Elgin, Ill., Sept. 12
Miller, Mary Ann Brashear, 83, Frederick, Md., Feb. 17
Minshall, Virginia Mae Davis, 92, Keyser, W.Va., Feb. 29
Morgan, Ruth Madeline Letchford, 94, Salem, Va., May 26
Mullins, James Darrell, 89, Manassas, Va., Jan. 22
Peters, June Marie Gillam, 79, Alexandria, Pa., March 20
Pohlhaus, Karl Alfred, 81, Glendale, Ariz., April 10
Reischauer, David M., 67, Virden, Ill., Aug. 21, 2019
Rice, Grace Virginia Yeager, 92, New Market, Md., March 11
Scharfenberg, Charles O., 95, Greenfield, Ill., Sept. 9
Shepler, Wilbur LeRoy, 98, Wabash, Ind., Sept. 28
Shidler, Treva F. Lechlitter, 97, Goshen, Ind., Feb. 4
Shull, Johnny William, 89, Bridgewater, Va., April 18
Skelton, Kathreen R., 87, Auburn, Ill., Sept. 1
Skinner, Vernon Ray III, 76, Brook Park, Ohio, April 17

Stoner, Virginia A. Wolfe, 98, Hampstead, Md., Feb. 29
Umble, Mabel E., 92, Lancaster, Pa., April 30
Walker, E. Jean Shockey, 89, Somerset, Pa., April 20
Wambold, Claude, 81, Perkiomenville, Pa., March 21
Wampler, Josephine Spangler, 89, Bridgewater, Va., May 1
Watkins, Gene R., 90, Plymouth, Ind., May 1
Weaver, Terry Lee, 78, Lititz, Pa., May 21
White, Gordon Osler, 84, Luray, Va. and Lorida, Fla., April 26
Zelmer, James E., 77, Palmyra, Ill., May 19, 2019

Commissioned

Lucien, Eliezer, Atl. S. E. Dist. (West Palm Beach Haitian Fellowship, Lake Park, Fla.), May 2

Licensed

Jones, George, Southeastern Dist. (Pleasant Hill, Blountville, Tenn.), May 24

Placements

Good, Jason, pastor, Swatara Hill, Middletown, Pa., April 20
Lucien, Eliezer, pastor, West Palm Beach Haitian Fellowship, Lake Park, Fla., May 2
Wink, Bill, from pastor, Swatara Hill, Middletown, Pa., to pastor, Richland, Pa., April 20

TURNINGPOINTS

Making a difference together

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many (1 Corinthians 12:12, 14 NIV).

The times in which we are living call us to ask: What does the Lord require of us? Thankfully, we do not have to do it alone.

For much of 2020, a group of people from churches across the denomination has been meeting every week to read and discuss the book *Everyday*



LADONNA NKOSI

Ubuntu: Living Better Together the African Way, by Mungi Ngomane. Granddaughter of the Nobel Peace Prize winner Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and peace activist in her own right, Ngomane shares 14 life lessons that the African principle of *ubuntu* brings to everyday life.

Ubuntu is a Zulu, Xhosa, and Kinyarwanda word that means “I am because you are,” “I am because

we are,” and “people are people *through* others.”

“Put Yourself in the Shoes of Others,” “See the Wider Perspective,” “Learn to Listen So You Can Hear,” “Have Dignity and Respect for Yourself and Others,” and “Seek Out Ways to Connect” are just a few of the discussion topics. Each week, we gather around scripture and share in conversation and listening together.

Michaela Alphonse, pastor of Miami (Fla.) First Church of the Brethren, says, “The book discussion group has created a space to talk about race and justice, what it means to live in an interdependent society, and what it looks like to be in relationship with one another.”

Carolyn Fitzkee from Lancaster (Pa.) Church of the Brethren says, “It was easy to connect with as an Anabaptist. The meaning of *ubuntu*—I am only because you are—seems evident in the strong bonds of fellowship as Brethren. It’s the ‘together’ part of our tagline (peacefully, simply, *together*).”

Scripture reminds us that we are the body of Christ with many members. The dual pandemics of COVID-19 and the

violence of racism call us to faithfully act and bear witness, and we all have a part to play.

So what is your part? Here’s what congregations have been doing:

La Verne (Calif.) Church of the Brethren issued a statement on racial justice. Referring to the murders of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, the congregation “call[s] upon the churches of the Brethren denomination to stand with us to jointly condemn these acts and call out racial injustice in their communities.”

Harrisburg (Pa.) First Church of the Brethren issued a Black Lives Matter statement, saying,


“As followers of Jesus we stand in solidarity with our black brothers and sisters enduring racial violence and systemic oppression. We denounce anti-black racism resulting in police brutality, mass incarceration, and unjust legal systems that disproportionately harm black and brown people.” As a community, they have committed as a first step to study Jemar Tisby’s *The Color of Compromise* video series.

Virlina District and Central Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va., are hosting a weekly book study of *The Color of Compromise*.

What does the Lord require of us? What does the Lord require of you?

There is room for all of us to do our part. Commit to healing racism as a church. Attend a book study and trainings. Undoing racism includes our conversations with family, church, and community members. Let us work together so that our churches and communities are safe places for all to live.

We don’t have to do it all. We don’t have to do it alone. But each one, each church, each community, each family, and our denomination—let us all do our part.

If a house is on fire, is it ours to watch from the sidelines and comment on the nature of the fire? Or should we do whatever we can to put the fire out? In these powerful days, let us make a difference together. Let us reach out to one another, connect, and help to heal our nation and our communities. Together with Jesus, nothing is impossible. 

LaDonna Nkosi is director of Intercultural Ministries for the Church of the Brethren.

THE MEANING OF UBUNTU—I AM ONLY BECAUSE YOU ARE—SEEMS EVIDENT IN THE STRONG BONDS OF FELLOWSHIP AS BRETHREN. IT’S THE “TOGETHER” PART OF OUR TAGLINE (PEACEFULLY, SIMPLY, TOGETHER).

Suggested date: September 13

Together: Living unto the Lord

“So then, each of us
will give an account
of ourselves to God.”

~Romans 14:12, NIV

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



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