

CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

MESSENGER

OCTOBER 2024 WWW.BRETHREN.ORG



Minga solidarity
in Ecuador

Advent Offering suggested date: December 15



Intercultural Ministries



Death Row Support Project



Peacebuilding and Policy



Brethren Volunteer Service

Photos by Chris Brumbaugh-Cayford and Donna Parcell



A voice of hope

*And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord
and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior."
~Luke 1:46-47*

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CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN MESSENGER

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on the cover

At-large editor Walt Wiltschek traveled to Ecuador at the same time as the FaithX group featured on p. 8. His journey took him to the rain forest, where he captured this image of a fragrant orchid vining through the trees. Reflecting on their experience and his, and the beauty of minga solidarity, he thought of these words from Ralph Waldo Emerson: "Happiness is a perfume you cannot pour on others without getting a few drops on yourself." Photo by Walt Wiltschek.

Does your congregation have a unique way to celebrate Christmas?

MESSENGER wants to highlight the variety of cultures across the Church of the Brethren, and welcomes your Christmas story. Submit high-resolution digital photos and brief article to messenger@brethren.org. Be sure to include your name, email address, phone number, and congregation. The deadline for submissions is the first week of October.

Circle of Hope

Circle of Hope is hard to read—but harder to put down.

This new book profiles the unraveling of Circle of Hope, a radical evangelical church in the Philadelphia area. The author, Pulitzer Prize-winning Eliza Griswold, got permission in 2019 to become embedded in the daily lives of the four pastors, wanting to know more about this kind of evangelical—ones very different from the evangelicals who typically make the news.



WENDY MCFADDEN
PUBLISHER

Then 2020 hit. The thriving church—which consisted of four congregations, each pastored by one member of the four-member pastoral team—suffered existentially from a series of challenges that came to a head that year: the pandemic, race, whether to be open and affirming, and “founder’s syndrome.”

Several facets of this story were especially fascinating for me: I had met one of the pastors two years ago at an Anabaptist conference. Like some of the pastors, I had grown up in the evangelical world, and know well the language, personalities, and theology that they came from. And, because Circle of Hope was a congregation in the Brethren in Christ denomination, the emphasis on Anabaptist beliefs and history were deeply familiar.

The author does confuse the Brethren in Christ with the Church of the Brethren and our Schwarzenau siblings, mistakenly attributing to them our American beginnings at the Wissahickon Creek in Germantown, Pa., on Christmas Day in 1723. The Brethren in Christ came into being several decades later—about 1780.

But that imprecision doesn’t make less true the rest of the story, which is recounted in real time. Through the author, the reader sits in on countless tense Zoom meetings, in-person gatherings, and email arguments. The book covers the sad and messy three-year dissolution of this group of gifted pastors, who seemed to have everything needed to lead an exceptional church.

It turns out that thinking of their church as exceptional was one of the pitfalls. They were just as human as other followers of Jesus, and their congregations just as vulnerable in the storms of the last few years.

Circle of Hope grappled painfully with three things that are difficult in the Church of the Brethren as well: How to disagree while still valuing collective decision-making. How to navigate the identities of race and sex. And how to open the circle.

That is, when should the comfort of a circle be broken open? When does something that looks like death become the birthing of a new thing?

In an eloquent benediction for the book, Griswold speaks of the “third way” that Anabaptists treasure, and she concludes that God’s third way is mercy.

Wendy McFadden

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“Give me the wisdom and knowledge to lead them properly, for who could possibly govern this great people of yours?” —2 Chronicles 1:10, NLT

“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.” —Martin Luther King Jr.

“The ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all.” —John F. Kennedy

“We do not have government by the majority. We have government by the majority who participate.”

—Thomas Jefferson

“Somewhere inside of all of us is the power to change the world.” —author Roald Dahl

“Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.” —author and educator Booker T. Washington, in *Up from Slavery*

BY THE NUMBERS

8,000

Approximate number of local artisans and farmers with which SERRV International works as it sells fair trade handicrafts to benefit these partners. Read more about SERRV starting on page 6.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

October is Clergy Appreciation Month.

The second Sunday of the month is Clergy/Pastor Appreciation Day. The observance was partially created—or at least popularized—by Hallmark more than three decades ago, in 1992. Whenever you do it, take a moment to thank your pastor!

MANY HAPPY RETURNS

In the puzzle below, can you find these words associated with Election Day? Answers can be horizontal, vertical, or diagonal, forward or backward.

ELECTION	VOTE	PRECINCT	REPRESENT	DEMOCRACY	PRESIDENT						
SENATOR	POLL	RALLY	BALLOT	CAST	CANDIDATE	CAMPAIGN	OFFICE				
R	D	E	C	A	N	D	I	D	A	T	E
P	Y	E	A	U	O	B	V	L	I	C	A
T	M	L	M	E	I	O	Y	R	L	R	T
N	C	I	P	O	T	A	N	L	N	O	V
E	O	N	A	E	C	A	S	T	L	T	P
D	E	V	I	C	E	R	M	L	B	A	E
I	R	B	G	C	L	O	A	O	T	N	R
S	H	D	N	Y	E	B	A	C	T	E	N
E	V	E	A	D	T	R	W	O	Y	S	R
R	T	N	E	S	E	R	P	E	R	K	F
P	O	U	O	F	F	I	C	E	R	G	R

DID YOU KNOW?

No US presidents have come from the Church of the Brethren or the Mennonite Church, probably in part due to those traditions keeping an intentional distance from politics in their earlier centuries. There have, however, been two presidents from another of the historic peace church traditions: the Quakers or Friends. Herbert Hoover and Richard M. Nixon both identified as Quakers. Hoover had strong roots in the Quaker church but rarely attended as an adult. Nixon’s mother was a Quaker, and his father became a member. He likewise maintained membership as an adult but seldom attended worship. Episcopalians and Presbyterians have been represented most often in the White House.



Ollie Atkins

'Anything kitchen' and bedding

Crest Manor Church of the Brethren in South Bend, Ind., recently donated various household and kitchen items and bedding to the Center for the Homeless. The center had shared of their desperate need for “anything kitchen” and bedding. The center’s mission is to assist those transitioning from “homeless” to their own apartment or other home.



The church family at Crest Manor was asked to go through their kitchens and determine what items they have duplicates of or may no longer use. Garage sales were another great source of such items. The church collected a very large assortment including several

sets of dishes and pots and pans, plus numerous other kitchen items, along with a big supply of sheets, blankets, and pillows. Tossing in a few more pieces of furniture, the Center for the Homeless van was filled—almost beyond capacity.

In another recent effort, women at Crest Manor took up a project making little dresses for girls in Africa. Meeting weekly for a couple of months, the women made 58 dresses to be shipped to Malawi for distribution to girls in different local communities, through a nonprofit organization.

“It was a fun project which required minimal sewing with plenty of fellowship!” said a note to MESSENGER. No two dresses were exactly alike, and a variety of sizes were assembled, many with fabric that had been set aside for “never gotten around to” projects.

ANNIVERSARIES

■ **Summit Church of the Brethren** in Bridgewater, Va., celebrated its 150th anniversary on Sept. 15.

■ **Peace Community Church of the Brethren** in Windsor, Colo., celebrated its 50th anniversary on Aug. 18.

■ **Open Circle Church of the Brethren** in Burnsville, Minn., celebrated its 30th anniversary this past Easter Sunday, and held a celebration with Northern Plains District on Sept. 7.



Members, family, and friends of Peace Community Church of the Brethren gathered for a group photo during the congregation’s 50th anniversary celebration.

Considering connections

It wasn’t an ideal weather day, but that didn’t dampen the spirits of York Center Church of the Brethren members and friends as they held a Neighborhood Fun Day on Aug. 17.

Like many congregations, York Center—located in Lombard, Ill., in the western suburbs of Chicago—has been considering ways to better connect with its immediate community. The church’s Christian education commission decided to try holding an event at a park two blocks from the church to open the doors to those connections. Members arranged for a local taco truck, visits from first responders, art activities, lawn games, and more to go with the extensive playground equipment already there.

While it didn’t end up drawing a lot of church neighbors, it provided some new visibility, and several families stopped by to enjoy the activities—including one boy who initially came with his family and decided to stay for the whole time to keep playing.



Members and friends of York Center Church of the Brethren connected with the DuPage County Sheriff’s Department and other community members at an Aug. 17 event in a neighborhood park.

It was also a high-spirited time for members of the congregation to connect and share amid the bursts of rain, including some who don’t often come for worship. And it left everyone with the question: What could we do next? —Walt Wiltschek

Do you have district or congregational stories that might be of interest to MESSENGER? Short items with a photo are best. Send them to MESSENGER, c/o In Touch, 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120 or messenger@brethren.org.

COLLEGE NEWS



courtesy of Juniata College

The women's volleyball team from Juniata College at the White House this summer.

■ **Juniata College's** champion women's volleyball team was invited to attend the College Champions Day at the White House in Washington, D.C. "As reigning NCAA Division III National Champions, they joined student-athletes and coaches for College Champions Day (July 22) to celebrate the 2023–2024 title-winning teams across all three college and university divisions," said a release from the college that is located in Huntingdon, Pa. Vice president Kamala Harris hosted the event on the lawn of the White House. "It is amazing to be here with all these championship teams and to celebrate our national championship one more time," said Juniata Women's Volleyball head coach Heather Pavlik.

■ **McPherson (Kan.) College** announced that it has welcomed the largest incoming class in its history this fall. The fall semester began on Aug. 21 with 319 first-time freshmen, "the largest freshman class on record," said a release from the college. "This year's freshman class grew 35 percent, with total enrollment up 5 percent. Overall enrollment was bolstered by a second year of increased retention." The release quoted president Michael Schneider and others, who credited the high enrollment figures to a number of factors including new buildings going up on campus and more crucially the college's Student Debt Project that has allowed nearly a third of participating seniors to graduate with zero debt.

Scholarships awarded

The Joanne Grossnickle Scholarship Committee of Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren awarded scholarships to seven college students for the 2024 school year. Committee members are Carole Doody, Rebecca Lippy, and G. Hibbard. Scholarships were presented on Sunday, July 21, during the morning worship service. This is the 39th year that the Joanne Grossnickle Scholarship has been awarded.



Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford

A photo taken in 2018 of one of the bombed-out buildings at the EYN headquarters, still in ruins after four years.

A somber 10th anniversary

Ten years ago, late on Oct. 28 or early on Oct. 29, 2014, Boko Haram fighters took over the headquarters of Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (EYN, the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria) and Kulp Bible College (now Kulp Theological Seminary) in the village of Kwarhi, northeast Nigeria.

At the time, leading staff including EYN president Samuel Dali were holding meetings in a community several kilometers away and were safe. However, their families and those in the college community who were on campus had to flee for their lives. Many EYN staff ended up taking refuge in the city of Jos in central Nigeria, where EYN set up a temporary headquarters.

The event was an impetus for the Nigeria Crisis Response, a collaboration of EYN with the Church of the Brethren in the US and its Global Mission and Brethren Disaster Ministries. The Nigeria Crisis Response is the largest disaster response program in Church of the Brethren history, and has brought short-term and long-term aid to tens of thousands of EYN members and other Nigerians affected by the insurgency.

By fall 2015, EYN was able to return to Kwarhi and begin to repair the damage. Although there had been looting and vandalism, and destruction from shrapnel and bombings, it could have been worse. Most buildings were still standing and had not been burned. A bomb or missile believed to be targeting a Boko Haram controlled tank had destroyed much of the new clinic and the computer training facility. Another large loss was to the school's library collection.

The many precious lives lost in the violence, however, could not be reclaimed.

In the decade since October 2014, EYN has rebounded, grown, and even flourished, through the grace of God. As EYN's Centenary Celebration last year proclaimed, "Great is God's faithfulness."

—Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford



Dauid Gera Andrus

The scene in a looted office at Kulp Bible College, discovered after college staff returned in 2015.



Cuckoo! SERRV turns 75

“Can you guess what SERRV’s first handcrafts were?”

asked a SERRV post on Instagram. “Cuckoo clocks! When SERRV was established by the Church of the Brethren in 1949 as the Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation, we helped generate income for refugees in Europe after WWII by selling their handmade cuckoo clocks in the United States.”

Committed to sustainability. With the direct linkage between climate change and poverty, sustainability is a core value. “People with limited income and communities of color are disproportionately on the front lines of environmental disasters and are more adversely affected by climate change. . . . Fair trade, by definition, is more sustainable than conventional business.”

Shopping to improve the world! SERRV stores have popped up in various locations over the years including the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill., and the Brethren Service Center, where SERRV has had warehouse facilities since its beginnings. Now, most SERRV shopping happens online at www.serrv.org and through a print catalogue, but there are still dozens of partner stores across the country that stock and sell SERRV items.



Courtesy of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives

William Nyce, SERRV’s first fulltime director (center), and Betty Young (left), manager of the first SERRV International Gift Shop, a position she held for 22 years, present a carving of the last supper to the Brethren Service Center, which is represented by Miller Davis (right). The wooden carving was made at the Institute of St. Joseph and Youth Center in Kerala, South India.

1949

SERRV is founded by the Church of the Brethren.

1950

The first SERRV catalogue is printed and the first store opens—the International Gift Shop at the Brethren Service Center.

1964

William Nyce begins as SERRV’s first fulltime director.



Courtesy of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives

Michael Bukrejew with his carvings of wooden figurines.

The beliefs. SERRV's statement of beliefs includes creating employment while also working to prevent child labor; paying fair wages to artisans in advance to ensure they can support themselves and their families; encouraging sustainable practices to care for the planet; and preserving traditional crafting techniques. In addition, SERRV believes in doing community development alongside fair trade.

A fair-trade pioneer. SERRV was one of the first fair-trade organizations, starting before the phrase entered common usage. In the late 1940s, people working with Brethren Service in war-ravaged Europe had a very simple idea: improve people's lives by selling their handcrafts in the United States and returning the profit to them. "Church of the Brethren relief workers in postwar Germany saw the need for a first step beyond crisis concerns for food and shelter," said a fiftieth anniversary publication of the Brethren Service Center in New Windsor, Md.

Today, SERRV defines fair trade as "a commitment to a fairer world—ensuring that people who make and grow products have a place to sell them, that they're fairly paid, and that their working conditions and communities are healthy."

SERRV helped found the World Fair Trade Organization and the US Fair Trade Federation and has helped set standards for the fair-trade movement.

The mission. "To empower small-scale global artisans and farmers through long-term trading partnerships, helping them build sustainable employment, resources, rights, and a vision of hope in their communities."

Wanted: A photo of a SERRV cuckoo clock. A 1950 letter to Brethren Service leader M. R. Zigler from Byron Royer, who was working in Castle Kaltenstein near Enz, Germany, described the clocks as having a distinctive marking: "On the leaf just below the face of the clock, they have carved a Brethren Service emblem." If you have such a clock, please send a photo—and any story related to it—by email to messenger@brethren.org.



Courtesy of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives



Courtesy of the Brethren Historical Library and Archives



1989
SERRV co-founds the World Fair Trade Organization.

1994
SERRV co-founds the Fair Trade Federation.

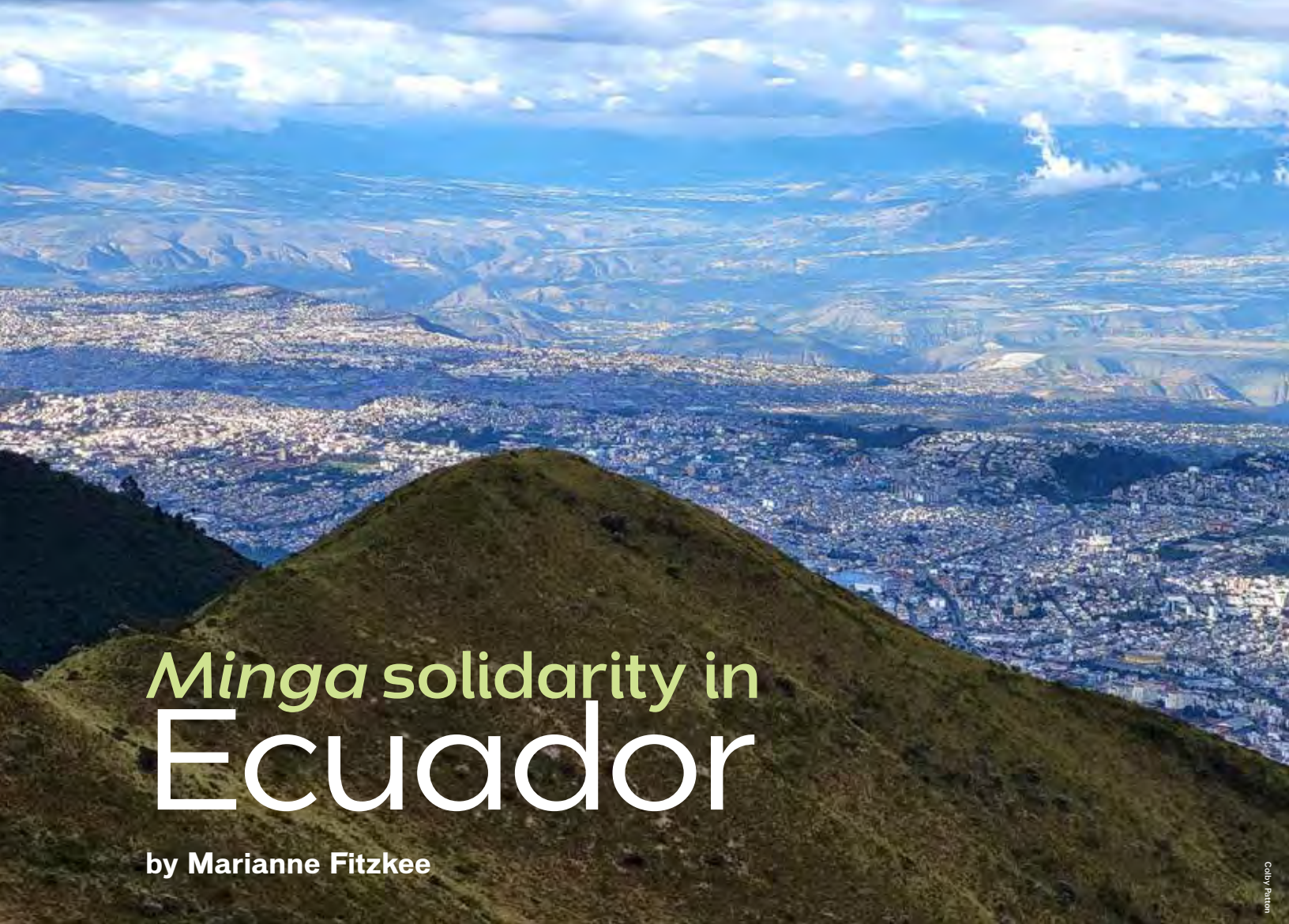
1999
SERRV becomes an independent nonprofit.

2001 and 2004
SERRV opens stores in Madison, Wis.

2020-2021
SERRV sends more than \$20,000 in COVID financial relief to fair-trade partners.

2024
SERRV celebrates 75 years. Today it extends into 24 countries and works with more than 8,000 artisans and farmers every year.

Sources: www.serrv.org; "Fiftieth Anniversary of the New Windsor Service Center, 1994"; the Brethren Historical Library and Archives



Minga solidarity in Ecuador

by Marianne Fitzkee

In January 2024, rising unrest across the small South American country of Ecuador brought my Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS) placement to an abrupt end. Since the previous September, I had been serving on a farm run by the environmental nonprofit Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU, Brethren and United Foundation). I packed my bags and said hasty goodbyes, leaving alfalfa rows half weeded and corn stalks knee high, unsure whether I would be able to return to this spiritually symbiotic place where I had sunk my hands into the soil and been nurtured in return.

Come summer, conditions had stabilized enough for the June FaithX service trip to Ecuador to proceed as planned. With the goal of learning

about agroecology and Ecuadorian culture while helping around the farm, a group of 13 participants took off for my former BVS placement. Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred, BVS coordinator of short-term service, handled logistics. I assisted with language and cultural interpretation. We flew into the capital city of Quito and boarded a bus that wound us an hour north along an Andean segment of the Pan-American Highway until we pulled off at the stony path that leads to FBU.

As indicated by the name, FBU was founded, in part, by the Church of the Brethren. Our denomination has a venerable, yet little known, history in Ecuador. The presence of the Church of the Brethren in the country dates back to 1943. In the 1970s, the Church

of the Brethren mission merged its community development ministry with that of the United Andean Mission to



Coby Patton

Marianne Fitzkee



Colby Patton

Tomate de árbol, or “tree tomato.”

form FBU. The organization once boasted a respected medical clinic, did work in several regions of the country, attracted two presidential visits, and claims the title of the longest-lasting Ecuadorian environmental nonprofit still in existence—or so I’ve been told.

These days FBU, under the leadership of executive director Alfredo Merino, hosts student groups and international volunteers to offer experiential education about environmental stewardship and to promote intercultural exchange. The pandemic brought financial hardship to FBU that led to the selling of part of its land to developers. The organization is now upgrading its facilities to attract more visitors, and our FaithX group had the opportunity to contribute to this ongoing maintenance and beautification.

After getting settled in FBU’s volunteer house, we set out on a farm tour. Coming from various places in the United States—Florida, Illinois, Kansas, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Texas—where the elevation is signifi-

cantly lower than FBU’s 9,350 feet, we huffed and puffed the eucalyptus-infused air. With farm dogs Kiara and Beto in tow, we traipsed by FBU’s herb garden, orchard, greenhouses and tree nursery, blackberry patch, fields, and pastures in which a small herd of dairy cows grazes. We assisted with the milking and greeted the farm’s sheep, chickens, and horses (one of whom gave birth just a day after we left, much to the chagrin of the group’s equestrian enthusiasts).

On our workdays we accomplished various projects organized for us by Merino, who was unable to be with us due to unforeseen health issues. We cleared the foliage lining the entrance pathway and tore down old fence posts. Some then dug holes and erected a new fence—and only one participant suffered a scorpion sting in the process. Others harvested a large garden area and prepared the soil for replanting. We also cleared a greenhouse and weeded and fertilized the blackberries. Since 60 years separated the youngest and oldest participants in our FaithX group, and we possessed

diverse professional backgrounds, we had much to learn from one another as we worked.

One morning, we undertook the tedious task of weeding hundreds of tiny guarango tree saplings that I had helped to transplant from the greenhouse during my BVS experience. Guarango is a native species with many commercial benefits. FBU is partnering with Heifer Ecuador, an offshoot of Heifer International, in an initiative to conserve these trees and provide fair wages for rural farmers. For this project, many hands made light work, which lifted the spirits of FBU’s staff.

Each day we worked up an appetite and never went hungry. Two local women prepared our meals, including samplings of Ecuadorian fare made with products grown on the farm, which we ate together in the dining hall. Fresh juices, often made from fruits unfamiliar to us in the United States, accented each meal. One such fruit was *tomate de árbol*, which literally translates to “tree tomato,” an oblong red fruit that has a tomatoey



Mariela Whitkovsky-Elied

“ Since 60 years separated the youngest and oldest participants in our FaithX group, and we possessed diverse professional backgrounds, we had much to learn from one another. ”



Marnissa Wilkowsky-Eldred

texture and flavor greatly enhanced by adding sugar. After dinner, we had evening devotions centered on the 2024 FaithX theme “Beloved.”

At work, on the soccer field and basketball court, and around the fire pit between bites of s’mores and snippets of ghost stories, we had the opportunity to share love with FBU staff and community members by simply enjoying each other’s company. We also had opportunities to listen and learn about local challenges. Some of these include poverty, insecurity, low literacy, high rates of teenage pregnancy and domestic violence, discrimination against immigrants, unstable electricity, and the damaging environmental impact of the floral industry. (The nearby town of Tabacundo is the “rose capital of the world,” but harmful pesticides and poor working conditions diminish the charm.)

A major learning opportunity was a field trip to the other organization in Ecuador that retains the Brethren

name—Unidad Educativa Brethren (UEB, Brethren Educational Unit). This school in the northern Quito community of Llano Grande was founded by Brethren mission workers 75 years ago. Started as an agricultural school, it is



now a public institution that educates more than 2,000 students ages 3 to 18 with a morning session for younger children and an afternoon session for middle and high school students. On a tour of the campus, we learned about the school’s ecological initiative called “Interactive Nature: Life and Equality.”

Several green spaces decorate the school grounds, and a small orchard stands by the sports fields, each tree protected from stray balls by fencing constructed from recycled wood. UEB is the only school in Quito with a section of original Andean dry forest on the property. The school has taken advantage of this by building two outdoor classrooms in the shade of its branches. There is no government funding for these types of projects, so parents, teachers, and students collaborate in the traditional Quechua system of *minga*, which involves working together as a community, not unlike an Amish barn raising.

“Parents, teachers, and students collaborate in the traditional Quechua system of *minga*, which involves working together as a community, not unlike an Amish barn raising.”

UEB also has school gardens, tended by the students in the fifth through seventh year classes, with plants donated by FBU. The gardens use associative planting, meaning that different crops are planted together that are mutually beneficial. For example, planting beans with corn allows the bean tendrils to climb up the corn stalks. When harvest time comes, students bring in their own plates and some additional ingredients and have a *pambamesa*, the Ecuadorian version of a potluck, enjoying the fruits of their labor. The hope is that the interactive nature of these projects at school will encourage students to take steps to care for the earth at home.

We had the opportunity for a conversation with a class of students so we could hear their opinions about the school’s ecological projects and they could ask us about the United States and practice their English, which is taught at a basic level at the school. The students were excited to have foreign visitors—and bona fide Brethren at that!

One of the school administrators showed us a scrapbook of UEB pictures from over the years. When I was in Ecuador last fall, I had visited a formerly Brethren congregation called El Mesías, also in Llano Grande. There I met Mercedes Tasiguano, an indigenous woman proud of the education she received as an early student at UEB. The school builds on its legacy with continued innovation, enacted little by little as resources allow.

At the end of our trip, we spent two days sightseeing in Quito. In the historic city center, which is a

UNESCO World Heritage Site, we toured Independence Square and the soaring Basilica of the National Vote. We also rode up the side of the Pichincha Volcano on the TelefériQo cable car to take in a breathtaking view of the city. And, of course, we couldn’t pass up the opportunity to visit the equator, where several people earned certificates for balancing eggs on nail heads and some of us worked up the nerve to taste the traditional delicacy of guinea pig.

In his message of thanks to our FaithX group, Merino shared, “You’ve helped us a lot and given us, above all, energy of love and confirmation that we’re on the right path helping the most poor. . . . Hopefully you’ve been

able to get a perspective of Ecuador other than of violence, a perspective of the countryside and of solidarity work, of a life of brotherhood under the tutelage of our Lord.”

John 15:5 says, “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit.” Our Brethren forebears planted seeds that have borne the fruits of education, empowerment, and creation care. This FaithX trip gave us an opportunity to work in *minga* solidarity, in the hope that one day all God’s children may share in the abundance of one big fruity *pambamesa*. 🍷

Marianne Fitzkee is continuing her BVS service at the Bernardo Kohler Center for Immigration in Austin, Texas.



The FaithX group poses in front of the FBU sign: (front row, from left) Colin Scott, Smith Gameti, Marissa Witkovsky-Eldred, David Braune, and Ethan Dilling; (back row) Judy Braune, Dawn Dilling, Madison Creps, Aleshia Hock, Colby Patton, Marianne Fitzkee, Bryan Bingeman, and Stefanie Ketterman.



WEAPONS TRANSFERS AND THE GOSPEL OF PEACE

by Nathan Hosler

In 2018, a bus full of children on a school outing was bombed in Yemen. Of the 51 casualties, 40 of them were children. The only survivor was a teacher. The 500-pound laser-guided bomb was made by Lockheed Martin, which is headquartered in Bethesda, Md., fewer than 20 miles from my church.

In 2017, while in Bethlehem, West Bank, Occupied Palestinian Territories, I was shown tear gas canisters and rubber bullets that had been

used on peaceful protestors. These protestors, who were objecting to a stifling military occupation of their lives, were seen as a threat. Printed on the side of the canisters: “Made in Jamestown, Pa.”

Even before Oct. 7, 2023, yearly military aid from the US to Israel was approximately \$3.8 billion. Some of this is in the form of direct transfers, while other is funding that must be spent on US-made equipment.

When I met with villagers in Iraqi

Kurdistan a few years ago, they implored us to tell the US government to stop supporting Turkey in bombing their fields. Their villages were emptying, as people found the situation unbearable. While they did not specify whether the bombs were made in the US, they were clear that the continuation was supported by the United States.

War and matters of war-making continue to evolve, to morph, to change. We need to continually dis-

cern how to live the gospel of peace in a perpetually changing geography of war. Not only do we need to evaluate our direct participation in war, but we must understand the less obvious ways: How do our ignorance, lack of focus, or inertia support war?

While driving a tank in a land invasion is explicit, there are a spectrum of less overt modes of engagement with war-making—say, a policymaker authorizing the invasion, or a company manufacturing the shells that were fired, or an employee working at a plant manufacturing bolts for the tank, but which can also be used for search-and-rescue machinery.

War-making—broadly defined—requires community discernment. Weapons transfers and production should be seen as part of war-making and thus subject to ethical reasoning. Responsibility for this cannot simply sit with the highest levels of government.

Peace churches (especially those in the US) are not separate from this. We must disentangle ourselves from participation and live a radical call to peacemaking, which requires justice, healing, care for creation, and care for all people.

The expansion of weapons production during the industrial revolution and growth of the “military-industrial complex” since World War II have led to private enterprises that provide weapons of war and related supplies

to the military. These businesses have a vested interest in supply and demand for their products, ranging from food for troops to missiles to the attack helicopters I see advertised on the sides of buses while I bike to my office in Washington City Church of the Brethren on Capitol Hill.

Weapons transfers via sales and general “support” functions carry lethal consequences and are not a value-neutral function of diplomatic relations or economic activity. They are part of war-making.

A significant concern is that sales proceed because of “diplomatic” and geopolitical considerations. Typically this is framed as, “If we don’t sell the weapons, someone with fewer concerns about human rights will sell to them.”

Another concern is that Congress must indicate *disapproval* rather than approval. While this presumably reduces administrative hurdles, it means that matters of war-making functionally bypass Congress.

As a peace church, the Church of the Brethren does not rely on Congress to make ethical determinations for us. But we do affirm measures that slow and potentially impede acts of war.

The church needs to renew its theological and ethical reflection in the face of today’s realities: the intentional expansion of US military pres-

ence and influence globally; the dramatic expansion, industrialization/ privatization, and decentralization of weapons production; and the blurring of the lines between military and non-military actions.

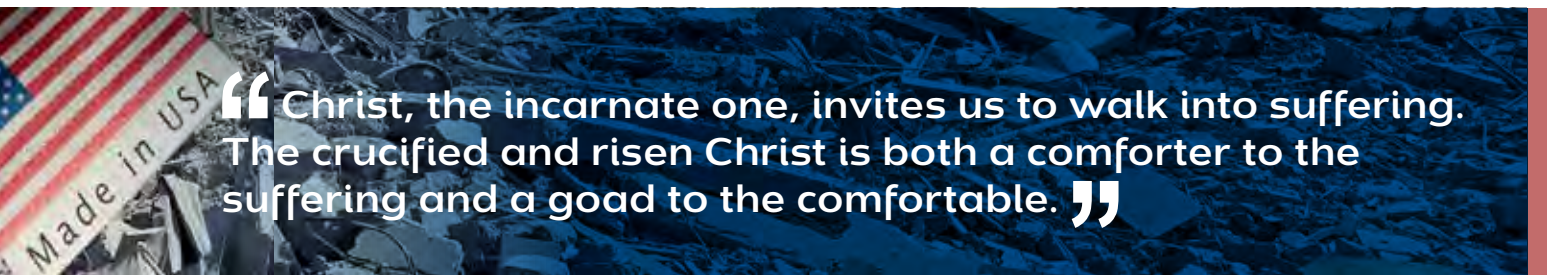
For the Church of the Brethren, our official understanding of war and peacemaking can be found in our Annual Conference statements and resolutions. For example, the 2013 Resolution against Drone Warfare gives this brief overview:

The Church of the Brethren follows the teaching and example of Jesus Christ, whose willingness to die was unaccompanied by a willingness to kill. In line with our Brethren heritage, we believe “that war or any participation in war is wrong and entirely incompatible with the spirit, example and teachings of Jesus Christ” (1918 Statement of Special Conference of the Church of the Brethren to the Churches and the Drafted Brethren) and that all “war is sin . . . [and that we] cannot encourage, engage in, or willingly profit from armed conflict at home or abroad. We cannot in the event of war, accept military service or support the military machine in any capacity” (1934 Annual Conference Resolution on Peace and Goodwill).

Such statements are part of our tradition of reading scripture in community. That is how we go about theolog-



“Christians should challenge the notion that economic activity and weapons production, use, and transfers are neutral, that they are a tragic but necessary reality.”



“Christ, the incarnate one, invites us to walk into suffering. The crucified and risen Christ is both a comforter to the suffering and a goad to the comfortable.”

ical and ethical discernment.

Because the making of weapons is dispersed over many sectors, it is difficult to determine who is responsible. The question of responsibility is an important part of Christian discipleship, as well as a matter of legal accountability and transparency.

The decision to fire a weapon is far removed from its sale and even more distant from the production of its component parts. While ethical and policy decisions are made closer to the point of killing, all parts are necessary to support this action.

Additionally, there is a disaggregation of responsibility. In “War Crimes Inc.,” Elizabeth Beavers argues that, given the crimes in Yemen, corporations knew or should have known their complicity and, as such, are legally liable.

Along with the objection to the use of violence—especially against non-combatants—Christians should challenge the notion that economic activity and weapons production, use, and transfers are neutral, that they are a tragic but necessary reality.

Anabaptists believe that theology is not separated from ethics. Claims about God cannot be separated from how we live in the world. Economics is not separated from wellbeing. Intent in action cannot be separated from impact. The sale and production of weapons is not separated from their intended use. Peace churches then, are opposed to both the use of weapons of war and their production and

distribution.

It would be easy to say that responsibility sits with the policymaker. However, given the nature of the military-industrial complex, these questions are neither straightforward nor easy to untangle.

Theological arguments aim to describe truth but also may serve several practical purposes. They may “mobilize constituents” or shape moral imagination, as Paul Lederach says. That is, church-goers are also political constituents who have ways to engage and shape policy. When, for example, the Church of the Brethren asserts in official policy that “all war is sin” and we cannot participate, this invites reflection and action on what not participating means—and also how we are called to actively work for peace.

As such, while we speak theologically and prayerfully, we use “regular” modes of action as well. For example, we can and should partner with those far beyond our faith tradition. We also can (and for practical reasons should) use languages and modes of engagement such as human rights.


Legal arguments and restraints can be embraced and used as a tactic. However, just because something is legally possible or the legal framework is technically met, this does not preclude the need to challenge this action ethically and theologically. I was recently in a high-level meeting at the State Department, where people gave detailed assurances that they were meeting all legal and policy requirements in relation to weapons going to

Israel for the destruction of Gaza and death of innumerable civilians.

When it comes to weapons transfers, reflection and practical action should lead to strategic withdrawal of support or active resistance. We must challenge the assumptions that “this is just how things are.” We can’t be content with simply not joining a fighting force, but we must examine our commitments to “our standard of living” or to job stability. Otherwise, we are passing off risks and costs. Yemeni children bear the lethal weight of my so-called way of life.

As Christians, our lives are oriented toward God and toward others. Our theology and worship should shape our understanding of primary good, idolatry, economics, and violence, both direct and indirect.

Christ, the incarnate one, invites us to walk into suffering. The crucified and risen Christ is both a comforter to the suffering and a goad to the comfortable.

That the system is complex does not alleviate our responsibility. There is much work to do: To challenge assumptions of necessity, normality, neutrality, inevitability. To build communities and economic systems that do not benefit from violence wrought on others. And to boldly proclaim the gospel of peace in our words and actions. 

Nathan Hosler is director of the Church of the Brethren Office of Peacebuilding and Policy. This article is adapted from his 2021 Durnbaugh Lecture at the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College.

Turning the world upside right

by Gary Heisler

My father, Arthur, was a minister. Our family went to church every Sunday morning. I heard hundreds of my dad's sermons—more accurately, I was present during those sermons! His sermons were good, although I wasn't always a good listener. But I remember one thing he said frequently: Jesus came into this world to “turn it upside right.”

Most of Jesus' teachings are examples of doing things that run counter to the culture and to the human instinct of self-preservation. Jesus said, “Love your enemies.” “Do good to those who persecute you.” “The first will be last and the last, first.” “Turn the other cheek.” “Sell all you have and give to the poor.” Jesus' parables are often about doing the unexpected, especially where the poor, sick, immigrants, and those who are looked down upon are concerned.

There are many people in the Church of the Brethren who turned the world “upside right” by the manner of their living. I have met some, including Dan West, founder of Heifer Project, now Heifer International; Anna Mow, who along with her husband was a missionary in India for 17 years and was one of the first ordained women in the Church of the Brethren; and M. R. Zigler, one of the founders of On Earth Peace.

Other examples of Brethren who were counter to the culture of their day include Alexander Mack, the first Brethren leader in Germany; Ted Studebaker, who worked with farmers in the Montagnard ethnic group in Vietnam and was killed; Sarah Major, one of the first Brethren female preachers in the 1800s; John Kline, a Church of the Brethren pastor who ministered to both sides during the Civil War and was killed because of it; and Gladdys Muir, who founded the Peace Studies Institute at Manchester College in Indiana in 1948.

Hundreds of Brethren have lived the upside right life in Brethren Volunteer Service and as conscientious objectors. It's stated in BVS' goals: Advocating justice, working for peace, serving human needs, and caring for creation. My dad was a conscientious objector during World War II although he wasn't raised in one of the “peace” churches. His Civilian Public Service project, operated by the Church of the Brethren, was at


Camp Wellston, Mich., near Manistee.

I know people in various congregations and retired residents right here at Timbercrest in North Manchester, Ind., who exemplify upside right living. They may not be famous, nor have they started great movements within the church, but they have lived their lives guided by Jesus' upside right teachings.

Some other Brethren-connected organizations demonstrating this upside right living include Brethren Disaster Ministries, Children's Disaster Services, Church World Service, and CROP Hunger Walks. New Community Project, directed by David Radcliff, has projects dealing with earth care and justice, including a Million Tree Campaign to plant trees in Africa, South America, and Asia, and Give a Girl a Chance projects in Asia and Africa.

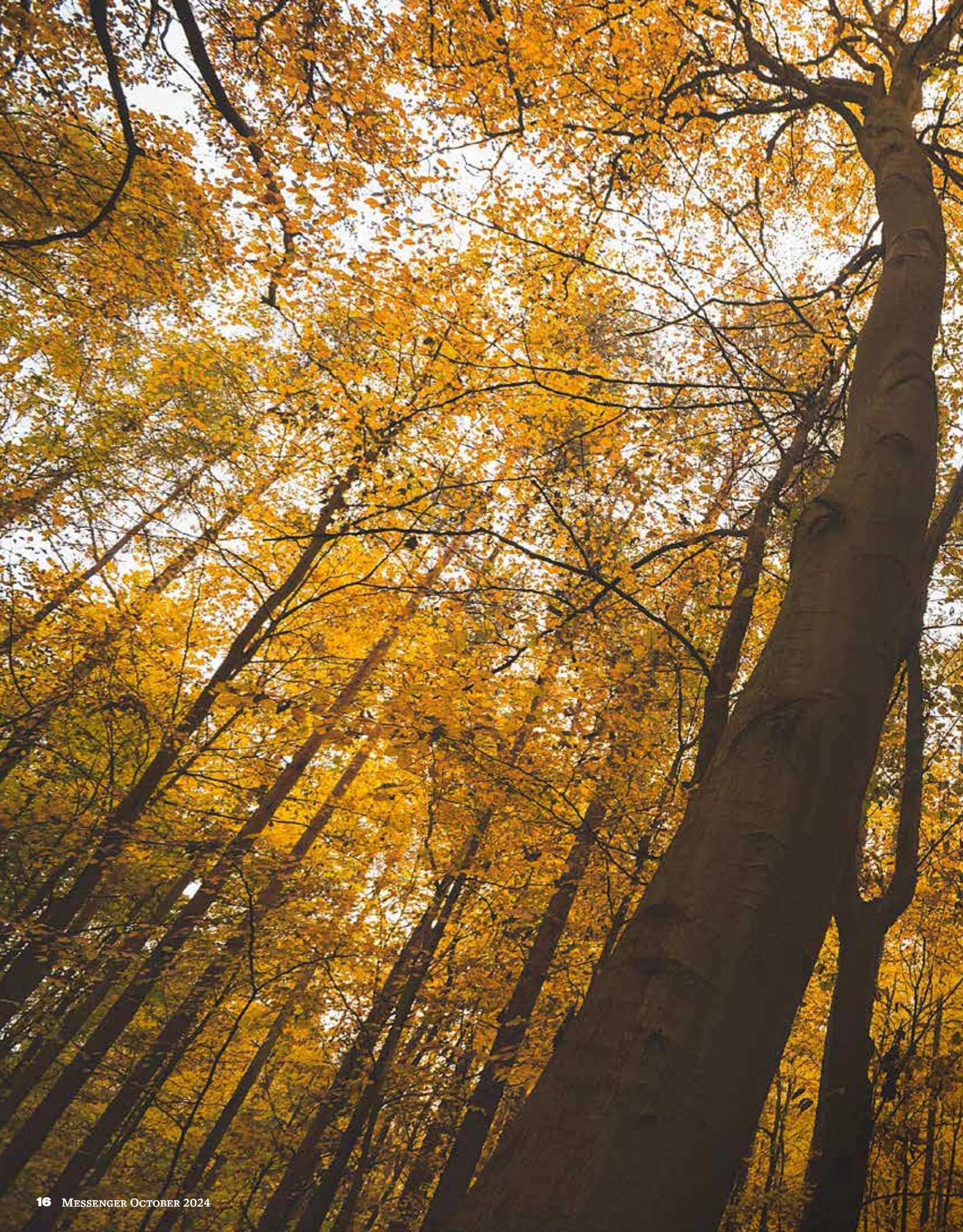
In addition to congregations in the United States, the global Church of the Brethren now has congregations in Brazil, Democratic Republic of Congo, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras, India, Nigeria, Rwanda, Spain, Uganda, and Venezuela. The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria (Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria) has endured extreme cruelty and many deaths at the hands of Boko Haram terrorists, yet their response has been the creation of camps where both displaced Christians and Muslims reside and receive assistance as needed. “Upside right” living has truly become an international movement!


Many non-Brethren have provided examples of this type of living, too, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and other members of the nonviolent civil rights movement in the 1960s, Gandhi, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Teresa, and others.

Unfortunately, 2,000 years after Jesus' teachings, the world is still “upside wrong.” There are multiple armed conflicts, and the accumulation of personal wealth or power at the expense of others is prevalent. But still our allegiance is to Jesus and his teachings. It requires determination and self-sacrifice for our neighbors' good. We are called to “another way of living” and turning the world upside right. 

Gary Heisler lives at the Timbercrest Senior Living community in North Manchester, Ind.

“We are called to “another way of living” and turning the world upside right.”

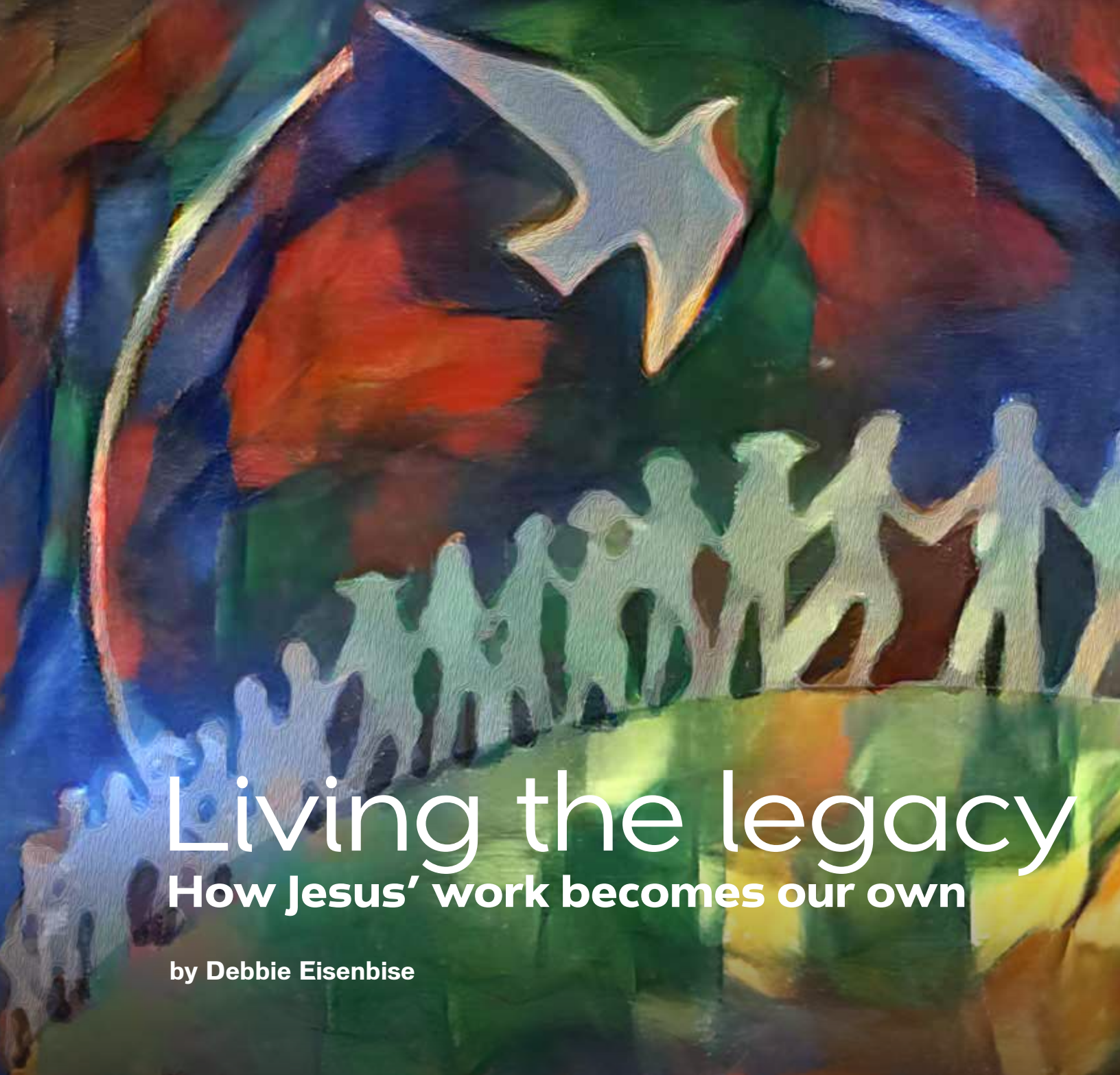




God
Grant me the grace of a tree
Who bends in the storm but does not break
Who seeks deeply for its source of strength
Who stretches out its arms for light
Who shelters the homeless
Feeds the hungry
Comforts the laborer
Preserves the land
Who stands silent through the night
And is first to hear the songs of the morning

—*Wilbur E. Brumbaugh*

Wilbur E. Brumbaugh was a poet, musician, and artist who in previous decades served on the staff of MESSENGER and worked in communications for the Church of the Brethren.



Living the legacy

How Jesus' work becomes our own

by Debbie Eisenbise

So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but

you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him” (Romans 8:12-17, NRSVue).

Christianity is a legacy passed down generation to generation. It is the gospel, the good news, kept alive in people witnessing one to another their experience of the movement and activity of the Spirit of God. Again and again in his letters, this is what Paul offers his correspondents—what has been passed on to him. His words sit

An abstract painting with a rich palette of warm colors like reds, oranges, and yellows, interspersed with cooler tones of blue and green. The style is expressive and textured, with visible brushstrokes. In the lower-left quadrant, there are faint, stylized figures of people, possibly representing a community or a group of individuals. The overall composition is dynamic and layered.

“Adoption that is offered and made manifest by the Spirit of God creates a community of equality.”

at the center of Christian liturgy, in the consecration of the eucharist: “For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you” (1 Corinthians 11:23). Paul, who never knew Jesus in this life, still heard a call and took on the role of apostle in the Christian community to pass on this legacy. Through the Christian community, he was so grafted into the faith that “adoption” became

for him a central metaphor for identity and participation in this faith.

In his letter to the church in Rome, Paul invites those in that community to embrace their adoption, as he embraced his own. Writing to this church that he did not found, to people he never met, he dons the mantle of the apostle to teach and exhort. He knows his audience; a largely Gentile

group with a Jewish minority. Emperor Claudius in 49 CE had expelled the Jews from Rome due to conflicts around acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah. Gentiles who had joined the Christian fellowship under the leadership of Jews were left, after nearly two decades of their leadership, to keep faith alive.

Paul writes to this community as the Jewish Christians make their way back to Rome. The edict exiled them for five years before Claudius died. Paul’s letter comes at this time of reintegration. Paul is aware of the situation and has met with some of those exiled, including Aquila and Priscilla (as noted in Acts 18:2). His letter is both introductory and conciliatory, seeking to offer a narrative that can help reknit connections and rebuild community. Paul, in subtle and direct ways, speaks to these “brothers and sisters” as one.

Paul’s use of the “spirit of slavery” and corresponding “fear” conveys his knowledge of the church and would have struck a chord with both Gentiles and Jews. The former were most likely “low status individuals: slaves and freed-persons,” and the latter mostly immigrants “who settled in Rome around the second century BCE [who] were originally brought in as slaves when Pompey conquered Jerusalem in 63 BCE” (John B. Song, “Adoption in the Roman World”).

Chapter 8 is the heart of this letter, and in five dense verses (12-17), Paul, the master rhetorician, gets to the point of his argument. While the world has relegated these brothers and sisters to the margins of society, by the Spirit of God they are adopted as children of God.

“Jesus’ work becomes our own through this adoption, ... and we are entrusted with God’s legacy to embody, to live, to pass on.”

This sets the foundation for his clear and concise conclusion laid out at the end of the chapter: “For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

The metaphor Paul uses to concretize this process is the “spirit of adoption.” Adoption that is offered and made manifest by the Spirit of God creates a community of equality in which all are moved beyond “ethnic, familial, imperial, and legalistic boundaries” (Robert Brian Lewis, *Paul’s “Spirit of Adoption” in its Roman Imperial Context*, p. 23). All, including Paul, are truly made “one in Christ.” As Jesus promised in his final discourse in John’s Gospel (14:18), “I will not leave you orphaned”—and it is the Holy Spirit that comes as advocate and comforter to adopt them.

The rhetorical foundation for this argument is found in the Roman imperial use of adoption, with which Paul and his correspondents were intimately familiar. The end of the edict removing the Jews from Rome came at Claudius’ death with the ascension of Nero, his stepson through adoption. At Jesus’ birth a similar imperial transition took place when Augustus, then Octavian, was adopted at age 18 to succeed Julius Caesar, and in doing so took the title “Son of God” to add legitimacy and secure his authority. For Paul and his readers, using the term “adoption” would have brought to mind these moves to preserve the Julio-Claudian line.

For Paul this is true for those adopted through baptism into faith. Jesus as the Messiah, the Christ, is the “Son of

God” who confers his spirit, the Spirit of God, upon all who believe. Every one of Paul’s readers is a child of God by virtue of this action of God to offer adoptive “sonship” to all. Not limited to those in power or to any ethnic group or bloodline, or gender, or any other distinction, this adoption is for all who will place themselves under the authority and care of God as their one parent.

Again, this echoes John’s Gospel where Jesus, as the good shepherd says, “I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must bring them also, and they will listen to my voice. So there will be one flock, one shepherd” (John 10:16). God through Christ calls Gentile and Jew together in one community that is not of their making; membership is chosen by the adopter. Lewis notes that “God was unwilling to be the Father of an only Son. God was unwilling to be the Father of one group to the exclusion of another. This was the plan from the beginning. The family of God was to be expansive and universal in scope. God is willing to adopt to achieve these purposes” (p. 17).


This adoption reorients those in the church, offering them legitimacy and freedom and agency outside the strictures of Roman society. No longer does participation in the civil religion of Rome bind Christians. They need not worship the Emperor as “the Son of God,” for through the Spirit of God’s grace, they have been adopted into the family of God. Through this adoption into a lasting legacy of power that defies even death, these ordinary people have parity with the ruler of the Roman Empire. This is the extravagant self-giving love of God who chooses us as partners in the work of redeeming the earth: bringing God’s

reign here as it is in heaven.

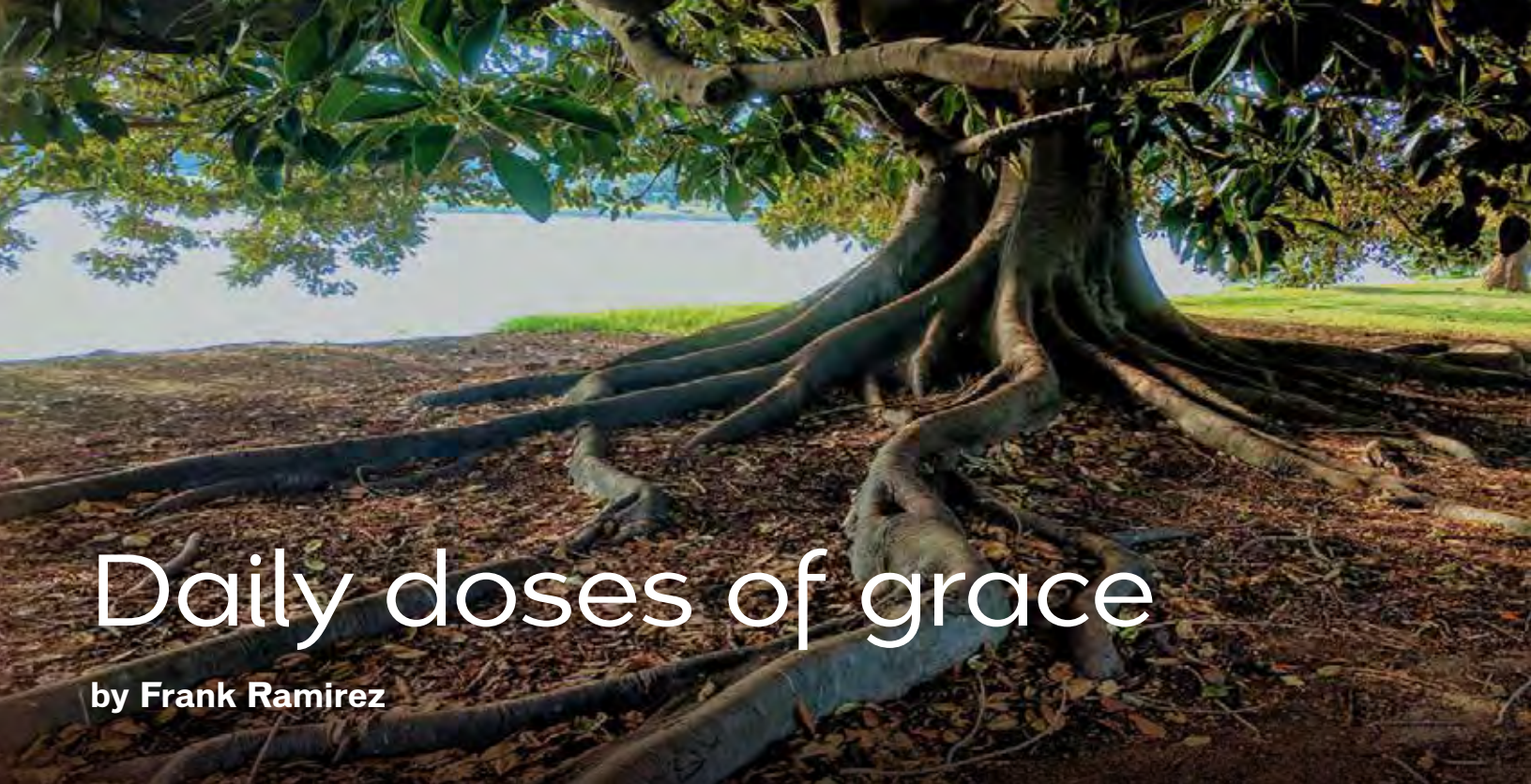
So, this adoption issues a call—rights and privileges and responsibilities that flow from participation in the Spirit that animated and guided Jesus. Like him, those in the church in Rome are full heirs of the legacy of faith. With this comes both glory and suffering, the latter described in subsequent verses as Paul writes about the struggles involved in birthing a new, redeemed creation.

Jesus’ work becomes our own through this adoption, and we are entrusted with God’s legacy to embody, to live, to pass on. As Teresa of Ávila (1515-1582) put it:

Christ has no body but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes with
which he looks
Compassion on this world,
Yours are the feet with which
he walks to do good,
Yours are the hands, with which
he blesses all the world.
Yours are the hands,
yours are the feet,
Yours are the eyes, you are his body.
Christ has no body now but yours,
No hands, no feet on earth but yours,
Yours are the eyes
with which he looks
Compassion on this world.
Christ has no body now
on earth but yours.

God offers intimacy and belonging to all. This is how God’s legacy is passed on, the good news conveyed, by those willing to be adopted as children of God. 

Debbie Eisenbise is an ordained minister serving on the pastoral team of Living Stream Church of the Brethren. This piece was originally published at <https://politicaltheology.com/living-the-legacy>



Daily doses of grace

by Frank Ramirez

After 45 years of preaching, I've retired from pastoral ministry. I'll continue to perform the occasional wedding, funeral, and sermon, as well as some other writing, but as far as preaching the Word of God every week in a congregation: That's over.

Since I've been a pastor for 45 years, I had to go through 45 years' worth of files. Much of it went to recycling.

However . . . there was this short poem I clipped and then carefully taped to a 3-by-5 card on which I had typed—typed!—"George E. Wade" and, underneath, "From *The Christian Century* October 16, 1991."

*Of my three score years and ten
All are gone. I've reached the end.
No more decades. In their place
Daily doses of God's grace.*

That's it! Just four lines. But I still remember how that poem knocked me for a loop 33 years ago. It kicks even harder today.

Three score and ten is 70. Though the

phrase occurs 111 times in the King James Version (according to Robert Alter in his book *Pen of Iron*), I think in this case the poem is alluding to Psalm 90:10: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labor and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."

Seventy years. Realistic? Not really. Not in those days. What with childbirth, childhood, adolescence, and the chances of disease, pestilence, plague, accidents, infection, warfare, and everything else, life expectancy for most of human history was half of that or less! Tops.

We're much healthier today, so we can be more optimistic about achieving three score years and ten. Still, this poem reminds me that even if one were foolhardy enough to count on three score years and ten, once you get there you'd better face the fact that you can never take tomorrow for granted any more. Praise God! What a gift it is every day to wake up and realize that you woke up!

That's why I love the verse that fol-


lows in Psalm 90: "So teach us to count our days that we may gain a wise heart."

I was 37 when I clipped that poem, and over the years I have thought about it many times. Long before I approached three score years and ten, I came to realize every day is a gift. I'm lucky to be alive in God's wonder-filled world, thanks to God's wonderful grace.

I'd call that a wise heart.

This is my 70th year, and though I'm relatively healthy and certainly much happier than I deserve, you can't live as close to death as a pastor without recognizing life turns on a dime.

That's why I'm taking this card home and pinning it on the bulletin board there. Just so I don't forget.

And that's why I'm sharing the poem with you as I prepare to hang up my preaching cleats and walk away from something I dearly love. Just so you won't forget, either. 

Frank Ramirez retired as pastor of Union Center Church of the Brethren in Nappanee, Ind. at the end of August. A version of this column was first written for a local paper.

“I'm lucky to be alive in God's wonder-filled world, thanks to God's wonderful grace.”



Growing faith at home and at church

by Shana Peachey Boshart, Joan Daggett, and Joyce Peachey Lind

Discipleship happens best in community.

Children, youth, and adults grow in faith as they worship and learn *together*. With the help of the gathered community, children can grow into following Jesus where they live, learn, and play.

Because Christian discipleship is a lifelong journey of transformation into the likeness of Christ, the community of faith includes people of all ages, from babies to great-grandparents. In 1 Corinthians Paul writes that the body of Christ is made up of many members, and that “its parts should have equal concern for each other . . . if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it” (1 Corinthians 12:25-26).

The Bible gives us examples of chil-

dren and youth being included and called to leadership of God’s people—people such as Samuel, David, and Mary. By honoring the children in our congregations and inviting them to participate in the life of the community, we can equip them to hear God’s voice and find a meaningful spirituality for themselves. Children are capable of being active participants in worship, community, and mission.

Why families go to church

Recent studies show that the primary influence on the faith of children is not the church, but rather parents, grandparents, and caregivers. If this is true, why would families continue to go to church? Because the faith community is the primary source of support for

parents as at-home faith leaders.

Studies of families and faith formation also show that participating in Sunday worship *as a family* is one of the most effective ways to grow faith in the family, particularly in children. Why is this so effective?

■ Church offers the support and accountability of a community of believers—the body of Christ—for forming a countercultural identity centered on Jesus and his ministry of reconciliation.

■ Churches offer programs that are designed to nurture faith in people of all ages and are likely to be using well-designed, developmentally appropriate curricula in those programs.

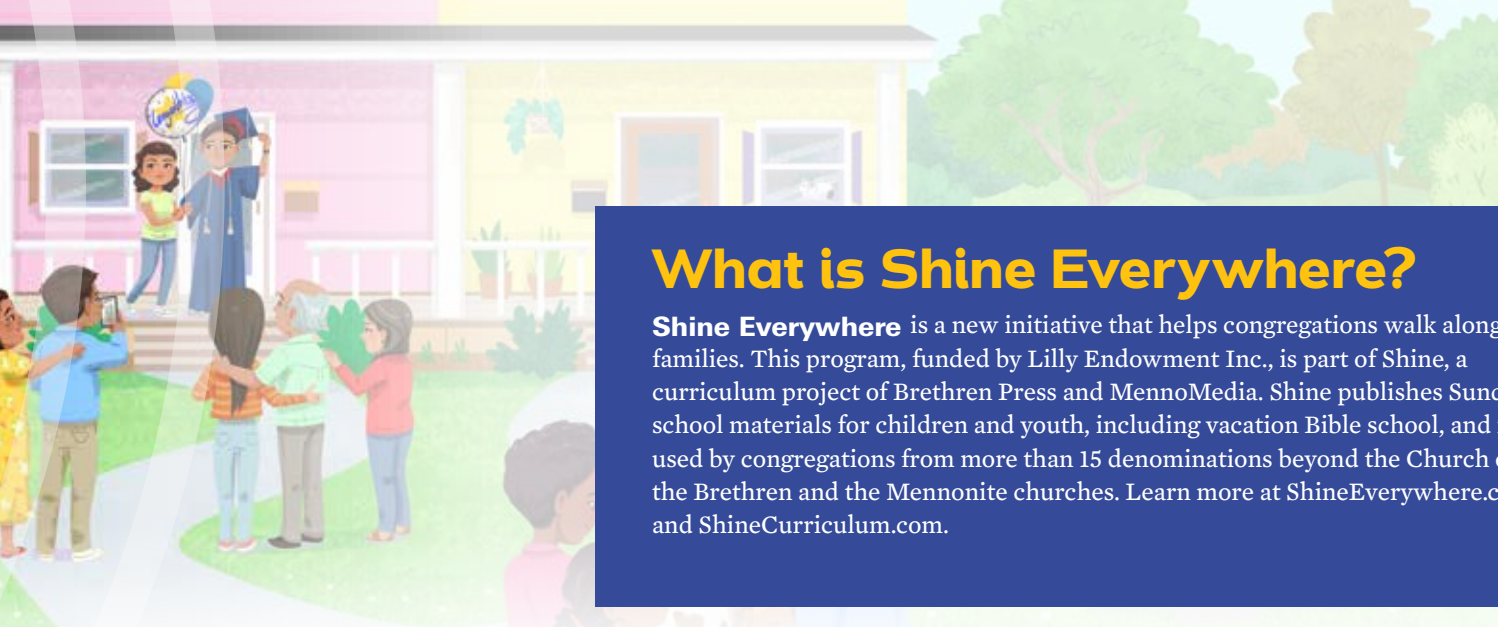
■ Going to church together provides a common vocabulary and common

Resources

Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation, by Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk, Oxford University Press, 2021. This book reports the findings of a national study of religious parents in the United States. The authors conclude that talking about faith with children is much more effective than quietly role-modeling it for them.

Families at the Center of Faith Formation by Leif Kehrwald, John Roberto, Gene Roehlkepartain, and Jolene Roehlkepartain, Lifelong Faith Associates, 2016. This book shares the results of many studies of religious families and offers new approaches to passing on faith to children and youth.

About “playgrounds”: <https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/playgrounds-encourage-little-children-to-come>



What is Shine Everywhere?

Shine Everywhere is a new initiative that helps congregations walk alongside families. This program, funded by Lilly Endowment Inc., is part of Shine, a curriculum project of Brethren Press and MennoMedia. Shine publishes Sunday school materials for children and youth, including vacation Bible school, and is used by congregations from more than 15 denominations beyond the Church of the Brethren and the Mennonite churches. Learn more at ShineEverywhere.com and ShineCurriculum.com.

frameworks around which the family can build their at-home faith practices.

Home is the starting place

Home is the starting place for children to learn about God and what it means to be a part of the church. In Deuteronomy 6, God gives parents a roadmap:

Hear, O Israel: The LORD is our God, the LORD alone. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise. Bind them as a sign on your hand, fix them as an emblem on your forehead, and write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

We are to welcome God into every part of our daily life—walking, talking, sitting, working, thinking, rising in the morning, and going to bed at night.

Here are some ways for parents to nurture faith at home:

- Share God's story. Read Bible stories from a children's Bible or storybooks like *The Peace Table*, *Shine On*, or *Resplandece*. Wonder and talk about the stories together.

- Tell your own stories. Share where

you have seen God today. Talk about times when God seems close by and when you feel alone and need God's love.

- Pray all the time and everywhere!

The Peace Table has morning, evening, and mealtime prayers and simple prayer paths for children to trace.

- Create rituals that communicate God's presence and care. Say a simple blessing for each family member as they head out the door each day. Light a candle at mealtime or when reading from the Bible. Share three things you are grateful for before going to bed.

Parents and church together

Parents and the congregation can work together to create a space that welcomes children and youth.

Families

- Prepare a special bag for younger children to take to church on Sunday mornings. Include a small story Bible, paper, and markers.

- For worship, choose seats closer to the front than the back. Notice the parts of the service that engage your child and talk about them on the way home.

- Prior to baptism, communion, or other rituals, give your child a simple explanation of what the ritual is about. Say what it means for you.

- Be intentional about cultivating relationships with people of different

ages in the congregation. Invite someone over for lunch or have a picnic in the park.


Congregations

- Consider creating an area especially for young children in the worship space. Stock it with paper and crayons, soft toys, books, and a small table with chairs. Provide coloring sheets related to the scripture passage. Some churches call this area a "prayground."

- Design rituals so that children and youth can participate in age-appropriate ways.

- When planning worship, include liturgies with repeated phrases or songs with a simple melody so that people of all ages can participate.

- Provide regular opportunities for youth to lead parts of worship alongside an adult or on their own, and affirm their contributions.

In today's world where life can feel fragmented or lonely, intergenerational congregations with children and youth are a gift. They convey God's love to people of all ages and embody the richness of the community of faith. 

Shana Peachey Boshart, an ordained minister in Mennonite Church USA, is project facilitator for Shine Everywhere. Joan Daggett is project director for Shine and an ordained minister in the Church of the Brethren. Joyce Peachey Lind, editor for Shine, is an ordained minister in Mennonite Church USA.

“To you I lift up my eyes, O you who are enthroned in the heavens! . . . Our eyes look to the Lord our God, until he has mercy upon us. Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us, for we have had more than enough of contempt. Our soul has had more than its fill of the scorn of those who are at ease, of the contempt of the proud.” —Psalm 123:1, 2b-4

WITH EYES LIFTED

by Erin Dalrymple

IT'S TIME FOR THE CHURCH TO SPEAK
UP ABOUT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The darkness hangs heavy and silent, an eerie calm after yet another storm. The shouts have finally ceased. The one with so much rage is finally asleep. The doors are still for a moment. Their hinges need rest after being slammed so many times. The ghosts of words still linger in the air. They refuse to go, refuse to sleep. They continue their assault, penetrating our thoughts and piercing our souls.

You can't always see our wounds. They are cleverly disguised. When we face the world, we smile. Alone, we nurse them. The fragments of debris lie littered around us. Shards of plates broken in rage. Pieces of our lives shattered and laid waste at our feet. We lift up our eyes. Have mercy on us. We have had enough. We are fleeing tonight. Have mercy on us.



This is my story. But more than that, it is the story of many other victims of intimate partner or domestic violence. We are exiles forced to flee unsafe relationships, to flee homes of physical and emotional abuse, to leave behind all we have and all we know.

I hear our stories echoed in the words of Psalm 123, words that give voice to the lament and suffering of a

group of people. I feel their suffering. And I feel their hope as they lift their eyes, as they look toward the promise and assurance of God's grace and mercy.

Whether writing from inside occupied Israel or from outside its borders, the psalmist was writing as an exile. The people lifted their eyes in the hope of deliverance, like their ancestors who fled Egypt. They lifted their eyes in the hope of a new relationship with God, one that promised hope amid a world of oppression and persecution.

When reading this psalm, I feel an immediate and emotional connection to this gesture of lifting one's eyes. It makes me think of the many times my eyes found their way upward as I struggled to survive in a world of rage, insults, and fear. I think about the stories of others, bravely shared, about how their eyes lifted in desperate pleas for help.

As these stories describe, intimate partner violence is a pattern of abusive behavior. It can be physical, emotional, or sexual. It is a means for one partner, someone in an intimate or family relationship, to gain or maintain power and control over another. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 41 percent of women and 26

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percent of men experience sexual or physical violence and/or stalking by an intimate partner each year, and many millions more experience psychological aggression by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

The statistics are staggering, but the reality is that many more cases of intimate partner violence go unreported, and the statistics do not include instances of violence that occur in other relationships, such as child abuse. The widespread problem affects people of all genders and gender identities and individuals across racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, and religious groups.

Intimate partner violence alone is responsible for thousands of deaths in the United States each year. Victims suffer other physical injuries. We suffer emotional injuries, low self-esteem and self-worth, mental illness. We suffer economic hardship. Abusers seek power and control over all aspects of their victim's lives, including finances and material resources. Many victims escape with no money, few possessions, and sometimes no one to turn to. Abusers isolate their victims from their family and friends.

Behind these statistics, eyes are lifting every day. Those eyes yearn for help, for escape, for mercy. They lift in trust that there is something beyond the present.

Similarly, in verse 2 the psalmist continues: “So our eyes look to the Lord our God, until God has mercy upon us.” In this plea, there is a sense that mercy has not yet come. We are waiting for mercy, trusting that it will come, but still waiting. We pray until mercy is granted.

I remember our pleas for mercy when our homes, our places of peace in the world, our refuges, instead became places where violence occurred, places we had to escape.

So many victims have heard others say *they* would not stay in an abusive relationship, but the reality is many of us stay. We stay long past when it is no longer safe. We stay and wait, hoping something will change. We stay and wait, not wanting to face a world other than the world we know. We stay and wait, not wanting to give up our homes, to take our children out of the only world they know, to make them exiles in a strange and foreign place: a shelter or a family or friend's home. We stay because we don't want to admit that we can't make it on our own.


When action is taken, often the voices of victims are

silenced. Victims call the police but are overburdened with a legal process that doesn't offer adequate protection. Restraining orders are not enforced or lapse after a short period of time. If the abuse is emotional, it is more difficult for courts to offer any protection. Stories are questioned. Reports are met with disbelief.

Like those in the psalm, we have had enough of the contempt and scorn. Contempt is its own kind of violence, a violence that denies worth and value, that denies humanity, that denies love, peace, and safety, and—for some victims—even life itself.

Victims often face scorn from their communities of faith, from people who insist they remain in their marriages or face separation from the community or even from God if divorce is pursued. There often persists either an implicit or explicit obligation to make marriages work. People turn away when they know we've left our marriages. But we have had enough of the scorn and contempt.

This is an issue of peace and justice. Every person deserves a home that is safe and healthy, a place to prosper.

The time has come to break the silence. Just as the psalmist offers words that give voice to the lament and suffering of *their* people, the church today can give voice to victims' stories of intimate partner or domestic violence. May all of us, together, lift our eyes to God and our voices to the world. 

Erin Dalrymple is pastor for education and spiritual formation at Bridgewater (Va.) Church of the Brethren.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS

Each year since 1989, October has been observed as Domestic Violence Awareness Month to work toward ending the stigma around this issue, to provide support and connection, and to advocate for change. Purple is typically the color associated with the movement. A hotline is available at 800-799-SAFE. Various resources are available online, including at www.dvawareness.org.

Praise for deliverance

Isaiah 25:1-10a

by Anna Lisa Gross

Isaiah's authority is evident in this passage. He knows Israel's history, he knows their context, he knows their needs, and he knows Yahweh's plans for these people. Isaiah speaks on Yahweh's behalf through the peaks of hope and harmony, and the pits of disobedience and despair.

God and God's people don't live a roller-coaster ride. They live at the pace of foot travel, or camel trains, or laden donkeys. Slowly the people turn back to God. Slowly the people drift away. Slowly they repent. Slowly they fall.

Witnessing and histories

Isaiah witnesses Yahweh's might, directing the people's praise for the one who "has done wonderful things." *Wonderful* is one way to translate the Hebrew *pele*, or *astonishing*. The destruction Isaiah describes is certainly astonishing. (It's the same word the Israelites sing in Exodus 15:11.)

Yahweh's actions include apparent extremes: destroying a city such that it can never be rebuilt *and* sheltering the poor and needy from storms and heat. Do you struggle to reconcile God's gentle kindness and God's violent punishment?

Yahweh witnesses the people who do not know God (strangers, aliens) and

destroys them (verse 2 could refer to Babylon, Nineveh, Moab, etc.). Other times Yahweh uses these strangers/aliens to punish the Hebrew people. What stories do the Babylonians tell of being Yahweh's helpers, yet never knowing God in the way God requires? I haven't found these records yet, but you can review ancient Babylonian letters online. Highlights include a reference to the great threat of "*Hapiru*-brigands." The *Hapiru*-brigands are not a clearly defined tribe or ethnic identity, but a looked-down-upon class of people. Some scholars believe some of them became the Hebrew people, both because the words are very similar and because Yahweh has such passion for the marginalized.

Shelter

God as shelter is a theme throughout scripture, including perhaps the best-known and possibly most-loved instance:

*The LORD is your keeper;
the LORD is your shade
at your right hand.*

*The sun shall not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night
(Psalm 121:5-6).*

I recall running from train to bus stop to bus stop to train in Chicago in

a torrential downpour, arriving at my destination as wet as if I'd jumped in a lake. Walking the dog in the bitter days of January is daunting. But longing for shelter is not a daily reality for most of us the way it could have been for our faith ancestors. Those who lived in deserts didn't take shade or water for granted. Those who lived nomadically understood hospitality as sacred.

Psalms 121, Isaiah 25, and other scriptures describe God as shelter—that God is absorbing the heat or hail for us, with the same nature as the "suffering servant" later in Isaiah, and the same nature as Jesus. In Isaiah 32, Isaiah speaks on God's behalf that human leaders might be shelter:

*See, a king will reign in righteousness,
and princes will rule with justice.
Each will be like a hiding place
from the wind,
a covert from the tempest,
like streams of water in a dry place,
like the shade of a great rock in
a weary land (Isaiah 32:1-2).*

A nearly opposite promise comes later in Isaiah; rather than "The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night," we find:

“Scriptures describe God as shelter—that God is absorbing the heat or hail for us, with the same nature as the “suffering servant” later in Isaiah, and the same nature as Jesus.”

*Your sun shall no more go down,
or your moon withdraw itself;
for the LORD will be your
everlasting light,
and your days of mourning
shall be ended (Isaiah 60:20).*

Human needs shape how we understand God’s provision.

This mountain

Which mountain (v. 6, 7, 10)? Mount Zion, though some scholars say Sinai. For many Christians, the promise of a “new Jerusalem” could be realized in any location. The mountain and the city could be God’s holy plan realized in any place, or many places. These discussions can get complicated quickly, in ecumenical and especially interfaith dialogue.

Muslim faithful know which direction Mecca is throughout their day (or will be sure to find out) in order to pray facing Mecca. In Jewish tradition, one should face the Holy Land when praying. If praying in Israel, face Jerusalem. When praying in Jerusalem, face the Temple Mount, and those on the Mount should turn toward the Holy of Holies.

Three locations have been called Mount Zion over time, because each location became worthy through events:

- The original location of Jerusalem during David’s reign, through conquering the Jebusites and their city of Jebus, and specifically where David had his palace built.
- Where the First Temple was built.
- And finally, the location where people later believed David’s palace was!

Part of the confusion is due to different details in this story recorded in both Samuel and Chronicles.

And if you want a little more complexity, Mount Moriah is another name for at least one of these locations. Mount Moriah is where Abraham pre-

pared to sacrifice his son Isaac. Later, during Solomon’s reign, the First Temple was built on Mount Moriah.

However, Samaritans understand Mount Moriah (where Isaac was bound) to be in a different location (remember that conversation Jesus has at a well with a Samaritan woman, about the different locations where their communities worship?)

And Muslims, who share many sacred stories with Jews and Christians, understand Mount Moriah to be in a wholly different location!

Swallowing death

Wherever it’s happening, the feast would be familiar to our faith ancestors for celebrating special occasions and following military victories. Human leaders sponsored banquets to feed the people. Other gods were understood to sponsor banquets too, especially on their holidays.

Does your stomach begin to growl at the description of this feast?

But there’s something unique on God’s menu that won’t whet your appetite: Death. “He will swallow up death forever” (v. 8). Death could be written with a capital D, because this is Death personified. We find this in other scriptures: “Like sheep [the foolhardy] are appointed for Sheol; Death shall be their shepherd; straight to the grave they descend” (Psalm 49:14a). “Death consumed me” (Psalm 104:2b, Inclusive Bible).

Yahweh swallowing Death is a clever and contextual image. Their neighbors’ mythology included a deity, Death, who swallows its prey. Death’s most impressive prey was Baal (should sound familiar; there are over 100 references to Baal in the Old Testament), a fertility, storm/weather god. Yahweh swallows Death, the swallower!

Beyond a dying sun

You may hear the hymn “Beyond a Dying Sun” (no. 323 in *Hymnal: A Worship Book*) as you read Isaiah 25:

*For God at last shall wipe away
the tear from every eye.
The sting of death shall pierce
the heart no more.*


Revelation 21 makes these promises, and there are other promises shared between Isaiah and Revelation. This feast is for “all people” (vv. 6-7) even “foreigners” (vv. 2, 5). The vision of the new or heavenly Jerusalem depicted in incredible detail in Revelation includes foreigners as well (7:9).

Why we worship

Why do we worship? Is it for God’s sake, or for our sake, or both?

Though we have a few references in scripture to God being jealous and demanding the people stop worshiping other gods, the notion that God needs our worship to feel okay doesn’t make sense to many Christians. If we understand God as whole and perfect, how could God need our worship?

Perhaps God longs for relationship with us but does not “need” our worship to feel good. Our worship, directed to God, may primarily be for our own sake: to right-size ourselves, to orient ourselves, to remember who and whose we are.

“We pray because our life comes from God and we yield it back in prayer. Prayer is a great antidote to the illusion that we are self-made,” says Walter Bruggemann. Worship (including prayer) reminds us that we are created beings and invites us to be in relationship with our Creator. 

Anna Lisa Gross is a pastor at Beacon Heights Church of the Brethren in Fort Wayne, Ind. This study is from *A Guide for Biblical Studies*, published by Brethren Press.



courtesy of Child Life Disaster Relief

Emergency Disaster Fund grants

■ **\$10,000** supports Brethren Disaster Ministries' work to complete the rebuilding of four homes in York County, Pa., following Tropical Storm Ida. This is a collaboration with the districts of Southern Pennsylvania, Middle Pennsylvania, and Atlantic Northeast, which are coordinating volunteers.

■ **\$15,000** supports training models and resource development by Child Life Disaster Relief, a partner organization of Children's Disaster Services (CDS).

■ **\$5,000** supports families connected with the Maui (Hawaii) Economic Opportunity, Inc.'s Head Start center in Lahaina, who were affected by last year's devastating wildfire. The grant includes a donation of \$4,646.28 from Virlina District designated for programming in Maui. As CDS had completed its work there, it iden-

tified Maui Economic Opportunity, Inc., through contacts with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Global Food Initiative grants

■ **\$15,402.06** supports an aquaculture project of Iglesia de los Hermanos Comunidad de Fe (Community of Faith Church of the Brethren) representing Haitian Creole-speaking churches in the Dominican Republic.

■ **\$4,000** is given to a grain mill project of the Church of the Brethren in Burundi, serving a community of about 3,000 people and likely to produce income for the church as well as some church members.

■ **\$2,500** supports a maize mill project in Uganda, aiding Hima Church of the Brethren to purchase a second motor to hull and grind grain.

■ **\$1,500** helped seven people from l'Eglise des Freres d'Haiti (the Church of the Brethren in Haiti) receive training in Syntropic farming, which has proven effective in reforestation with fruit and forestry plants.

CDS deploys to Lake Isabella

From Aug. 9 to 13, Children's Disaster Services (CDS) deployed a team of three volunteers to Lake Isabella, Calif., to serve 20 children in a local assistance center. This deployment was in response to the Borel fire, which started July 24 after a vehicle went over the edge of Highway 178 in Kern County, Calif., and caught fire. Borel was the second largest wildfire in California in the 2024 wildfire season, burning more than 59,000 acres before 91 percent containment on Aug. 10.

In the last few years, CDS volunteers have responded in several states during wildfires. These have included the 2023 wildfire in Lahaina, Maui, Hawaii, where 13 CDS volunteers served 457 children during 6 weeks of deployment; the Marshall Fire in Lafayette, Colo., in January 2022, serving 25 children; and in 2021, 3 wildfires in Santa Clara and Oroville, Calif., and 1 in Boulder, Colo. In 2018, CDS responded with 3 separate teams to the Camp Fire that destroyed the town of Paradise, Calif.

Staff increase translation efforts

A team of denominational staff has begun coordinating work on translation efforts in order to increase the number of printed resources and provide more interpretation at events. The group, which began meeting last year, is identifying the highest priorities for projects, assembling style guides for use by different translators, and locating funding beyond individual departments.

The staff team is working toward an organizational practice of translating resources into Spanish and Haitian Creole and is exploring ways to generate new funding sources for this work. The team also is developing a network of translators and a glossary of terms to maintain consistency and Brethren identity

across different translators.

The team set a priority for two projects in Haitian Creole: One is translation of *Manual del Pastor*, a Spanish-language compilation of selected material from *For All Who Minister*. Another is translation of Chapter 4 of the *Church of the Brethren Manual of Organization and Polity*, with the intention of translating the entire manual once updates are finalized. The manual already exists in Spanish.

Convened by Nate Polzin, executive director of Discipleship and Leadership Formation, the team also includes Founa Badet, Rhonda Pittman Gingrich, Nancy Sollenberger Heishman, Wendy McFadden, and Traci Rabenstein.

Brethren Faith in Action grants

■ **\$5,000** helps Antioch Church of the Brethren in Rocky Mount, Va., to upgrade its sound system. The church had been streaming worship services using a system installed more than 20 years ago.

■ **\$5,000** jumpstarts Columbia City (Ind.) Church of the Brethren's new Feed the Need ministry, an outreach project extending the congregation's commitment to being present in the downtown.

■ **\$5,000** aids Gospel Assembly of Lehigh in Lehigh Acres, Fla., to purchase a van for its ministries. The congregation offers an array of activities for youth and children.

■ **\$5,000** aids Iglesia Cristiana Elohim in Las Vega, Nev., to purchase musical equipment and develop promotional resources to establish the church's presence in its neighborhood.

■ **\$5,000** supports Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., as it has hosted a family from Nicaragua seeking asylum in the US. The congregation has supported asylum-seekers for several years, including people from Guatemala and Colombia.

■ **\$5,000** helps Meadow Branch Church of the Brethren in Westminster, Md., to install new flooring in the fellowship hall, replacing asbestos tiles. Outreach activities in the fellowship hall include a weekly food pantry.

■ **\$5,000** aids Nuevo Comienzo Church of the Brethren's outreach ministry to Hispanic people in Kissimmee, Fla., the majority of whom are low-income families who are challenged economically.

■ **\$5,000** has helped expand the outreach capacity of West Charleston Church of the Brethren in Tipp City,



Brethren Volunteer Service

The Summer 2024 unit of Brethren Volunteer Service (BVS), Unit 335, completed orientation Aug. 5 at Camp Colorado in Sedalia, Colo.:

(front, from left) **Carla Sornig** of North Rhine Westphalia, Germany, is working at Abode Services in California; **Henry Schenk** of Bavaria, Germany, is at Abode Services; **Calvin Brown** of Manchester Church of the Brethren in North Manchester, Ind., is serving at Corrymeela Community in Northern Ireland; **Tom Hurst** of McPherson (Kan.) Church of the Brethren is at Corrymeela Community; **Isabel Kruse** of Huntingdon, Pa., is working with Greenhill YMCA in Northern Ireland; (back) **Rachel Johnson** of Mechanic Grove Church of the Brethren in Quarryville, Pa., is working with FaithX and Brethren Volunteer Service at the Church of the Brethren General Offices in Elgin, Ill.; **Kate Ruebke** of Pleasant Valley Church of the Brethren in Weyers Cave, Va., is at Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center in Arkansas; **Svea Lembcke** of Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, is serving at Camp Stevens in California; **Lauren Hazel** of Brownsburg, Ind., is working with Greenhill YMCA in Northern Ireland; **Katelyn Hoffmann** of Pfullendorf, Germany, is serving with Ferncliff Camp and Conference Center; **Jan Hurst** of McPherson Church of the Brethren is working at Corrymeela Community; **Melika Rassoli** of Baden-Württemberg, Germany, has been at L'Arche Syracuse in New York.

Ohio, in support of the immigrants and refugees who make up 35 to 40 percent of the active congregation.

■ **\$4,676.19** helps the Church in Drive in Saginaw, Mich., to upgrade its audiovisual system. This ongoing project integrates online participants with the church's in-person activities beyond Sunday worship.

■ **\$3,000** has funded Potsdam (Ohio) Church of the Brethren's six community outreach events in 2024.

■ **\$2,500** helps Shepherd's Spring Outdoor Ministry Center, a camp in Mid-Atlantic District near Sharpsburg, Md., welcome youth from Hagerstown (Md.) Girl's Inc. Since 2021, about 80 girls have attended day camp each summer.

■ **\$500** has supported Topeka (Kan.) Church of the Brethren's Living Nativity outreach event last winter—part of the congregation's Jesus in the Neighborhood initiative.



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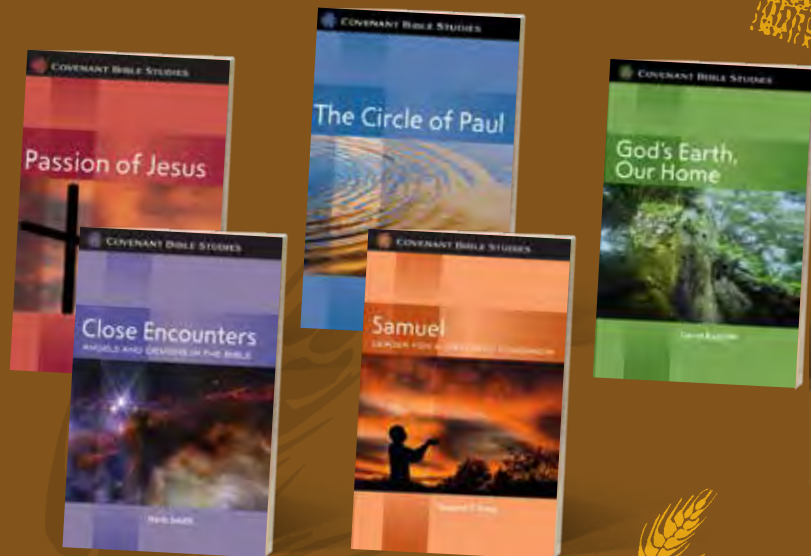
Discussion starters for small groups

■ **Minga solidarity in Ecuador**, for the FaithX group, meant becoming involved with Fundación Brethren y Unida (FBU) and Unidad Educativa Brethren (UEB). How were both related to the Church of the Brethren? On what ministries and values do they focus today? What did the FaithX group do to get to know the people of these communities? If a FaithX group visited your church and community, how would you encourage them to get to know you and your neighbors?

■ **Weapons transfers** may be the polar opposite of the gospel of peace. What critique does Nathan Hosler make of weapons transfers and current-day war-making, based on Christian convictions, peace church theology, and Annual Conference statements? When he urges, “evaluate our direct participation in war . . . [and] understand the less obvious ways,” what is he asking readers to do, in real-life terms? Answer his question: “How do our ignorance, lack of focus, or inertia support war?”

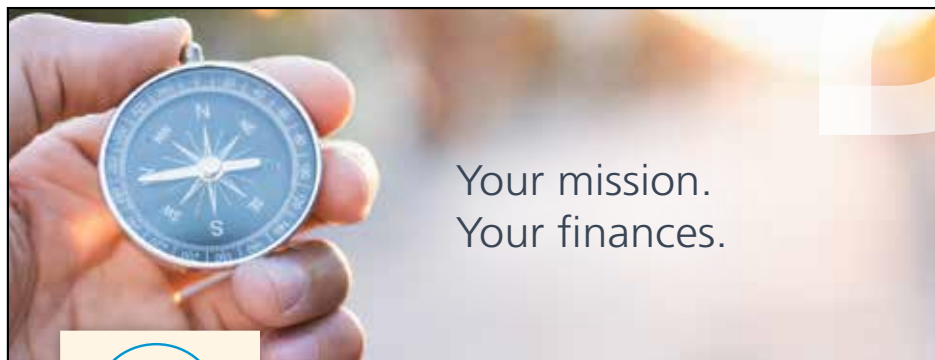
■ **Living the legacy** and making Jesus’ work our own is a key point of Paul’s letter to the Romans, writes Debbie Eisenbise. How did Paul pass on the legacy of Christ to Gentile believers not born into the Jewish faith? What does “adoption” mean in this context? Who, in your life, has passed on the legacy of Christ to you? How have you been “adopted” into the family of God?

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Tiny stories

Brethren 20 questions

Pat and I moved into the Bridgewater Retirement Community in March 2014. In the spring of 2016 a delightful couple, Lillie Ann and Sam Flora, moved in directly across from us.

Naturally, Sam and I played the Brethren “20 Questions”: Did you go to Annual Conferences? Did you go to NOAC? Do you know so-and-so? Did you do this or that? I was certain I had heard him talk somewhere, but it seemed our paths had never crossed.

Each year the Bridgewater College Alumni Association, at its annual banquet, proclaims the members of the class 50 years ago to be members of the Ripples Society. They also recognize one or two outstanding alumni who then give a short talk. Many of these talks are memorable (one year a 90-year-old doctor did a handstand).

At the 2016 banquet, prior to recognizing the outstanding alumni, they asked former recipients to stand. Up stood Dr. Samuel H. Flora Jr. Bingo! I then knew when and where I had heard him speak; it was at the Ripples Society banquet in 2010.

Sam and I had many chuckles about this before he passed in 2021.

—Ralph Compton, Bridgewater, Va.

Sushi for love feast

The building had congregations speaking three languages. The Korean church came to love feast, bringing trays of sushi and pastries to enhance the traditional shredded beef and fruit. An older pastor knelt in front of a young boy and carefully washed his feet. I saw humility embodied.

Servant leadership. Welcome for others even when it means changing traditions. A living image of Jesus.

—Jan Fischer Bachman, Oklahoma City, Okla.

Friendship

“Lois and Pat, you must stop talking.” That was the mandate from Lois’ father, who was our algebra teacher and also preacher at Union Bridge (Md.) Church of the Brethren. We were together 24/7 and later became roommates at Bridgewater College.

Lois was typically found in the nursery after the sermon, while I wanted answers to questions about the sermon. Years later, when I was an ordained minister speaking at Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church of the Brethren, Lois was in the nursery caring for babies. This past April I attended the memorial service for Lois’ husband, Joe Whitmore.

—Patricia Roop Hollinger, Westminster, Md.

Centenarians

Kramer, Valeria, 100, Harleysville, Pa., July 11
Ott, J. Irene, 100, North Manchester, Ind., Aug. 4
Peters, Verda Mae, 103, Sardinia, Ohio, June 18
Scheaffer, Paul, 100, Hummelstown, Pa., Aug. 10
Simmons, Eva, 100, Randallstown, Md., Sept. 1

New members

Anderson, Ind.: Deakin Borden
Bush Creek, Monrovia, Md.: Richard Himes, Tasha Himes, Matthew Weller, Michelle Weller
Celebration of Christ, Saint Petersburg, Fla.: Margaret Boyd, Annette Clifford, Ken Counts, Cynthia McLaughlin, Stephen McLaughlin, Dale

Posthumus
Evergreen, Stanardsville, Va.: Hattie Batten
Lafayette, Ind.: Keely Frier
Nokesville, Va.: Jessica Brockett, Harper Buettner, Kathy Sproles Groomes, Elisa Hack, David Myers, Jameson Revard
Peace, Portland, Ore.: Summer Stann
Prince of Peace, Kettering, Ohio: Julie Moore, Jimmy Parizek, Kelly Patrick, Karen Peck, Terry Walker
Stevens Hill Community, Elizabethtown, Pa.: Henry Becker, David Black, Kim Black, Beth Gallagher
University Baptist and Brethren, State College, Pa.: David Sollenberger, Sandy Sollenberger, Gabriel White-Vega

Wedding anniversaries

Brown, Maurice and Jane Phyllis, Parkville, Md., 73
Dotterer, Donald and Lorraine, Lancaster, Pa., 68
Jessup, Max and Dorothy, Anderson, Ind., 75

Deaths

Baker, William Edmond, Sr., 87, Roanoke, Va., Aug. 4
Batten, Robert Edward, 80, Earlysville, Va., June 28
Belser, Peggy Eberly, 94, Evanston, Ill., Aug. 15
Bohince, Darcey Frank, 89, Nokesville, Va., Nov. 4
Bohince, Judith Ann Knepper, 85, Nokesville, Va., Jan. 21
Bryan, M. Audean, 73, Middletown, Pa., July 20
Bunch, Zemora A. “Sis”

Gotschall, 85, Marion, Ind., Dec. 27
Cramer, Nora Lee Mulligan, 98, Hanover, Pa., July 14
Crumrine, Ruth Geesaman, 96, Oakmont, Pa., Aug. 1
Flory, Mary Ellyson Owens, 98, Nokesville, Va., Sept. 4, 2023
Hanna, Aloma J. Stanley, 92, Anderson, Ind., June 14
Hargett, John A., Jr., 101, Mount Airy, Md., June 11
Helm, LaRue Monn, 96, Lititz, Pa., July 25
Hylton, Clyde E., 91, Fieldale, Va., July 31
Lerch, Pauline Elizabeth Ebert, 98, Coopersburg, Pa., June 2
Mehaffie, Elizabeth, 84, Harrisburg, Pa., July 25
Ott, Kathy Ann Berg, 67, Hollidaysburg, Pa., June 20
Remington, Viola D., 91, Topeka, Kan., July 17

Sanchez, Pedro, 84, Lynchburg, Va., July 1
Savage, Paula Joyce Perry, 92, Anderson, Ind., May 17
Simmons, Mary Alice Murphy, 100, Hershey, Pa., July 15

Ordained

Leatherman, Paul, III, Mid-Atl. Dist. (Longmeadow, Hagerstown, Md.), July 15
Meiser, Laura, Atl. N. E. Dist. (Hempfield, Manheim, Pa.), July 21

Commissioned

Jarrett, Harry, Jr., Shen. Dist. (Pleasant Valley, Weyers Cave, Va.), Aug. 17

Licensed

Imler, Gabriel, Mid. Pa. Dist. (Hollidaysburg, Pa.), July 28

Placements

Hershberger, Marlys, interim pastor, Hollidaysburg, Pa., Aug. 11

To submit information for Turning Points, go to www.brethren.org/turning-points. Or send information to Diane Stroyeck at dstroyeck@brethren.org or 1451 Dundee Ave., Elgin, IL 60120. Information must be complete and less than one year old to be published.

TURNINGPOINTS

Voting for my neighbor's good

You may have noticed that there is a presidential election this year—although, in this wearisome era of perpetual campaigning, I wouldn't blame you for wishing I'd written about something else!

I am increasingly concerned that, for some, voting has become a test of Christian orthodoxy, as if there is only one candidate a faithful Christian can support, or one topic of such significance that it alone should determine your vote.



TIM HARVEY

Even more dubious is the notion that this November's election will determine the fate of Christianity in America, a view that is as naïve of scripture as it is of Christian history. The church already has an all-sufficient Savior; that office isn't on the ballot in this, or any other, election.

This isn't to say that there aren't clear differences in the policy proposals from the two major party candidates. I just don't share the notion that things are as apocalyptic in America as some would have us believe.

So how might we approach the upcoming election? I begin by gladly acknowledging my personal experience of being an American, a privilege almost too magnificent for words due to the freedom America provides. There are many places and time periods I'd enjoy visiting, but there is no other place I wish to call home.


But I also hear my church calling me "to foster an awareness that being born into and living in North American society exposes a person to racism that infiltrates all aspects of life" (quoting from the report of the Standing with People of Color committee at this year's Annual Conference). This uncomfortable reality exists because of the tension between two of the most significant years in American history: 1619 and 1787.

The preamble to the US Constitution (written in 1787) boldly states our intention to "form a more perfect union." Yet this noble aspiration has always been hindered by America's original sin of 1619 (the year enslaved Africans first arrived in Virginia) and the subsequent laws and prejudices that limited who was worthy of being counted as fully American—or even fully human.

As I consider my vote this fall, I want to "look not to [my] own interests but to the interests of others" (Philippians 2:4) and understand how each candidate's position works to resolve the tension between 1619 and 1787. So I'm looking at the neighborhoods in Roanoke most affected by gun violence and noting that these very neighborhoods were intentionally segregated in Roanoke's early years.

Then, in the 1960s to 1980s, Roanoke's leaders targeted portions of these same neighborhoods for so-called "urban renewal." Homes and businesses were bulldozed, and Black residents were moved into housing projects, all to build a new civic center, post office hub, and interstate exit.

Today, these neighborhoods struggle with the deeply interconnected issues of poverty, lack of access to fresh food, single-parent homes, absence of male role models, gang-related gun violence, and more. How might my vote best support colleagues and neighbors who live and work in these neighborhoods?

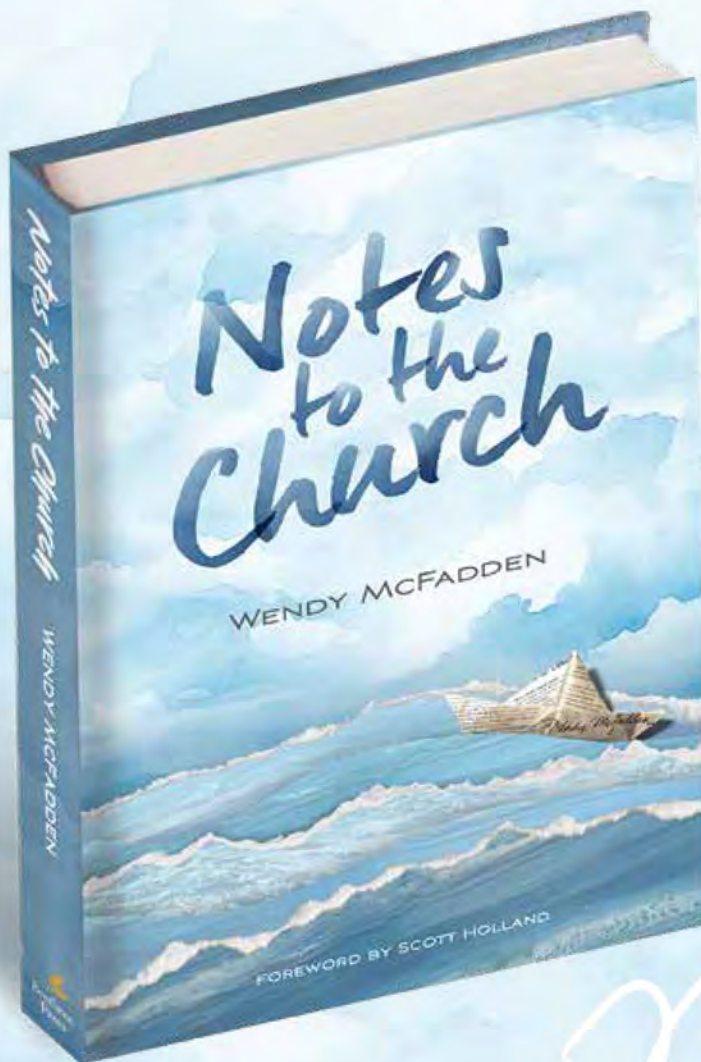
However each of us determines our vote, it is important to remember that political parties are not interested in Christian virtue, they are interested in Christian votes. The future of Christianity is not on the ballot, but the credibility of our faith might be. So look around at your neighbors who are struggling and consider voting in a way that most helps them. Then find a way to get directly involved "for the glory of God and your neighbor's good." 

Tim Harvey is pastor of Oak Grove Church of the Brethren in Roanoke, Va.

“The future of Christianity is not on the ballot, but the credibility of our faith might be.”

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