

*“The Earth is the Lord’s
and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1).*



A Study Resource on Climate Change

for the Church of the Brethren Annual Conference Query on Climate Change

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Introduction

Yes, the Earth is the Lord’s, and as human beings made in God’s image, this brings special responsibility. While we live in the world as part of Creation, we have also been charged to be God’s caretakers of all Creation—plants, animals, seas, skies, ecological systems, and our neighbors as well. This study resource focuses on our Christian call to care for God’s Creation and all of God’s children who are affected by the disruptions and injustices caused by climate change. It has been created as part of a response to a query brought to the 2010 Annual Conference.

The query asks:

“What is the position of Annual Conference on climate change, and how can we as individuals, congregations and as a denomination take concrete action to live more responsibly and offer leadership in our communities and nation?”

In fashioning a response to this query, our task team has sought to be guided by Brethren understandings of the Bible and of what it means to continue the work of Jesus in our current time. It is the hope and prayer of the assembled study committee that this guide might give greater clarity and inspiration to caring for what God has so generously given: “the Earth and all that is in it.” This current effort to respond to climate change builds upon previous statements of the church, especially the 1991 Annual Conference statement “Creation: Called to Care,” and the 2001 board “Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change.”

This guide is divided into three sections:

- 1. Climate Change and its Impact**
- 2. Biblical and Brethren Perspective**
- 3. Steps for Study and Action**

Section 1: Climate Change and its Impact

Over the past several decades, Earth's average temperature has experienced a consistent warming trend. In many areas of the world, this has led to heat waves that have killed thousands; drought that has affected agricultural production, often leading to higher food prices and an increase in forest fires; increasing disease vectors that have brought additional suffering especially on the world's poor; and severe storm events that have unleashed floods, hurricanes and tornadoes of unprecedented size and frequency. All these factors have meant an increase in the need for disaster relief in our country and around the world. The changing climate has also caused other living creatures to alter migration patterns and seek out new food sources, some to become extinct, and many others struggling to survive in a rapidly changing world. In light of these conditions, it is clear that God's Earth is deeply in need of our care. These changes to the Earth's climate point to a future where God's people will suffer physically and economically. God's already embattled Creation will face many additional threats to its vitality and viability.

Science, Not Fiction

The purpose of science is to understand the physical world through repeated inquiry and observation. It does not seek to explain a moral or ethical choice, which is a purpose of religion, but merely understand the way that physical reality is now and make inferences on future outcomes. For example, this distinction can be seen between understanding the characteristics of subatomic particles, which have allowed the crafting of the atomic bomb, and the ethics around whether such a destructive force should

be used. In dealing with climate change, we are similarly addressing the crossroads of science and the ethics informed from our Christian faith. While many of us are not scientists by vocation, we can learn much from those who dedicate their lives to such research. The reports of the National Academies are seen by this committee as the most reliable guides to understanding the nature, scope, causes, and impacts of climate change.

To quote the scientific conclusions of the 527-page report:

- *Climate change is occurring, is caused largely by human activities, and poses significant risks for—and in many cases is already affecting—a broad range of human and natural systems.*

- *This conclusion is based on a substantial array of scientific evidence, including recent work, and is consistent with the conclusions of the IPCC's Fourth Assessment Report (IPCC, 2007a-d), recent assessments by the USGCRP (e.g., USGRP, 2009a), and other recent assessments of the state of scientific knowledge on climate change. Both our assessment and these previous assessments place high or very high confidence in the following findings.*

- *Earth is warming. Detailed observations of surface temperature assembled and analyzed by several different research groups show that the planet's average surface temperature was 1.4°F (0.8°C) warmer during the first decade of the 21st century than during the first decade of the 20th century, with the most pronounced warming over the past three decades. These data are corroborated by a variety of independent observations that indicate warming in other parts of the Earth system, including the cryosphere (the frozen portions of Earth's surface), the lower atmosphere, and the oceans.*

- *Most of the warming over the last several*

decades can be attributed to human activities that release carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other heat-trapping greenhouse gases (GHGs) into the atmosphere. The burning of fossil fuels—coal, oil, and natural gas—for energy is the single largest human driver of climate change, but agriculture, forest clearing, and certain industrial activities also make significant contributions.

- *Natural climate variability leads to year-to-year and decade-to-decade fluctuations in temperature and other climate variables, as well as substantial regional differences, but cannot explain or offset the long-term warming trend.*

- *Global warming is closely associated with a broad spectrum of other changes, such as increases in the frequency of intense rainfall, decreases in Northern Hemisphere snow cover and Arctic sea ice, warmer and more frequent hot days and nights, rising sea levels, and widespread ocean acidification.*

- *Human-induced climate change and its impacts will continue for many decades, and in some cases for many centuries. Individually and collectively, and in combination with the effects of other human activities, these changes pose risks for a wide range of human and environmental systems, including freshwater resources, the coastal environment, ecosystems, agriculture, fisheries, human health, and national security, among others.*

- *The ultimate magnitude of climate change and the severity of its impacts depend strongly on the actions that human societies take to respond to these risks. (To download the NAS report, see “Further Reading” below)*

There is strong consensus in the scientific community that the observed climate disruptions around the globe are the consequences of increased levels of greenhouse gases caused by human activity. As noted above, there are al-

ready observations being made about the changing of Earth’s climate. Many studies have been done on the implications of these findings, and conclusions vary on the details of future effects. However, the overwhelming majority of these studies conclude that climate change effects will pose significant risks to the well-being of all life in the future. Such observations should give us pause to discern what on God’s Earth is going on, and make decisions from our faith values to address a moral action.

▶ **As Christians, how do we understand the relationship between faith and science?**

▶ **What role does scientific knowledge play in our understanding of God’s world?**

Economy and How We Consume

Economy and ecology are deeply related, and in fact both spring from the same root word: “eco.” This is the Greek word for “household,” and is a reminder that we live within two realms at the same time—our monetary economy and our Earth’s ecology. Indeed, we are learning that both are integrally related. If we don’t care for the larger ecological community, our economies will inevitably suffer. For instance, not acting on climate change now will lead to massive costs for future generations—both financially and in terms of human health—as society adapts to an over-heated world. Certainly humans need to consume energy and other resources, but we must find ways that maintain the stability, beauty and vitality of God’s Earth.

▶ **How do we decide between consumption and preservation of resources? In this regard, what makes a personal act of consumption “faithful” or “unfaithful”?**

▶ **How does culture shape our identities as consumers rather than stewards?**

Walking Her Talk

"I love to walk. It clears and refocuses my mind. It's gentle exercise. While walking the byways around my suburban home I pick up aluminum cans. Sometimes people stop me and ask what I'm doing. I explain how recycling aluminum saves the environment (less bauxite mining, less petroleum used, less greenhouse gas emissions). I also say I get money for recycling cans. The money goes to one of my favorite charities. That usually gets them. What could be better? Gentle exercise, educating the public through word and example, a cleaner roadside and environment, support for a non-profit that plants trees and promotes peace. Gained on today's 3 mile walk: 61 cans, a discarded handsaw, and a secondary feather from a hawk's right wing. I also find I'm walking farther for the same number of cans. Maybe people do listen."

—Glenda Webber, Sykesville, Md.

Indeed throughout history, entire civilizations have been brought down by the economic impacts of mistreating their local environments. Today, we have the ability to adversely affect the entire global economy—and with it, human well-being—should we allow climate change to proceed unbridled. Economic conditions throughout the world have been affected by environmental conditions.

► **As tenants take care of a household entrusted by an owner, how also could people of faith take care of the Creation entrusted to us by God?**

► **What is the connection between our relationship to God and the care or misuse of Creation?**

We in more affluent countries have a special obligation to examine how our lifestyle choices affect both our neighbors and our global neighborhood. Combining our affluence with ever-increasing technology has been a driving force behind the degradation of God's Creation. Ongoing increases in global population—and the aspirations of our neighbors to model our way of living—adds a recipe for an endangered Earth. Our country is the highest exporter of food; drought conditions have affected both the price and supply for countries that rely on our farms. Our penchant for large homes, personal vehicles, diets high in meat protein and exces-

sive material consumption simply cannot be matched by the billions of other people with whom we share this planet.

Climate change is in fact exacerbated by these kinds of consumer trends. Our present economy—from housing and transportation to agriculture and consumer goods shipped around the world—is largely based on fossil fuels. Our transportation system is fueled by petroleum, and releases nearly two billion tons of carbon emissions annually. Producing electricity generates another two billion tons of greenhouse gases. The industrial agricultural system that provides our food is also a principal contributor to climate change. Many of the consumer products we use daily are no longer made locally but travel thousands of miles to reach us—and create millions of tons of carbon emissions in the process.

► **How does our discipleship formation challenge the way that we are shaped by the surrounding culture?**

► **How do our cultural choices challenge our Christian discipleship?**

Since survival requires some level of consumption, how should we consume? We have often heard the mantra "Reduce, reuse, recycle," but our society has made only the last part more common. For example, the standard model of production and waste systems since the

industrial revolution has been linear. This means that we extract a raw material, process it, consume it, and then dispose of it. For each new product we start from a raw material and eventually produce a waste material. While all waste may not be completely avoided, there are ways to reduce raw materials needed by reuse of discarded material. This closed-cycle process, often called cradle-to-cradle production, is one solution to our economic production by being more in tune with the order found in ecosystems on God's Earth. For greater detail into this idea, please refer to the November 2012 *Messenger* article "What Goes Around" by David Radcliff and other sources in the Further Reading section.

Reducing our consumption is an even more important method of radical stewardship. In relation to consumer purchases that create greenhouse gas emissions, we could choose to:

- *Leave the car at home one day a week and save over a ton of CO2 annually (some Brethren have given up cars ownership, saving loads of CO2 and money!).*

- *Refuse to buy items in single-use containers (eight percent of the world's petroleum is used to create 600 billion pounds of plastic per year globally; half of this plastic is for one-time use).*

- *Find other sources of protein besides meat is since meat consumption is responsible for over a ton of greenhouse gases per person per year in the United States.*

► **What other actions or innovations to reduce the consumption of resources have you learned about?**

► **What other creative ideas could your congregation come up with?**

Section 2: Biblical and Brethren Values

"The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till and to keep it" (Genesis 2:15).

"Because of the absolute dependence of humankind on environment and vice versa (humankind is part of the environment), a plan of shalom for humanity excluding nature would be unthinkable. The fall included an alienation of humanity and nature from God, and could only be reconciled with the redemption of both" (1991 Annual Conference Statement: "Creation: Called to Care").

In Genesis we read that God intended for Creation to provide sustenance for all living things and made a covenant with humanity to be stewards of Creation. We, as humanity, have fallen short of that covenant. Brethren have long had a deep relationship with Creation from our farming roots and global ministries of hunger and disaster relief to healthcare and educational professions. Believing that our actions continue the work of Jesus, we have placed strong importance on living out our faith. At the urging of a hearing at the 2012 Annual Conference, we are in part focusing on re-engaging Brethren values as derived from scripture and our experience of following Jesus to address climate change. We will look at simplicity, continuing the work of Jesus, stewardship, and care for those in need to see what can help us in determining our response to the climate change.

Continuing the Work of Jesus

From our practice of reading scripture together, the Brethren have learned many things. We have long claimed that the "New Testament is our creed" and that through the study of the Bible in community we learn what it means to

follow in the way of Jesus. Indeed, Jesus changes the way we live in this world. Jesus calls us to live for the Kingdom of God. It is important that we bear witness to the Kingdom both in word and in action—that is, how we preach, sing, and talk to others about our faith as well as how we serve people in need, live honestly, challenge injustice, and care for all of God’s Creation. Jesus knew that living for God’s Kingdom meant one had to become a servant, or slave, subject to God’s priorities. The Brethren have understood that the servanthood Jesus portrayed often meant sacrificing the empowerment of self for the well-being of all in the community. We may have the freedom to do whatever we want as citizens of the United States, but as citizens of God’s Kingdom our decisions are subject to Kingdom priorities. Jesus further warns that pursuits of wealth and materialism can distract from our relationship with God.

“No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth” (Matthew 6:24 NRSV).

The following illustration Jesus then gives in scripture is inextricably linked to the order and provision of Creation.

“Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:31-33 NRSV).

Jesus understood that loving God also means loving those whom God loves, and often sought to meet people’s physical needs before addressing their spiritual needs. How can we tell others

about the Good News and Abundant Life when they are dealing with the despairing health issues of polluted water, soil, and air? How can they build a solid foundation of faith when their homes have been ravaged by flood waters, or their food sources have been withered from drought? Taking from Jesus’ lead, we can be witnesses to proclaim God’s love and goodness to the world when we are also working to protect the Creation in which we live.

Many teachings and actions of Jesus require his followers to seriously consider anything that impacts God’s people and planet as an expression of their faith. Jesus was concerned about the “least of these” (Matthew 25:40). People impacted the most by the effects of climate change are the poor and vulnerable. Our choices carry consequences and risks. As in the well-known parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37), Jesus reminds us that when our actions—or inaction—is harming our neighbor we are called to stop our usual routine and show mercy. The risks associated with climate change therefore require our attention as the church seeks to continue the work of Jesus.

► **When have you made a decision to live differently based from your faith convictions?**

► **In what ways have you seen a relationship between sharing the Good News and caring for a person or community’s well-being?**

► **We are constantly in contact with nature through our food and energy needs. How might caring for Creation be a means to proclaim the Good News?**

Line in the Sand(s)

I have marched and picketed a handful of times in the past, and with my brother decided to join the Tar Sands Action outside the White House. Tar Sands are the dirtiest source of oil, but that hasn't stopped Canada from exploiting them. To get at the sands, forests are cleared and the area strip-mined. Then a 1661-mile Keystone XL pipeline must be built from Canada through the US to refineries in Texas. And then there's the CO2 that will be generated in mining the oil from these sands and in the combustion of the fuel that is produced. NASA climatologist James Hansen, who joined us in the protest, says that if we exploit these tar sands in a big way, it is essentially "game over" for the climate.

When I decided to take part in the Tar Sands Action in a supportive role, I did feel anxious with a touch of terror by refusing to follow a police order and being enclosed by the temporary barrier. (I earn a living by substitute teaching and preparing individual income tax returns and an arrest could be something that would have to be explained.) I avoided arrest, but those who were thanked us for our moral support.

I have tried to take personal actions such as using a clothes line and using a solar hot water heater, and I regularly contact elected officials and newspapers to share my opinions. I do these things because I believe that as stewards of God's Creation we should care for the Earth. I felt going to the White House in support of the environment was something more I could do. Plus I thought it might actually stop the construction of the pipeline, so I'm glad I took a day to participate in this action.

—Mike Koob, Knoxville, Md.

Simplicity

Years ago, all Brethren were immediately recognized for their simple, plain dress. Stemming from the call to be in the world but not of the world (Romans 12:2), such practices of nonconformity arose. Though Brethren express nonconformity in a variety of ways, simplicity remains a value guiding daily decisions to this day. While the early Brethren may not have been thinking of the environment when they discussed these values, there was inherent wisdom in reducing what we use.

Simple living is a necessity born out of our moral commitment to God's people and Creation. Shaped by the values we understood in Jesus' life and teachings, Brethren have thought intentionally about how their decisions impact brothers and sisters around the world. The Earth's capacity to support humanity depends on humanity's care for Creation. Part of living simply, then is not using more resources than we need. It means valuing others and the things of God more than accumulating possessions. The value of simple living leads toward a sustainable lifestyle.

Simple living may be expressed through

building mutually supportive communities where resources are shared, using only the resources needed, or reducing energy use and consumption. All of these actions come from the recognition of privilege, and the decision to enact Jesus' justice through simple living. By living simply, space enough for all of God's creatures is made.

► **How can we build our awareness about the amount of resources we consume and the impacts our consumption patterns make on God's Creation?**

► **Does the Brethren ideal of simple living actually change how we live or is it only something we talk about?**

Stewardship

The roots of stewardship in the Church of the Brethren begin in the soil. A substantial number of early Brethren were farmers who continued farming in the United States in the second half of the 19th century. Until the 1950s, most Anabaptists made a living in occupations related to agriculture. Not only did Brethren develop stewardship of the land as part of their occupation,

but as an extension of their faith. Brethren continued the call to till and care for the land (Genesis 2:15) by developing sustainable farming practices. During this time, ecological stewardship became a part of our cultural and religious heritage.

Today, Brethren engage in a variety of occupations, but our roots in the land still go deep. In God's covenant with Noah, God says, "As long as the Earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease (Genesis 8:22)." Brethren stewardship calls us to make daily decisions to support the Earth's endurance so that local and global communities might flourish.

Ecological stewardship is made real through tending gardens, caring for soil, creating healthy watersheds, and supporting ecological diversity. Beyond this, stewardship is present in our continual decisions to treat the Earth responsibly. From consuming less to acting responsibly with the waste we produce, stewardship is a part of our daily lives. Informed by our historic roots, biblical guidance, and concern for global communities, stewardship offers a way forward in addressing the increasing ecological crisis.

Care for Those in Need and Advocating for Justice

Throughout the Bible, God calls upon us to help those in need. In the Word we find:

"For there will never cease to be poor in the land. Therefore I command you, 'You shall open wide your hand to your brother, to the needy and to the poor, in your land'" (Deuteronomy 15:11).

"But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth" (1 John 3:17-18).

As Brethren, we have long understood that our way of living is an example to the world of our faith in action. Our history has been written by reaching out to those affected by disaster, to peoples of the world whose lives have been touched by war and injustice. Today, the impacts of extreme weather and related economic consequences have caused much suffering in our own country and around the world. Our poorer neighbors both here and abroad have seen their lives adversely affected by rising sea levels, wildfires, drought, the diminishment of supplies of clean water, and other climate-related impacts. We find ourselves in a time when the impacts of weather and economic changes have caused many more to suffer in our country and around the world. Increasingly, the poor around us are in need due to a lack of employment or adequate training for jobs. Others have been humbled because their homes have been damaged by waves or flames, because their farm lands have been reduced by fire or drought, and their sources of clean water have been affected. Damages from Hurricanes Katrina and Sandy certainly affected the people with fewer resources far more than those with adequate resources.

New weather patterns around the world have created groups of people who must leave their lands to find more arable soil. African agriculture, for example, is particularly vulnerable to changes in growing conditions. In the past, East Africa experienced drought every decade; now these conditions are occurring every three years. The Church of the Brethren in Nigeria is experiencing rapidly expanding desert in part caused by deforestation, and such problems will likely intensify as an outcome of climate change. Dry-land farmers in the United States have felt the same effects of short yields due to increased drought cycles. Reports of melting glaciers and

expanding deserts seem to be increasing every year.

Taken as a whole, the impacts on the environment, the economy and related social justice issues seem overwhelming and beyond our control. But all around our denomination we are taking action locally by doing such things as establishing food banks and community gardens, volunteering to rebuild homes, and reducing energy bills by improving insulation for homes in impoverished areas. This list of small actions based “in deed and truth” shows some of the many ways we can respond to those in need near our congregations. Through acts of service and stewardship, the support of our districts and denomination extends the reach of our faith beyond our walls and shores.

► **What is the relationship between providing assistance after a flood and working to reduce human causes of climate change which could intensify the impact of floods?**

Section 3: Steps to Study and Action

What Can We Do?

“For the Creation waits in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed” (Romans 8:19 NIV).

Live simply. We can do many small things on a local basis to care for Creation. These efforts can include recycling, composting, reducing energy use, using less and remembering the gifts of a simple life. Throughout our denomination, congregations are reaching out to help in so many ways. Energy audits of our homes and churches have resulted in changes to more efficient lighting, better insulation, and uses of renewable energy. Bike racks have been installed to promote less driving. In some churches,

meals are no longer served on paper plates, giving way to the familiar community activities of dish washing and laundering napkins and tablecloths.

Live locally. Be involved in local community and district efforts to improve the environment and help each other deal with the local impacts of climate and economic change. For example, supporting local farming and food production reduces “food miles.” In most homes across the country, meals have traveled more than 1,300 miles to get to the table. Purchasing organic and sustainably raised produce reduces the use of fossil fuel-based pesticides and fertilizers. Grass-based livestock systems sequester carbon and protect soils and water from erosion and desertification. One way that many Church of the Brethren congregations have started to address this issue is by establishing community gardens at their churches. The Church of the Brethren Global Food Crisis Fund and Office of Public Witness have been working together to provide grants to congregations to start or expand community gardens at congregations. One exemplar of this new movement is Annville Church of the Brethren. Annville began their project hoping to get back to their congregation’s farming roots while also providing a service to their community.

Support global initiatives. Shifts in weather patterns have affected many parts of the globe in troubling ways. Though our denomination and our denominational partners, we have the ability to provide help in areas far beyond our individual reach. One such partner, Church World Service, is very active in working with communities where climate change is inhibiting healthy development. In most countries where Church World Service is active, water is either a desperate need—or a destructive force unleashed during hurricanes, typhoons, and

floods. Church World Service helps affected communities rebuild after climate related emergencies. Ongoing CWS projects provide and protect water supplies for drinking and agriculture. Supporting our partnership with them is a simple way of helping our brothers and sisters across the globe.

Live prophetically. Call on political leaders to make decisions related to the climate change based on long-term sustainability, not only short-term economic growth. Remind them that the interests of all human well-being and Creation must be kept in mind, not just the interests of the rich and powerful—or winning votes for the next election. Find ways to be a “light on the hill” in our communities, living in ways that draw attention to our deep concerns for God’s Earth, restore broken connections, and lessens the perils we face as the climate changes.

Past Statements and Resolutions

Annual Conference

- 1980 Resolution “Christian Lifestyle”
- 1985 Statement “Christian Stewardship, Responsible Freedom”
- 1991 Statement “Creation: A Call to Care”
- 1996 Resolution “Simple Life”

Mission and Ministry Board

- 1991 Resolution on Global Warming and Atmospheric Degradation
- 2001 Resolution on Global Warming/Climate Change

Books and Articles

Science

- *Advancing the Science of Climate Change.* National Academy of Sciences. National Academies

Press 2010. www.nap.edu/catalog

- www.nasonline.org
- *Global Weirdness: Severe Storms, Deadly Heat Waves, Relentless Drought, Rising Seas, and the Weather of the Future.* Climate Central. Pantheon Books 2012.
- *Heatstroke: Nature in an Age of Global Warming,* Barnosky. 2009.
- *Life Without Oil: Why We Must Shift to a New Energy Future,* Steve Hallett, John Wright. 2012.
- *Tropic of Chaos,* Christian Parenti. 2011.
- *Requiem for a Species: Why We Resist the Truth about Climate Change,* Clive Hamilton. 2010.
- *The Flooded Planet: Our Future in a World Without Ice Caps,* Peter Ward. 2010.

Christian Values and Climate Change

- *Creation in Crisis: Responding to God’s Covenant,* Shantilal P. Bhagat. Brethren Press, 1990.
- *Creation and the Environment: An Anabaptist Perspective on a Sustainable World,* Calvin Redekop, ed. Johns Hopkins University Press 2000.
- “Christianity—Anabaptist,” Kathryn S. Eisenbise. *Berkshire Encyclopedia of Sustainability: The Spirit of Sustainability,* Willis Jenkins, ed. Berkshire Publishing Group 2012. pp. 54-55.
- *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action,* J. Matthew Sleeth, M.D. Zondervan 2007.
- *A Climate for Change: Global Warming Facts for Faith-Based Principles,* Katharine Hayhoe, Andrew Farley. Faith Words 2009.
- *Global Warming and the Risen Lord: Christian Discipleship and Climate Change,* Jim Ball. Evangelical Environmental Network 2010.

Economy

- *Cradle to Cradle: Remaking the Way We Make Things,* McDonough and Braungart.
- *The Wealth of Nature: Economics as if Survival Mattered,* John Michael Greer. 2011.
- *The Race for What’s Left,* Michael Klare 2012.
- *Prosperity without Growth,* Tim Jackson 2010.
- *Climate Wars,* Gwynne Dyer. 2010.

“We were, as a congregation, trying to determine what our congregations’ special skills and talents were so that we could do God’s work with better focus. Someone in our congregation mentioned a project called “The Lord’s Acre,” which was a small farming project managed by some of the farmers in our congregation with the help of the youth some 30-40 years ago. . . . Thus, we began The Giving Garden to very simply provide food for people who need it, families and individuals who we know are struggling to stretch a limited income. . . . My grandfather, J. Paul Hertzog, was a Brethren “free minister” and a farmer who through his working life and retirement provided his own fruits and vegetables. He taught me gardening and orchard care and I never even realized that I was working. It was fun to help Grandpa and I think that is the way it is supposed to be with our service work. When we work for another’s success and do not glorify ourselves, there is no way to fail.”

—Todd A. Thomas, *Annville Church of the Brethren, Giving Garden Coordinator*