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Glen A. Pierce

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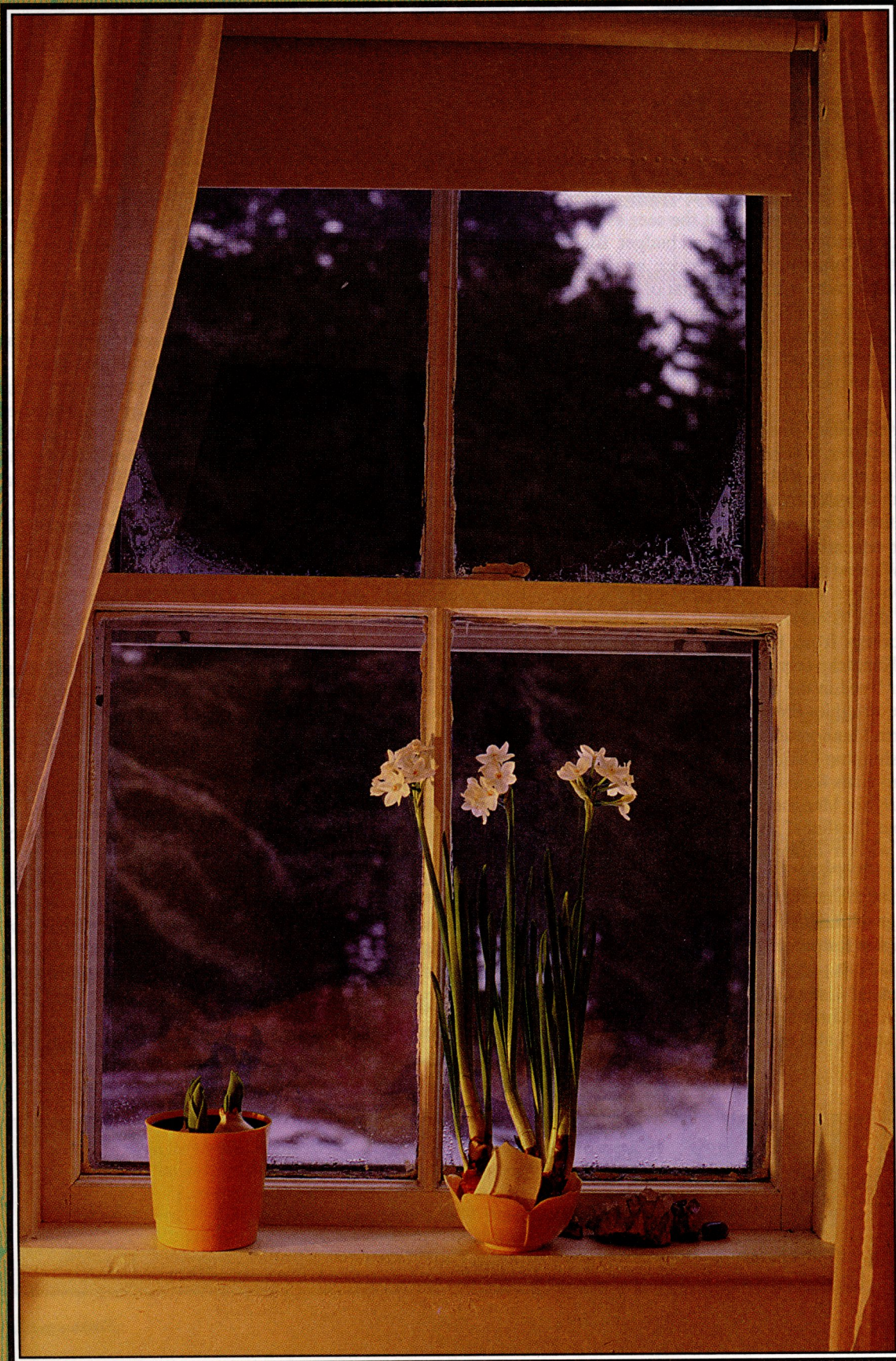
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evangelical

VISITOR

February 1998



**A "Kingdom-
Expansion"
Attitude**

***How To Be
An Ideal
Neighbor***

**Observations
On
Homosexuality**

***This Is
My Father's
World***

Felipe's Vision

Special People

Dana Bicksler, right, with co-worker Mitra Battan.



J. Daryl Byler

Volunteer speaks for the voiceless in nation's capital

"Sometimes it feels like everything here revolves around money," says Dana Bicksler, describing what she sees as government officials' preoccupation with the federal budget. Bicksler, a Mennonite Central Committee U.S. service worker in Washington, D.C., helps promote a different point of view.

"Faith-based groups [such as MCC] have something unique to offer in Washington," says Bicksler. "In speaking for poor and forgotten people, such as immigrants, we stress the dignity of human beings—that all are made in the image of God," she explains.

Broadly described as advocacy, the mandate of Washington Office staff, including Bicksler, involves a wide range of activities. "Advocacy is different from lobbying," Bicksler stresses. "Advocacy means promoting the interests of others, while lobbying means acting on the basis of self-interest."

"Advocacy is about education," says Mitra Battan, a co-worker of Bicksler's. "We read to learn about the issues, and try to connect MCC field workers with congressional staff."

A good example of this, Bicksler explains, was a visit by MCC U.S. service workers from Kentucky's Appalachian mountains who visited Kentucky representatives' offices. "One staff member had never lived in the region, and was happy to hear perspectives on the struggles there," she says.

"We also try to inform Mennonites and Brethren in Christ," says Bicksler. The Washington Office plans annual seminars, and hosts workshops and visits for college and high school students. Staff write regularly for Mennonite and Brethren in Christ periodicals, and send out "hotlines" to tell constituents about pending legislation and ways to influence its direction. "We try to speak on behalf of poor and forgotten people who do not get heard by politicians." (See the notice on p. 26.)

Bicksler covers a range of domestic issues, including welfare, immigration and civil rights for people of color. She also monitors legislation related to Asia.

What does all this involve? "I read MCC field worker reports, Mennonite and Brethren in Christ periodicals, and numerous newspapers," says Bicksler, "I also meet with several 'working

groups,' most of which are faith-based." Working groups form to share information about and influence legislation on particular issues. "And we can have an impact," says Bicksler, "although it's often small and always unpredictable."

In the past year, for example, religiously motivated advocates helped defeat bills to dismantle federal Medicaid and Food Stamp programs. They succeeded in recasting these issues from purely budgetary concerns to also considering human need.

Immigrants are one group of "voiceless" people for whom advocacy groups speak. In her work, Bicksler felt frustrated that few advocacy groups seemed to be working from a faith-based perspective. "I started looking for other people who wanted to talk about how our faith affects advocacy on immigration—about our unique perspective."

Working with staff from Church World Service and the United Methodist church, she organized a noon-hour discussion on July 14 of how faith affects immigration advocacy. "I sensed a lot of excitement," she relates. "We feel we do have something unique to offer, particularly in advocating from undocumented immigrants."

What is that unique perspective? "We [as faith groups] stress the dignity of human beings, and raise questions about an immigration system that categorizes people as 'legal' or 'illegal.'"

She notes recent graffiti in her primarily Hispanic neighborhood that proclaimed: "Human beings are not aliens!"

What led Bicksler to this kind of work? "I studied social work at Messiah College," she says, "and was interested in racism and other social justice issues." After college she applied to be a paralegal, and for a teaching job in a prison.

When this MCC placement became available, it fit the bill for Bicksler. "I wanted a way to fight systemic injustice," she says, "and this gave me a way to do that." She is also interested in law, and wanted to work in an environment where she could explore that as a profession. Has her work in the Washington Office set a career direction for Bicksler? "Well, I know I don't want to be a politician!" she says.

Deborah Fast, MCC Communications

SPECIAL NOTE:
Articles about
"Special People"
in their teens,
20s, 30s, and 40s
are invited.

"Special People" profiles a wide variety of Brethren in Christ members of all ages and from all walks of life. You are invited to submit a short article about some "Special Person" you would like to introduce to *Visitor* readers. Articles should be typewritten, preferably 300-400 words, and must have the approval of the person being profiled. If your article is accepted for publication, we will contact you to secure a photo for publication (which will be returned). Mail your article to *Evangelical Visitor*, P.O. Box 166, Nappanee, IN 46550.

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General Church Offices**
431 Grantham Road; P.O. Box 290
Grantham, PA 17027-0290
Telephone: (717) 697-2634
FAX Number: (717) 697-7714

General Church Officers
Moderator: Harvey R. Sider
General Secretary: Warren L. Hoffman
General Treasurer: Allen Carr

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A Kingdom-Expansion Attitude

by Craig Sider

To make disciples, we must have a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude.

DO YOU think much about your wealth? I don't mean your money; I mean your wealth in Christ. The wealth that the Apostle Paul describes in Ephesians 2:7, "the incomparable riches of God's grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus."

Do you dwell much on your wealth in Christ? One of the most effective ways you can spread your faith is to manage your life in such a way as to stay mindful, every single day of your life, of how rich in Christ you are—the extent of your inheritance in Christ, the wonder of the character of the God we worship, the magnitude of the miracle of transformation that has taken place in our lives.

Think about this wealth factor as it impacts each of us in our own mission in personal evangelism. A good illustration is an Old Testament story in 2 Kings 7. The city of Samaria was under siege and there was a serious shortage of food. "Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, 'Why stay here until we die? If we say, "We'll go into the city"—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let's go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.'" They had nothing to lose.

They went to the enemy camp and found it deserted because God had made noises in the night that confused the enemy into

thinking they were going to be attacked from the side. So these lepers stumbled on to all of this provision in the middle of the deserted enemy camp. They found more food than they could eat—they're stuffing their faces.

Then they came up with an idea (a smart one, really). They said, "Let's gather up all the stuff we can carry and find a cave somewhere to pile up all these provisions. We'll be set for a long, long time." But while they were stashing all of these provisions, they said to each other, "We're not doing right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves. Let's go at once and report this to the royal palace." So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, "We went into the Aramean camp and not a man was there—not a sound of anyone—only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were."

All the people came out and found food and the city was saved.

As these lepers stumbled into all these provisions, it was the abundance of the provision that led them to make the announcement to people back in the city. It was the fact that the provision was so large...the miracle was so exciting...the news was so wonderful that they said, "We're not doing the right thing by keeping silent about this miracle; let's go tell other people." Silence was an unthinkable crime at that point.

Here is the point for us. When we are living with an awareness of the size of our

spiritual wealth and the sheer scope of our blessings in Christ, with very little strategy and with very little effort, we will find ourselves saying to lost people, "You just need to come to know how wonderful our God is."

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 ought to draw us and propel us as individuals, as churches, and as a denomination to make disciples.

To make disciples, we must have a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude. This doesn't mean the newest technique, the latest approach, or the most recent success story (as helpful as they may be), but a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude that can develop in your heart, mind, and life.

A—Acknowledge that church growth is a God thing

I have a friend who in one particular year in ministry worked hard and smart, and was faithful to his calling to preach the Word with boldness and clarity. That particular year his church didn't grow numerically. Several years later, while still being faithful to his call, the church experienced unprecedented growth. What happened? Did he all of a sudden become smarter and get his act together as a leader? Or in his faithfulness, did he experience the sovereignty of God as it relates to church growth?

Church growth *is* a sovereign act of God. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "I will build my church." In John 6:65, Jesus says, "No one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him."

Yes, we need to fish diligently, we need to learn where the fish swim and when they are hungry, and we need to be fish-smart. But we don't put the fish in the net—God does. We need to use our gifts, we need to be wise, we need to be learners in evangelism. But church growth is a God thing.

Let me suggest why this is important in our attitude. If we see church growth as purely a human activity, it breeds jealousy, arrogance, and pride. If church growth happens, we tend toward arrogance or pride. If church growth isn't happening right now, we tend toward discouragement or a critical spirit toward congregations where it is happening. But when we, individually and corporately, acknowledge that church growth is a God thing, we learn from one another and view each other as co-laborers

in the mission field, rather than competitors in the arena.

T—Turn our attention to the lost

Have you ever noticed in sports the "attention grabbing" that goes on? All kinds of posturing and statements are delivered which in one way or another send a common message, "Look at me! Hey, here I am; pay attention to me!"

That can happen to us in the Body of Christ, can't it? The focus slides into having *our* needs met, *our* concerns addressed, and *ourselves* cared for. And subtly, the focus shifts away from the lost to ourselves.

Jesus says in John 4:35, "Open your eyes and look at the fields. They are ripe for harvest." A person, a church, or a denomination with a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude turns attention to the lost. We make them a priority. We make room for them in our lives. They are reflected in our budgets. They are reflected in our church programs. We spend significant time as individuals, as church boards, saying, "How can I reach the lost? What can we do better? We'll do whatever it takes because the stakes are sky high."

The truth is, it's easy to structure our churches in such a way that we more naturally depopulate other churches than we do the kingdom of darkness. Kingdom-Expansion Attitude says, "I will, we will turn our attention to the lost."

T—Transformational living

At a recent business appointment I attended, a woman who admits she is trying to discover Christ told of her experiences on a recent business trip. She took a taxi to a convention center. When the cabbie informed her that the fare was sixteen dollars, she handed him a twenty-dollar bill. But the cabbie gave her back four dollars. She said, "No, the four dollars is a tip; I want you to keep it," to which he responded, "I can't; I'm going to be responsible to God some day and I can't keep this extra money." At this, I silently went "Yes!", excited by the fact that she encountered an authentic Christian. But then she finished by saying, "and the cabbie said 'you see, ma'am, I'm a Moslem and I will be accountable to God some day for my actions.'" My heart sank, not because what he said wasn't good—it was.

When we are living with an awareness of the size of our spiritual wealth and the sheer scope of our blessings in Christ, with very little strategy and with very little effort, we will find ourselves saying to lost people, "You just need to come to know how wonderful our God is."

A person who has been a Christian for 20 years is still to be experiencing the transforming power of Christ.

But I wanted her to come into contact with a Christian who was about transformational living. I thought, I wish there were more transformational Christians. I wish I lived more transformationally.

In 2 Corinthians 3:18, Paul writes, "And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord." You know what I notice? There's no age cut-off. There's no statement that says, "Once you've been a Christian 15 to 20 years, the transformation part is over."

No! A person who has been a Christian for 20 years is still to be experiencing the transforming power of Christ in his or her life. It's a powerful witness for a non-Christian to come into contact with a Christian who is being transformed—one who is quick to admit mistakes, one whose character flaws continue to be chiseled away by the Holy Spirit, one who lives each day submitted before God—whether a new Christian or one who is 5 or 50 years

old in the faith. A Kingdom-Expansion Attitude requires transformational living.

I—it begins with me

In the marriage counseling that I've done, I've had very few instances where one of the persons has said, "The problem begins with me; the solution begins with me." In fact, when I asked one couple the question, "What's the issue you're dealing with?", the husband looked at me and said, "My wife thinks I'm an idiot!" As their story unfolded, I think maybe she did have the gift of discernment. But there are very few people saying these days, "it begins with me."

A Kingdom-Expansion Attitude begins with me. I repeat, it begins with me!

It recently occurred to me that there's nothing preventing me from being a contagious Christian, from giving away my faith. The law doesn't stop me. The person I am accountable to in my work doesn't discourage me. My wife is not going to leave me. My Board of Directors doesn't

How to be an ideal neighbor

1. Make sure you are a friend first and foremost.
2. Use the power of example.
3. Be caring and gracious.
4. Be ready to help in a time of need.
5. Drop off extra baking.
6. Feel free to borrow items, but return them in good shape.
7. Pay special attention to people's children.
8. Ask for help from your neighbor.
9. Pray for your neighbors
10. Have a good sense of humor.
11. Avoid sharing Christ too much, or all at once. Give it time.
12. Be sensitive to neighbor's idiosyncrasies.
13. Focus on developing one or two solid relationships.
14. Be deliberate about building those relationships.
15. Work with others to build a network of relationships.
16. Allow for natural interactions to take place.
17. Give your neighbor the space they want.
18. Ask for your neighbor's feedback on your projects.
19. Be involved in common community causes with your neighbor.
20. Ask your neighbor's permission on joint property issues before proceeding.
21. Entertain your neighbors in your home.
22. Keep it simple when you entertain, so your neighbor feels like they could reciprocate.
23. Allow the joy of the Lord to be evident in you.
24. Look for small ways to continually build a relationship stronger.
25. Love your neighbor as yourself.

This list of 25 ways to be an ideal neighbor was produced by the lifestyle evangelism class of the New Life Brethren in Christ Church, Collingwood, Ontario.

say, "You can't do that." You know what? It begins with me!

A Kingdom-Expansion Attitude doesn't depend on a pastor giving better sermons, on implementing the latest evangelism technique, on meeting in the newest church building, or on having a kazillion small groups in the church. They may all help, but it begins with me!

Here's a suggestion: on a piece of paper, write down the names of three people—neighbors, family members, colleagues, or friends with whom you have contact and for whom you are praying for salvation. Beside the three names, write these words, "It begins with me!"

T—Telling the story

I was in a restaurant with a business friend who wasn't a believer. As we were finishing lunch, with time running short, he looked across the table at me and said, "Craig, how do you know that you're a Christian?"

If you would have been me at that table, what would your confidence level have been to be able to explain the Christian faith in two or three minutes? In a spirit of humility, I have to ask, should not each maturing believer be able to answer?

Well, in this restaurant, God graciously allowed me to have two or three minutes where I explained to him the difference between religion and a relationship with Christ. I'd like to tell you that he fell to his knees and right there, in the middle of that restaurant, he repented of his sins and trusted Christ. I'd like to tell you that, but it didn't happen. His response was, "Oh." In fact, I talked about faith with Mike a number of times after that before he responded to the tug of the Spirit and trusted Christ.

If the gospel is the hope of the world, we as maturing believers have to know what to say. First Peter 3:15 says, "Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..."

If each of us, as believers, would learn (and we, as churches, would train our believers to learn) a simple, natural plan for sharing a verbal witness with unchurched friends with whom we've built credible relationships, it would revolutionize our churches.

U—Understanding the cost

Just a few weeks ago, I scanned through the book, *Through Gates of Splendor*, by Elizabeth Elliot. It's about Elizabeth's husband, Jim, and the four other missionaries who were killed in South America by the ones to whom they went to take the message of Christ. As I scanned through the pictures of Jim Elliot, Nate Saint, and the other men, I thought, "These were good-looking, young, sharp men who gave their lives for the cause of Christ." That wasn't their goal. Their goal was to win men and women to Christ. But they were willing to pay any price. It shouldn't be any less for us!

My friends, my community, or the world will not be won for Christ on the shoulders of convenience and casual endeavors at evangelism.

Jesus made that clear—abundantly clear. In Luke 14:25-33, Jesus gives two examples about counting the cost and concludes by saying, "Any of you who does not give up everything he has cannot be my disciple." We need to understand the cost if we are to impact our country and our world for Christ.

It will cost us convenience—spending time building relationships with neighbors, pouring ourselves into their lives. It will cost us as parents—it may mean releasing our children to share Christ around the globe. It will cost us money—for missions around the world, for church planting, for our local churches to reach out. But more than anything, it will require the abandonment of our hearts to the mission of Christ. A Kingdom-Expansion Attitude understands the cost.

D—Developing relationships with non-Christians

Jesus was accused by his enemies of being "a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Though this was meant as a derogatory term, Jesus never denied it. Instead, he took it as a compliment and kept living it out.

Developing real relationships with non-Christians isn't as easy as it sounds, but I think the battle to reach people is won or lost there. It's tough because for years, in our desire to be biblical Christians, we have said, "Come apart; be separate; you should evangelize but not really build relationships with the unchurched."

*My
friends, my
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evangelism.*

*I recently
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that there's
nothing
preventing
me from being
a contagious
Christian,
from giving
away my
faith.*

But John Stott refers to that as "rabbit hole Christianity." We must not become, as Stott puts it, "a rabbit-hole Christian"—the kind who pops his head out of a hole, leaves his Christian roommate in the morning and scurries to class, only to frantically search for a Christian to sit by (an odd way to approach a mission field). Thus he proceeds from class to class. When dinner comes, he sits with Christians at one huge table and thinks, "What a witness!" From there he goes to an all-Christian Bible study, and he might even catch a prayer meeting where the Christians pray for the non-believers on his floor. (But what luck that he was able to live on the only floor with 17 Christians!) Then at night he scurries back to his Christian roommate. Safe! He made it through the day and his only contacts with the world were those mad, brave dashes to and from Christian activities.

It's easier to hang out with the already convinced, those who talk the same language, have the same values, and pray before meals—it's safe! But when we break out of our huddles and build relationships with unchurched people, when we spend time with people in the marketplace and invest in their lives, God places a lump in our throat at the prospect of them spending eternity without Christ.

Friends, we need to be like Jesus in being a friend of sinners.

E—Everyone is a potential child of the Father

Did you stop and get gas this morning? If you did, you locked eyes with someone who is a potential child of the Father. Did you stop and get coffee? If you did, you locked eyes with a potential child of the Father. Every person your eyes have ever made contact with is someone for whom Christ died. John 3:16 says, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." A person with a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude lives in that awareness.

Your teller at the bank is not just a teller, she's someone for whom Christ died. Other associates are not just your real estate agent, your lawyer, your mechanic, your waitress, your teacher, or your student. Your prayer becomes, "Father, give me

your eyes that see every person I come into contact with as a potential child of yours."

That, my friends, is a Kingdom-Expansion Attitude! We're God's Plan A. There's no Plan B. He's counting on you and me.

At times the reward of that kind of attitude is overwhelming. My wife Laura and I were attending a church growth seminar with another couple. Two years earlier, I was with this young couple in their living room as they prayed to receive Christ as personal Savior and then began to live transformed lives. Now here we were, among a group of 2,000 people, preparing to share Communion together. As Mark and Sarah prepared to share communion with Laura and me, Mark said with tears rolling down his face, "I can't begin to express the difference that knowing Christ has made in our lives. It has totally changed the direction of our lives and will change the course of our family line. Thank you so much for sharing the message of Jesus with us; we will always be grateful."

I was overwhelmed by the fact that God had chosen to use me as an instrument of grace and truth in the lives of this couple who now desperately want to serve Christ. It provided me with a fresh opportunity to renew my commitment to be involved in the greatest task in the world, the task of witnessing to the wonderful gospel of God's grace.

The challenge for us as individuals, and as the Church, is to be so transformed by God's Spirit at work in us that we develop a mindset, individually and corporately, that lives for the expansion of the Kingdom.

Craig Sider is bishop of the Atlantic and Southeast Regional Conferences of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Observations on homosexuality

Over the last twenty years I have had numerous opportunities to minister to individuals attesting to a homosexual orientation, including such individuals as ministers and missionaries. For the most part, these encounters have proven to be enormously positive, with the individuals expressing a sense of having been helped in some way. Part of my success can be attributed to the complete lack of fear I have for the subject, coupled with a sincere desire to understand the persons and the complexities that come with such a profile. I share these thoughts with you in the hope of expanding understanding among God's people for others, and to perhaps open an opportunity for healthy discussion to occur in congregations.

I begin this reflection on homosexuality with a presupposition that the whole arena of sexuality presents one of the most important formative conflicts of human personality.

Regardless of one's orientation sexually, the sexual impulse is equal in intensity to any that a human being can experience, and significantly greater than most. What gives the sexual impulse its power is that it is inexorably tied to the nurturing impulse and the need to give and receive love. Human beings need to experience affection and validation, and it is hard to separate such legitimate needs from our inherent sexuality.

For whatever reason, human sexuality seems to find expression most commonly in one of three ways: heterosexually, homosexually, and paedophilically. Whether or not such orientations emerge developmentally or are a part of our nature is practically irrelevant, considering that the genesis of our orientation does not change the conflict that exists once an orientation has taken root. Far too much importance has been placed on this question in the modern debate. Simply put, a heterosexual does not choose attraction to the opposite sex, nor does a homosexual

choose an attraction to the same sex. Paedophiles do not choose to be attracted to children. The key consideration is that our attractions are emotional expressions that exist apart from volition of any kind, whether they are inborn, developed, or are created by some combination of the two.

The biblical prescription for sexuality, the clear mandate of Scripture is that sexual intercourse is reserved for that relationship that exists between a man and woman in a union that has been blessed by God. All other acts of intercourse, whether they be with other human beings of the opposite sex, of the same sex, with children, or with animals, are condemned as outside of God's design for human sexual expression. These notions are being challenged by some modern theologians, but it is clear that changes in our understanding can only be achieved by making radical adjustments to accepted methods of biblical interpretation. At present, no arguments have been forwarded that are at all persuasive to those maintaining a high view of Scripture. For conservative Christians, there are simply no biblical grounds on which to base an acceptance of an active homosexual lifestyle, regardless of the context in which it occurs.

If this is true, then it is important to consider why God allows some human beings to experience sexual desires that fall outside the parameters of acceptable sexual expression. Why, for instance, would God allow anyone to develop an attraction to children when it is impossible for sexual expression to occur without causing harm to all concerned? Why would God allow homosexual attractions to exist when they are so patently rejected by Scripture, and historically frowned upon by society?

The fact that adult human beings can be sexually attracted to children is evidence enough that the mere existence of a sexual preference is not reason enough to approve

by Glenn A. Robitaille

I share these thoughts in the hope of expanding understanding among God's people for others, and to perhaps open an opportunity for healthy discussion to occur in congregations.

Glenn Robitaille is pastor of the Ashland (Ohio) Brethren in Christ Church.

of its active expression; nor does it follow that something is acceptable simply because it occurs between two consenting adults. Two consenting adults can agree to kill each other, to commit adultery, or to abuse their children through neglect; and none of these things can be declared acceptable simply because adults are in agreement with the acts.

What we find in life is that heterosexuals can find themselves in legitimate sexual unions that are neither nurturing nor rewarding, and where sexual attraction no longer exists. In spite of these circumstances, Scripture calls on believers to honor commitments that are made within the mandates of God's Word and, if necessary, compromise sexual ideals (in the sense of our most profound desires) for faithfulness to God's design. The devastating impact of divorce on children in the present generation is evidence enough of God's wisdom on this matter.

Likewise, God's Word calls on homosexuals and paedophiles to compromise their sexual ideals for faithfulness as well. Part of what makes this possible is a recognition that sexuality of any kind falls desperately short of the kind of intimacy human beings really need and long to know. At best, sexual intercourse is often a quick replacement for the kind of depth of relationship that only emerges in a caring, respectful relationship where two people honor one another in genuine attachment and love.

In 2 Corinthians 12:7-10, Paul describes a "thorn in the flesh"—a messenger of Satan (as he described it)—sent to torment him. Three times he asked God to remove this burden from him, but God replied, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." It is a gift of God that this "thorn" is not explained in Scripture, for so many things in life can be thorns for different people. What we know

This is my Father's world

I was 21 when the congregation of the church I served as a youth minister in downtown Lexington, Kentucky, decided they didn't want me to preach anymore. Half the congregation sat dumb-founded while the other half sat with stony-faced scowls. The people glared at me with crossed arms and heads shaking in complete and unabashed disagreement.

I had just completed service as a chaplain at Eastern State Mental Hospital. I spent 40 hours a week at the hospital, spending the vast majority of my time talking with and counseling the patients on the violent ward. My ward, Ward 11, was an interspersed of psychotic patients, former drug addicts who had fried their brains on a mixture of hallucinogens, and the profoundly depressed of the hospital. This was my little congregation during the day. I prayed with them and listened to them and held church services for them. In the evenings, I went to work at the little church in

downtown Lexington. There I ministered to the youth who were taking drugs and frying their brains so that I might one day see them in both places.

At the hospital, there was a small group of patients who were not violent, but merely profoundly depressed. As they were mostly coherent, I spent most of my time with these folks. I recall in particular Betty, as she talked to me about her life as a lesbian. This was, in fact, the first time I had ever met an openly gay person. Honestly, I was taken aback, but I began to pray for her and do some reading on ministry to gays and lesbians. In a short time, God broke my heart, and I was moved with compassion by the plight that was her life. As we talked about her past, about God, and salvation, she showed an increasing openness to Christ. I will never forget the day before she was discharged; she came to me and asked if she could attend my church. The part I could not forget was that I had to tell her no. The church I attended barely tolerated Kathy and I, and our outlandish "California Christianity" that allowed teenage girls to wear

pants to youth meetings so that they might participate in the games and activity portions of the meetings. No, they would never find it in their hearts to open their arms to this little lamb, who wanted desperately to find life and love.

One block away from the only gay bar in Lexington, Kentucky, our small church sat with the answers to a life lost in the world's lies. Three hundred steps from the front door of the church building was the front door of the only gay bar in Lexington. A little further down the way was the Kentucky Theater, a movie house to which most everyone in greater Lexington went; a theater which, late at night, became a notorious hang out for the local gay population. And this was my sermon: the love of Jesus demands that we minister to the lost—to walk the three hundred steps to reach someone for the One who walked the road to Calvary for us.

Will you join me in that walk?

Paul Lehman-Schletewitz is senior pastor of the Walnut (Calif.) Brethren in Christ Church. This article (and one in the Dec. 1997 issue) was reprinted by permission from the church's monthly newsletter.

about Paul's thorn is that it was beyond his ability to control, that he saw it as an attack of evil, and that God was not willing to remove it.

Sexuality has often been a thorn for God's people. In the third century A.D., Simon Stylites climbed a 60-foot pole and stayed perched there for 25 years in an attempt to escape his own sexual distractions. It has been speculated that much of the monastic movement, and that of the desert hermits, existed because of the need for some to find restrictive ways of dealing with their intense sexual desires. The high number of paedophiles in the Catholic priesthood is not evidence of perverted people seeking opportunity to molest others within the church, but rather of confused individuals seeking refuge from their desires within the boundaries of enforced celibacy.

Sexuality cannot be escaped; it must be embraced, whether it is heterosexual, homosexual, or paedophilic. When it is denied, suppressed, or repressed, it is only intensified as a passion. But neither can it be extended free expression, as can be illustrated by our sex-saturated society which has released all kinds of untold horrors upon the world. Sexuality brings with it a challenge for everyone. No other aspect of our being requires us to deal more honestly and gently so as to avoid exploiting others as does the sexual impulse. Accepting our sexuality and freely expressing it are vastly different things.

My existence as a sexual being is a hydra-headed reality. On the one hand, it offers me the opportunity to know someone in a deeply intimate way, and to be a participant in a deeply mutual and satisfying physical relationship. Occasionally people are blessed with such satisfying physical relationships, but with an infidelity rate above 80 percent in the West, apparently not as often as we would like. On the other hand, sexuality is an irrational energy that casts its affection where it wills and tests the metal of our human resolve.

The fact that this tension has existed historically and is experienced so universally in these varied forms is evidence that they are part of the the human package. Human sexuality, as well as being one doorway into increased intimacy, is a conflict that presents significant challenges to being a caring, genuine person living in human community. Once I accept what my attractions are as a human being, and allow them to be filtered

through a soul immersed in God's Spirit and focused on being a wholesome part of community, I begin to get a deeper sense of what my sexuality is meant to contribute to my life. Sexuality and genital contact are not necessarily tied together in one package. It is possible for one to have a sexual attraction without participating in sexual intercourse. It is also possible for people to work through desires that fall outside of the parameters of appropriate sexual expression without being guilty of sin.

I believe our sexuality is a gift from God. The fact that some experience desires that are contrary to appropriate sexual expression does not change the fact that sexuality as a whole was given by God because God desired that we experience passion and intimacy with one another. Far too often, human beings indulge themselves in passion and forgo the greater need for intimacy. As a heterosexual male in a committed marital relationship, I accept my role as a husband to my wife and live within the parameters of my commitment. I am careful to remember that sexual expression is not intimacy, but is something that can enhance my marital intimacy if the other aspects of my relationship with my wife are maintained.

The questions that I would pose to those heterosexuals who are unmarried, to homosexuals and lesbians, and to those attracted to children, are these: How can your sexuality with all of its passion and power deepen your relationships with others in your communities? What aspects of your sexuality are like "thorns" that God can use to strengthen you where you are weak? How can you be true to who you are and what you feel without compromising Scripture or exploiting others sexually?

The goal of the Christian life is to experience a deep abiding love for one another, not to have sexual intercourse. For some, part of the challenge of life is to live without intercourse entirely, in order to more fully develop those other aspects of relationship that are more important. For others, it is to not allow sexual intimacy to crowd out the more important aspects of relationship and to remain faithful to one spouse for one lifetime.

Either way, sexuality is something that invites us to relate to one another in a deeply passionate way while respecting each other as individuals loved and created for God.

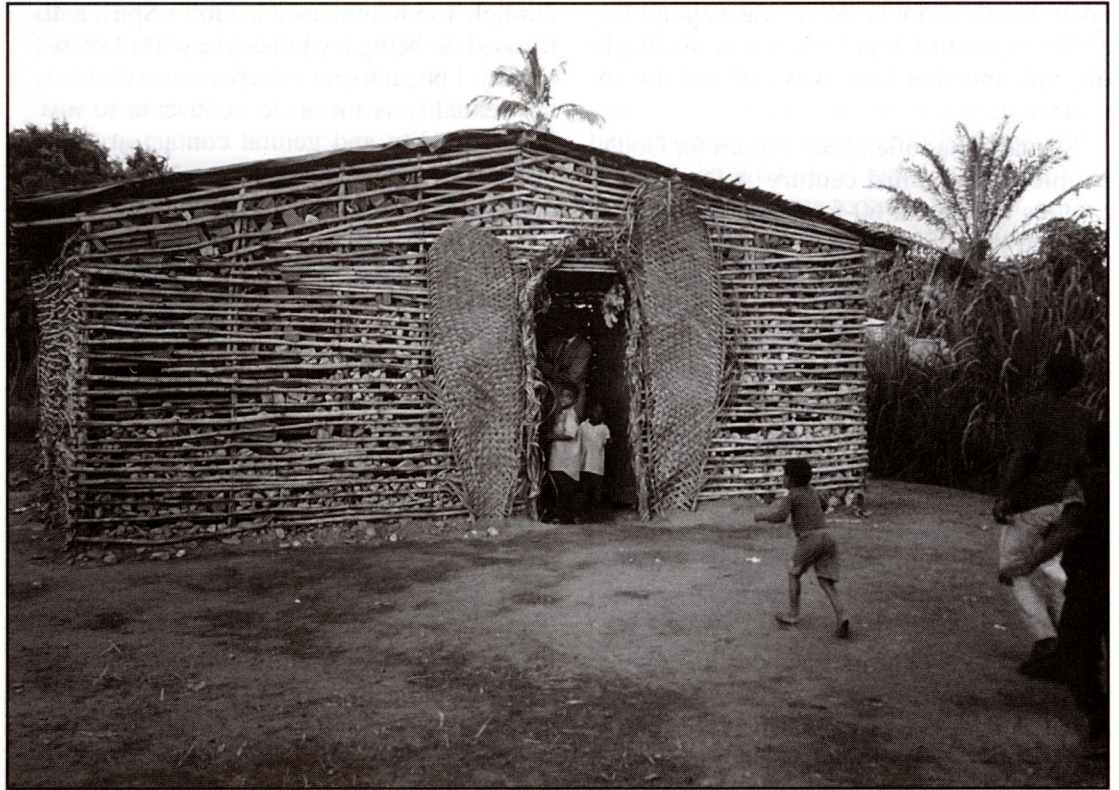
And either way, it isn't easy!



*Scripture
calls on
believers to
honor
commitments
that are made
within the
mandates of
God's Word
and, if
necessary,
compromise
sexual ideals
(in the sense
of our most
profound
desires)
for
faithfulness
to God's
design.*

FELIPE'S VISION

by
A. Graybill Brubaker



Pastor Felipe's church building.

F IS HIS CUSTOM, the Deputy Chief of Traffic Police of the city of Beira, Mozambique, bounded up the flights of stairs to his sixth floor apartment for his afternoon rest. It is Felipe's "training," the way he keeps fit. Shortly afterwards he awoke with a start and called his equally devout wife, Marie. Felipe, a deacon in the Faith of the Apostles Church, had seen a vision and they needed to pray. It was a vision of a cross. A dove flew down and landed on the cross and over the cross Felipe could make out the words: The Evangelical Church of the Brethren in Christ.

Convinced that the vision was a call from God to minister in the church of that name, Felipe set out to find the church. When local enquiries failed, he searched out Manuel Machenze, the Secretary of the Ministerial Fraternity of Mozambique. Manuel told him that there was a Brethren in Christ Church and that he had the credentials in hand. Felipe could use them under the aegis of the Assembly of God International, of which also Manuel was secretary.

Manuel had other responsibilities as well. He was in charge of donor goods that came into the port of Beira for distribution. He

became increasingly corrupt and ill. When he died sometime toward the end of 1996, it was discovered that he had not only turned the donor goods opportunities to his own advantage, but had also embezzled funds from the Assemblies of God International, including some funds contributed by Brethren in Christ World Missions for a Bible school.

While Felipe knew none of this, he did know that Manuel had kept him apart from the representatives of Brethren in Christ World Missions (BICWM) whenever they came to visit Mozambique. In 1993, he and his people were assigned seats so far from the platform of the church that he couldn't recognize a member of the BICWM delegation when he met him again in 1997. All help sent for the Brethren in Christ in Mozambique was intercepted; none of it reached Felipe and his church.

Still Felipe shared his vision and the church grew until it numbered 528 members in 1995. When it was not recognized by Manuel and the Assemblies of God International (AoGI—a local Mozambique church not affiliated with the Assemblies of God in the United States), the group severed its connection and registered with the govern-

Felipe had seen a vision of a cross. A dove flew down and landed on the cross and over the cross Felipe could make out the words: The Evangelical Church of the Brethren in Christ.

ment as the Brethren in Christ Church. Now without any accountability Felipe and his leaders set out again to find the Brethren in Christ Church.

They had heard of Barnabas, who had learned of the Brethren in Christ while a refugee in Malawi. So Felipe and Maria went to Tete and searched for Barnabas. After much searching they found him and invited him to their home in Beira. He came and talked much about "Disi" in Malawi.

When the Brethren in Christ World Missions' missionary, Darrell Winger, became aware of the corruption at the head of the AoGI, he left Mozambique and settled in Malawi. However, he had met Felipe and before he left, was given a warm farewell party in Felipe's sixth floor apartment. Darrell had talked about the Brethren in Christ Church in Malawi and its General Director, Ephraim Disi. Now Felipe and two of his leaders took the long and difficult journey to Malawi to look for Ephraim Disi.

For three days they walked the streets of Blantyre and its suburb, Ndirande. They asked at the Bible Society, the Christian Center, and all other places that they could hear about, asking for Mr. Disi. They got no help at all, and it was only after they had left Blantyre that Ephraim Disi heard about the men who were looking for him.

The vision was still strong and they continued ministry, preaching the gospel as they understood it to their churches. Some of the members became discouraged and left, saying that there was no Brethren in Christ Church. They

wanted to be part of a real church, one with connections outside of Mozambique. The active membership declined to 183.

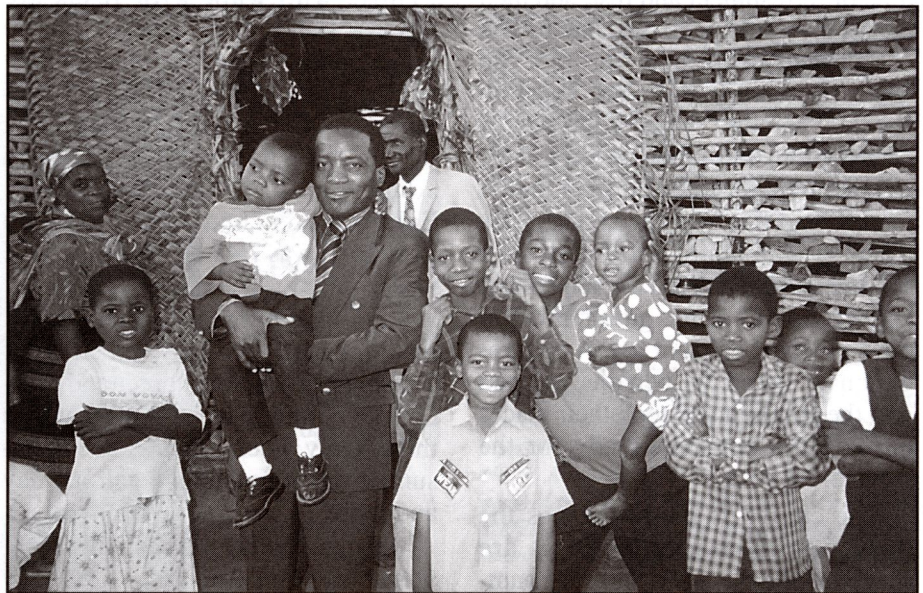
Then AIM missionary Randy Carpenter and Felipe met. Randy, whose staff is already assisting about 12 churches including the AoGI and could not take on another, offered to help find the Brethren in Christ. He had known Darrell Winger from Canada and eventually made contact. It was the urgent insistence of veteran missionary Randy Carpenter that persuaded Brethren in Christ World Missions to make another foray into Mozambique after its previous unfortunate experiences.

Jack McClane, Executive Director of Brethren in Christ World Missions, wanted to respond to the appeal from Mozambique but did not want to do it alone. Having two missionary couples in nearby Malawi, he asked them to plan a trip into Mozambique. The information gathered was not good. Bandits, posing as police and army units, were stopping cars on the roads, robbing passengers, hijacking vehi-

cles, and in several cases killing the occupants. Vehicles with out-of-country registration plates were especially vulnerable. It was decided to use the services of Mission Aviation Fellowship to make the journey.

On Saturday, June 21, 1997, a single engine Cessna 206 took off from Blantyre's Chileka airport with Jon Cadd at the controls and with passengers Jack McClane, Ephraim Disi, Gary Andricks, and Graybill Brubaker. In a very smooth flight at altitudes up to 7,300 feet and a speed of 120 miles per hour, the party watched the densely-populated country of Malawi fade from view and the miles of the virtually empty country of Mozambique slip under the little plane. Exactly two hours later, the single runway of the Beira airport came into view. Soon the nose wheel of N206CE touched down.

From the moment the party entered the airport, they were overwhelmed by a reception party which included not only Randy Carpenter and Pastor Felipe, along with his wife and six children, but about a dozen other lead-



Pastor Felipe and his family.

ers of the Brethren in Christ Church in Mozambique. There was Felipe's assistant, two counselors, pastors, deacons, and an interpreter. Perhaps the story of the interpreter, Charles, best describes the church and its growth. Charles took his schooling in Zimbabwe and learned English there. He was employed by the police to teach English. There Felipe met him, led him to Christ, and Charles became the English liaison for the church.

With the party in Randy's car as part of it, a motorcade proceeded into the city of Beira and pulled up outside of a tall apartment building. Taking the elevator to the sixth floor, the whole group crowded into the comfortable apartment of Felipe and Maria, their one daughter and five sons.

For the next hour, waves of gratitude surged over the party, which was truly embarrassed by the expressions of relief that at last God had answered their prayers and their five years of searching for "The Vision" had been rewarded. God had sent the "parents" to tell them the orders of life and worship of the Brethren in Christ Church. Taken at face value, they wanted to know and felt that they were under God's orders to obey. That "the vision" had been from God was assumed, and only obedience would be appropriate.

By now it was about 2:00 in the afternoon. There was to be a short time of refreshment and rest, and then the group would go to the church. The people had been there through the whole afternoon and were eager to see the "parents." After a journey of eleven kilometers (about seven miles), the two pick-up trucks turned onto a plot of land that had once been a rice field. It was about 6:00 p.m. The singing had been heard for some time, and the arrival of the guests brought out a renewed spirit of joy. A congregation of about 90 persons trooped into the building and took their places on backless benches, ready for the service.

The church is being built as the local houses are built. Poles are spaced along the walls and split bam-



From left: Graybill Brubaker, Ephraim Disi, Jack McClane, and Gary Andricks.

boo is tied on each side. The gap between is filled with stones and bits of tile and the wall is then plastered. A low roof made of poles and split bamboo covers the whole and the roofing itself is a large sheet of heavy blue plastic. Some specially-woven fronds provide a decorative touch around the door and behind the very low platform. This church is still under construction and the walls are not yet plastered.

As the people trooped into the building, they were singing a song which was interpreted as saying: "Those who walk with Jesus are always successful." Pastor Felipe prayed and a song leader colorfully led the singing. The party was introduced and Gary expressed the feeling of the party in saying that we had come to tell of the Living Word. Ephraim preached a sermon from Acts 16. It was 7:45 before the service was over.

Returning to the sixth floor apartment the party was served the first of a number of fabulous three- and four-course dinners we enjoyed while there. Only when that had been consumed was it possible to call it a day and retire.

Arising Sunday morning, the party was able to look from a small balcony

over the wide bay that makes Beira the ideal location for a seaport. Unfortunately, the shore is littered with rusting hulks of ships of many kinds. On the other side of the apartment, the view reveals a large part of the city and on to the harbor, once the main route of supply of goods for Northern and Southern Rhodesia and Nyasaland—now Zambia, Zimbabwe, and Malawi. The link with Zimbabwe is still open, having been guarded during the civil war by Zimbabwean troops. But the rail link with Malawi is no longer usable, repairs of the huge bridge over the Zambezi River being a long way from complete.

By 10:00 the party was back at the church. The singing was enthusiastic, accompanied by two drums, rattles and a reed instrument sounded by shaking with practiced motions. The motions of the people were even more vigorous than those in the churches of Malawi. They worship God with exuberant joy. One song was sung in English and spoke of going home to be with our Lord.

Two persons came as applicants for membership. One of them, however, had not been baptized as a believer, and a first lesson of what it means to be Brethren in Christ was evident. The leaders were introduced and stood

with their wives, with expressions of affection the visitors had not seen before in Africa. The offering was given by placing the individual gifts on the table at the front of the church. A very old woman came forward to make her offering and a boy so small that he could hardly reach the table put his offering there. Afterwards three leaders were seen counting and recording the offering.

About 135 people listened to a sermon by Jack in Portuguese, (interpreted into Ndaou) on the theme of the supremacy of Christ. After more than 30 minutes, he closed his time by praying for these deeply sincere people. Then the women went out to bring in some gifts for the party. As they entered the church they sang two songs. The first one was interpreted to say, "Receive the little bit that we have"; the second one said, "We will enter Canaan together and we will not turn back." With that they brought three plates and a cage. On the first plate were two bottles of Coca Cola, on the second were two bottles of Fanta Orange, on the third was a hand of bananas, and in the cage were two doves.

The doves were symbolic of "The Vision" and were very important. However, the party did not know what to do about them. They could hardly take them in the plane to Malawi, and indeed it was expected that veterinary papers would be needed to take them out of Mozambique and again to take them into Malawi. In the end Ephraim

explained this to Felipe, who said that he would take them to Malawi himself when he goes there.

With the singing of "Alleluia, Amen," the service ended at 1:00 p.m. Then the visitors were stationed at the door and each person shook hands with them and joined the line. In that way every person shook hands with all of the others. Felipe led the party past a small house behind the church, where he had grown up, to meet the lady who had sold the land for the church to him. There was then more singing as the party left to drive back to the apartment.

At the apartment the party got a glimpse of their late night dinner—a huge red snapper fully three feet long. However, that was for later. For now there was a lighter meal with one of several tasty soup dishes and a bit of time to relax. The people had been fed at the church and by 5:00 p.m. were back in service. About 66 people were present and the service was to be less formal. It was to be a teaching session on what Brethren in Christ doctrine and practice required. Graybill was assigned this task. After he spoke more than an hour and a quarter, the people would not rest until Gary spoke also. He emphasized the importance of Bible study, a point which Graybill had not included. Ephraim bore the heavy burden of the interpretation into Shona, one of the seven languages he speaks but one that he had not used for a long time. With the singing of "Alleluia, Amen,"

the service ended at 7:20 p.m. with a benediction by Jack. The people had been there all day! The party went to Felipe's home and ate on that red snapper.

There was one day left and

the people wanted to make the most of it. On Monday afternoon, the party was taken out to an area north of the city called Inhamizua. On arrival they saw low houses set in intensive gardens. Open wells showed the water table only about five feet below the surface. A church building had been there, but a storm had blown the roof off and the one side in. They followed the sound of singing and came to a group of people under a tree. About 40 people, including many children, sang a welcome with accompaniment by a man with a rattle in each hand. A ladies group sang beautifully.

It was a short service. Each member of the party spoke for a few minutes. Gary spoke from Philippians 3:7-14: press on to the goal. The party took leave just after 5:00 p.m. and returned to the city.

The next morning, Tuesday, June 24, was the day to return to Malawi. A special prayer of blessing was prayed upon Felipe and Maria. At the airport a group was waiting to see the party off. The care and honor for the "parents" was evident right up to the departure.

Upon return to Blantyre the trip was evaluated. Having "been taken" once in Mozambique, is it wise to try again? The unanimous agreement was that God was in it and we should press on, but with caution. Felipe was invited as an observer at the Malawi General Conference in August. He brought the two doves with him. Ephraim and Graybill with Ethel returned to Mozambique in November 1997 for more teaching, and Mozambique is to be included in next year's administrative trip by the Executive Director. Not much is being risked, but a lot may be gained. The Lord has opened a great door of opportunity, taken at face value.

Graybill and Ethel Brubaker, after having served with Brethren in Christ World Missions in Zambia and as an administrator in North America as well as having serving in several pastorates, returned to Africa in April 1997, this time to serve in Malawi. They are members of the Upland (Calif.) Brethren in Christ Church.



A red snapper for dinner.



God at work in our world

We have prayed!

Dr. Craig and Trish Hogg went to Macha Hospital in September 1997 from the Heise Hill Brethren in Christ Church in Ontario, Canada. Craig's letter to the home office and an added paragraph by Trish give the account of a faith-building experience.

Dear friends,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your continued prayer support. It really does make a difference.

I was on call to the hospital on Sunday, December 7. Dr. Mann, the surgeon, was away in Lusaka for the weekend so I was the only physician here. A 30-year-old lady came in to the hospital with a 2-day history of abdominal pain and bleeding. She was three months pregnant. The diagnosis turned out to be a ruptured tubal pregnancy. She was bleeding internally and, due to the loss of blood, needed an operation to stop the bleeding. I have seen this operation done before, but had never done anything like this by myself.

My choice was to try it myself or transfer her to Choma, a town two hours away over a bumpy dirt road. I was honest with the family as to my experience with this and they asked to have her transferred. As I spoke to other people here about this, they were concerned about attempting a transfer. They have had a number of bad experiences with similar cases not doing well in transfer and not being operated on in a timely manner once they arrived there. I discussed this with the family and they told me to do whatever I felt was best.

The responsibility for this lady's well-being weighed very heavily on me, to say the least. I decided to go ahead and operate on her myself. With the assistance of an excellent team of Zambian nurses and a physician's assistant, I was able to identify the problem, remove the affected tube, and control the bleeding. Today the patient is recovering well and hopefully will make a complete recovery.

The time here when I was struggling with the decision was about 5:00 p.m. This would have been around 10:00 a.m. your time, when you would have been in Sunday school or church. I appreciate the fact that you share with me regularly that you are praying for us. I'm sure there

were many people in Canada and the U.S. praying for me in my time of need. Praise be to God for the power of prayer and his faithfulness to hear us and answer our prayers. I had a real sense of calm once the decision had been made, and I know God was guiding me throughout. Thank you all for your "assistance" with this operation.

Trish adds:

Craig agonized as I have never seen before and decided to go ahead. Providentially, he had recently assisted Dr. Mann with the same operation. He called the best staff into the operating room and the operation was successful. He visited the patient at 5:00 a.m. this morning, and she smiled at him and told him she was hungry. He did make a difference and saved a life dramatically. I was just praying like crazy. The neat thing was that while all this was going on, I was leading a women's Bible study. I described the situation to them and they pleaded with the Lord. After the prayers, one lady who is a midwife said to me, "Dr. Hogg has made the right decision. And we have prayed!" Our faith has grown by leaps and bounds through this one experience.

Growing churches in Cuba

LeRoy and Judy Eberly give leadership to the Brethren in Christ Churches in Mexico as well as those in Cuba. Following is a portion of the report from their most recent visit in Cuba. The Eberlys have served in Mexico since August 1993.

On November 6, 1997, it was our privilege to travel again to the island of Cuba for our ninth visit with the Brethren in Christ Church in Cuba. What started out in 1992 as two congregations that were struggling under the leadership of one person has now grown to 21 house churches in addition to the two congregations. Twelve or thirteen lay leaders pastor the house churches, while the president of the national board of directors, Daniel Cabrera, pastors the Cuatro Caminos church, and the dean of our seminary, Adolfo Rodriguez, pastors the church in the Nazareno community. The ministry of the Brethren in Christ church has now moved from doing ministry in Habana Province

to three other provinces. They are Santa Clara, Holguin, and Granma.

Entry into the country was decidedly more difficult this time. First of all, we were restricted in the amount of luggage we could take on the plane. Later our luggage was inspected and we were told that we had too much luggage to be tourists. When we showed our Religious Workers permit, we were finally allowed to leave the airport. Religious worker permits can be secured only for foreign ministers by our church there when there is some major activity planned. The occasion of our visit was the first annual Women's Prayer Fellowship rally on Friday and Saturday, November 14 and 15. Judy and I were both involved in ministry during those days.

On Saturday evening, Nov. 8, a group of 18 students and two professors from Eastern Mennonite University visited the Cuatro Caminos church for a time of interacting with the youth and a meal. Following their visit we had a service and several received Christ as their Savior. During our time there as many as ten prayed to receive Christ.

As before, we walked and rode old vintage cars and the public transit to attend the different cell and house groups. All of the groups are growing. New leaders are being trained in the seminary at Cuatro Caminos Church. I attended one of the sessions with about ten students on a Saturday morning.

The Grapevine

Doyle and Thelma Book serve as self-supporting missionary associates in Kitakyushu, Japan. They served in Japan under Brethren in Christ World Missions from 1955 to 1972 and have continued their ministry there.

Doyle had an interesting experience recently. Occasionally he has been asked by a missionary friend to perform weddings for him at a well-known restaurant in a town a little farther down the coast from Kitakyushu City. The name of the restaurant is Buddo no Ki (The Grapevine). Every Japanese Christian who hears the name thinks immediately of the fifteenth chapter of John's Gospel where Jesus tells us he is the vine and we are the branches.

A nurse who graduated from our school, Orio Joshi Gakuen, chose this restaurant for her marriage place. She told the owner about that Bible passage she had read at her school. The restaurant owner was intrigued and wanted to have

the words. The nurse couldn't remember where they were in the Bible, so she asked the head nurse in the hospital where she was employed to find it for her. That head nurse, Miss Ishii, is a member of our little church. She told us the story at church later.

In the meantime, the restaurant owner,

not a Christian at all, had received Jesus' words about the vine and the branches. He was so impressed that he asked Doyle if he could work them into the wedding ceremony in some way. Doyle could and did. He also told the missionary friend so he could make use of them, too, in an ongoing witness to the restaurant owner

and workers as well as to every wedding couple and guest who will be married at The Grapevine from then on. This is one of those instances where God allows us to see how his Spirit works, using even unbelievers—the nurse and the restaurant owner—to open a way for his Word to find entrance. **EV**



Sammy in a ricksha in Peshawar.

Why do you want to minister to Muslims?

The Muslim people are among the least evangelized in the world. They have the least opportunities to know Christ.

Recently you took a missionary trip with the hope to reach Afghanistan and participate there in a prayer walk. You left Oct 4 and returned Oct 28. You arrived in London and then went on to Pakistan, but were unable to enter Afghanistan. Tell us a bit about preparing for this trip.

I needed to raise \$3,500 US dollars for the trip. I did various fund raising events. Niza 9 Brethren in Christ church contributed half of my financial needs. I wanted to help my church feel ownership in the mission trip and because of that, we raised prayer and financial support through special events and activities. The other half of the funds came from other Brethren in Christ individuals (not from the Niza 9 church) and other individuals.

Were there problems that you encountered on your trip?

I had some difficulty securing visas for England and Pakistan. Also because of being Colombian, I was not treated well in the London airport. This is because there is much drug traffic between Colombia and Pakistan. While in Pakistan, I sensed many spiritual attacks. This came mostly in the form of bad dreams. I was aware of the spiritual war I was encountering.

And what about the blessings you received?

I never lacked food nor lodging. Fellow Christians and missionaries helped me and extended themselves to me. In Pakistan, I became familiar with a developing Christian church. I met some Christian Afghans in Pakistan. This was a great encouragement.

What have you learned through this experience?

The biggest lesson I learned through this trip is that God taught me not to pray against Islam, but against Satan. Muslims eyes are blinded, and the one blinding them is Satan.

What are your future plans?

I see that I need to develop a support system here, for both prayer and finances. I plan to continue studying theology with Curtis Book in the Brethren in Christ church. I also need to do some Islamic studies, and I would like to go to the school in London operated by Operation Mobilization. While in Pakistan, this was strongly recommended to me. I would like to get married in one and a half years, but I don't have the girl yet. Lord willing, in two and a half to three years, I would like to be in Pakistan or Afghanistan. **EV**

Sammy's missionary journey

Curtis and Leslie Book serve the Lord in Bogotá, Colombia. The following article is from an interview Leslie did with Sammy D'Arco, a young man from the Niza 9 Brethren in Christ Church in Bogotá.

Leslie: How did you come to know the Lord?

Sammy: I was saved five years ago when I was nineteen years old. I read an evangelical tract and turned my life over to the Lord.

What brought you to the Brethren in Christ Church?

Four years ago I came to Bogota to work with street ministries. I stayed in the same house as Sonia Valencia. She invited me to go to the Niza 9 Brethren in Christ Church.

How did you receive your missionary vision?

Since I became a Christian, I have had a desire to be a missionary. Soon after my conversion, a missionary talked to me about Afghanistan and I began to pray. I read everything I could about the country. God gave me an intense desire to be a missionary to Afghanistan.



Church News

Notes of Congregational Activities in North America

Allegheny Conference

The Gudgeon family presented a Christmas program Dec. 28 for the **Air Hill** congregation, Chambersburg, Pa. The youth New Year's Eve party was under the guidance of youth director, Dave Miller. ♦ The adult choir of the **Antrim** church, Chambersburg, sang the

cantata "Celebrate the Gift" Dec. 13 and 14. A church turkey luncheon was Dec. 14. ♦ On Dec. 14 the children's choir of the **Chambersburg** church gave the musical "Shine, Jesus, Shine." The congregation baked cookies for inmates of Franklin Co. Prison. ♦ On Dec. 19 and 20 the **Fairview** church, Waynesboro, Pa., gave a 25-min.,

9-scene outdoor guided tour through the Christmas story with a mix of humor and insight.

On Dec. 7 the children of the **Five Forks** congregation, Waynesboro, tried to solve the mystery of how Old Testament prophecies relate to our mission today in the musical "Mission Impossible." The church reports an increase of worship attendance since December 1996 of 92. ♦ On Dec. 7 the **Hollowell** church, Waynesboro, celebrated with a carry-in meal and program by the Gudgeon family. The mini-musical "And On Earth Peace" was given by the senior choir. ♦ On Dec. 7 the **Iron Springs** congregation, Fairfield, Pa., had a light meal, tree trimming, and hymn sing. ♦ Carl Shank delivered the message Dec. 7 to the **Martinsburg**, Pa., congregation. Member Lydia Leonard celebrated her 100th birthday recently. On Dec. 14 the Omegans presented the play "No Room."

Mim Stern spoke at the Dec. 6 MPF mother-daughter Christmas banquet of the **Montgomery** church, Mercersburg, Pa., on "Putting God First." On Dec. 14 the youth presented the five-scene play "Something Happened." ♦ The **Mt. Rock** church, Shippensburg, Pa., received 55 new members on Nov.

30. Ben and Julia Musser celebrated 50 years of marriage in December with a reception given by their children. Julia wore her wedding dress. They have been part of the congregation since 1951. ♦ The **Mt. Tabor** congregation, Mercersburg, received five new members recently. A candle sale by the youth raised over \$400. The congregation also sold nuts, with proceeds of \$558 going to Gospel Tide Hour. ♦ The **South Mountain** church, Shippensburg, caroled at Shippensburg Health Center and distributed gifts items to residents on Dec. 17.

Atlantic Conference

On "New Humanity Day," Jan. 18, the **Circle of Hope** church, Philadelphia, Pa., celebrated the essential Christian work of reconciliation and honored Martin L. King Jr. ♦ At the Dec. 6 Daughters' Christmas Brunch of the **Cross Roads** church, Mount Joy, Pa., Carol Anne and Tara Lee Friesen were speaker/soloist. The junior choir presented "It All Happened in the Country" on Dec. 13 and 14. ♦ The Saturday Circle meetings Dec. 20 at the **Elizabethtown**, Pa., church featured a carol sing, stories, and the men vs. women Name That



Costs Updates for General Conference, July 4-8, 1998 at Messiah College, Grantham, PA

Corrections for Airport, Bus/Train Station Transportation

Transportation to/from Harrisburg International Airport (MDT)

- One person—\$20.00 each way
- Two persons—\$12.00 per person each way
- Three or more persons—\$9.00 per person each way

Transportation to/from Harrisburg Transportation Center (bus/train)

- One person—\$15.00 each way
- Two persons—\$8.00 per person each way
- Three or more persons—\$6.00 per person each way

Your reservations will be confirmed and an attempt will be made to combine your request with others in order to obtain lower rates.

Cost Information regarding Youth and Children's programs

Exciting and extensive special programs are being planned for youth and children who are able to attend the 1998 General Conference. To help cover the costs of these programs, the following non-refundable fees will apply:

- Youth (13-17)-\$40.00 for the full program
- Children (5-12)-\$20.00 for the full program, or \$5.00 per person per day
- Nursery (0-4)-\$10.00 for the full program, or \$3.00 per person per day

Registration for the above programs will take place on July 4, 8:00-9:30 a.m., at General Conference.

David P. McBeth, Conference Director, Phone (717) 766-0598.

Schedule of Events

Board meetings are held at Grantham, Pa., unless otherwise noted. For more information, contact the denominational office, P.O. Box 290, Grantham, Pa. 17027; phone (717) 697-2634.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Mar. 2-4 | National Association of Evangelicals Annual Convention |
| Mar. 6-7 | Pacific Regional Conference |
| Mar. 7 | Messiah College Open House (All Majors)—Grantham, Pa. |
| Mar. 20-21 | Atlantic Regional Conference |
| Mar. 20-21 | Central Regional Conference |
| Mar. 20-21 | Midwest Regional Conference |
| Apr. 4 | Allegheny Regional Conference |
| Apr. 6 | Messiah College Open House (All Majors)—Grantham, Pa. |
| Apr. 14-15 | Ministers' Conference—Messiah College |
| Apr. 17-18 | Canadian Regional Conference |
| Apr. 17-18 | Susquehanna Regional Conference |
| Apr. 19-23 | Core Course "Theology of the Church"—Collingwood, Ont. |
| Apr. 24-25 | Southeast Regional Conference |
| Apr. 29-30 | Leadership Council |
| May 7-9 | Core Course "Brethren in Christ Polity"—Grantham, Pa. |
| May 18-22 | Core Course "Brethren in Christ History"—Upland, Calif. |
| July 4-8 | General Conference—Messiah College, Grantham, Pa. |
| July 16-18 | Core Course "Theology of Salvation"—West Milton, Ohio |

Carol contest. ♦ The **Fairland** congregation, Cleona, Pa., received 15 new members on Dec. 7. ♦ In January the **Free Grace** church, Millersburg, Pa., began a 13-week course, "May All Who Come Behind Us Find Us Faithful."

The youth of the **Hempfield** congregation, Lancaster, Pa., sold peanut brittle as a fund raiser for Water Street Mission recently. Average worship attendance in December was 158. ♦ The **Lancaster** congregation participated in the Angel Tree Project by taking gifts to 41 children. ♦ The choir and orchestra of the **Manor** church, Mountville, Pa., presented "Love's Pure Light: A Worship Experience" on Dec. 20 and 21. ♦ The **Millersville**, Pa., congregation welcomed five new members by transfer recently. The quiz team quizzed at the Manor church on Dec. 7. ♦ On Dec. 7 the **Mt. Pleasant** congregation, Mt. Joy, Pa., collected stockings for Messiah Village. The kids' musical on Dec. 21 was "Don't Be Afraid Brigade."

"It All Happened in the Country" was the Dec. 21 musical at the **New Hope** church, Harrisburg, Pa. ♦ Small groups at the **New Joy** church, Akron, Pa., recently studied *Dare to Discipline* and "Discovering God's New Community." ♦ The **Palmyra**, Pa., church welcomed 12 new members Dec. 14. "The Gofers Christmas" was the Dec. 21 musical. ♦ The **Pequea** congregation, Lancaster, participated in the Angel Tree Project for children of prisoners. On Dec. 21 the church had a live nativity and the children's musical, "Don't Be Afraid Brigade." ♦ The **Silverdale**, Pa., church sold Christmas ornaments with a picture of the church with proceeds going to the building fund. On Dec. 22, the congregation paraded from the town firehouse to the church's live nativity. ♦ "The Baby King" was the Dec. 7 children's musical at the **Skyline View** church, Harrisburg, Pa. ♦ The **Summit View** congregation, New Holland, Pa., caroled Dec. 14 at Tel Hai Nursing Center. A youth retreat was Dec. 26-28.

Canadian Conference

The Dec. 14 program of the **Bertie** church, Stevensville, Ont., included a chime choir led by Charles Lady; the drama "Would You Know Jesus If He Came to Your Door?"; and a Sunday school presentation. ♦ On Dec. 6 the **Boyle** congregation, St. Ann's, Ont., had a Kids for Camp Kahquah bazaar. ♦ During the Sunday school hour Dec. 7 of the **Bridlewood** church, Agincourt, Ont., students from NCC

entertained and challenged attenders with skits. ♦ The **Cross Roads** congregation, Guelph, Ont., participated in Operation Christmas Child for needy children around the world. ♦ On Dec. 14 the junior choir of the **Heise Hill** church, Gormley, Ont., presented "Code Red...an E.R. Christmas."

The **Kindersley**, Sask., congregation has decided to name its new building Clearview Brethren in Christ Church, reminiscent of the country church (1917-1953) and reflecting their theology and new location. The congregation is discussing calling an associate pastor. ♦ The youth of the **Massey Place** church, Saskatoon, Sask., had a Christmas banquet Dec. 19. A women's craft and fun night was Dec. 1. ♦ "Songs in the Air" was the Dec. 14 Sunday school program of the **Oak Ridges**, Ont., church. ♦ The **Orchard Creek** church, St. Catharines, Ont., had their annual Christmas supper and talent night Dec. 14. ♦ The Christmas Eve service at the **Port Colborne**, Ont., church was "A Christmas Collage" of readings and song. The church received nine new members on Dec. 4.

The youth of the **Ridgemount** church, Hamilton, Ont., were active in December: a semi-formal dinner Dec. 6; boffle ball night, Dec. 19; and a "head hunt" Dec. 23. ♦ The Dec. 21 junior Sunday school program of the **Rosebank** church, Petersburg, Ont., was "A Church Mouse Christmas." The women have a Bible study on Tuesdays at the parsonage. ♦ On Dec. 21 "The Bethlehem Project" was presented by the children's choir of the **Sherkston**, Ont., church. ♦ Carol-Lyn Thompson was speaker for the Dec. 8 women's fellowship and gift exchange at the **Springvale**, Ont., church. ♦ Pastor and Mrs. Keith Wiggan were installed Dec. 7 at the **Westheights** church, Kitchener, Ont. He gave the message at the Dec. 13 Christmas banquet.

Central Conference

On Dec. 3 the MPF of the **Beulah Chapel** church, Springfield, Ohio, had a white elephant auction. Martin White, church planter in Noblesville, Ind., spoke on Dec. 21. ♦ At the **Carland-Zion** church, Owosso, Mich., 130 people attended the debut of the choir in their December presentation of "Joy in This Place." ♦ The **Christian Union** congregation, Garrett, Ind., had a turkey dinner and gift exchange on Dec. 7. ♦ The **Highland** church, West Milton, Ohio, reports new life, new families, new activity, new



E.V. TimeLines

Selected from the archives of the **EVANGELICAL VISITOR**

100 Years Ago

Feb. 15, 1898—V.D. David, a Tamil evangelist from India, in a two-part article (Feb. 1 and Feb 15 issues) entitled "The Life More Abundant": "Nowadays

hundreds of people are preaching the gospel. They get tired; they have sore throat, or chest pain; they are laid up; they can hardly do their work.... You haven't got the oil of the Holy Ghost. Until you get the oil of the Spirit, your machine will squeak: there will be plenty of noise, but no power."

75 Years Ago

Feb. 19, 1923—In a news article reporting on the compiling of General Conference actions from 1905 through 1915: "It is an easier matter to legislate than to live up to legislation. While some of the rulings as formerly passed will likely need some modification to meet present conditions, yet we need be careful lest we reject that which has been passed by the Church in the past, if the nullification of past legislation tends to accommodate ourselves too readily to the spirit of the age, which we must believe is not in keeping with the spirit of the principles as laid down by Christ for his followers."

50 Years Ago

Feb. 9, 1948—J.N. Hostetter wrote of the death of Mohandas K. Gandhi: "The 78 year old man of India who was christened the 'Great Soul of India' has met death at the hands of an assassin. This apostle of Peace and non-violence had three methods of accomplishing his designs: passive resistance and non-violence which he said he learned from Christ; non-cooperation which he learned from Holstoy [sic]; and civil disobedience which he learned from Thoreau.... It is true, Jesus was a wonderful teacher and example, but without the experience of regeneration...man finds it utterly impossible to attain the ideals of life for which He stood."

25 Years Ago

Feb. 10, 1973—In an editorial entitled "In Praise of Romance," John Zercher wrote: "Give me a marriage founded upon faithfulness, supported by agape love, and lighted by romance and I will show you a relationship which is the envy of angels and the joy of the whole earth. It is from such marriages that children will rise up and call their parents blessed."

10 Years Ago

Feb. 1988—In a true but tongue-in-cheek news item entitled "Squirrel tours bookstore": "A bushy-tailed visitor toured the Elizabethtown Christian Light Bookstore on a warm day a couple of months ago. Customers were startled. Employees—having drilled for such contingencies—went into action immediately. They chased the visitor from the first floor to the basement, and back again. He brushed the legs of a customer in the card section who was looking for something unique. She found it. However, finding no nuts on the premises, he left on his own via the open front door. Even though hotly pursued by sales clerks, no purchase was recorded."

MONEY MATTERS

The story of Bunker Hill Church

by Philip D. Keefer and Raymond Martin

Philip D. Keefer is Director of Stewardship for the Brethren in Christ Church. Raymond Martin pastors the Bunker Hill congregation.

She is a lady of principle, courage, and determination; most of all, she is a lady of conviction who loves the Lord. Her name is Mrs. Betty Swisher. She once owned the property where the Bunker Hill Brethren in Christ Church is now located.

Her property had been on the market for five years. Mrs. Swisher had offers from buyers who wanted to use her property for a beauty parlor, an antique shop, and a beer hall. An occult group wanted to buy it for a church. But she prayed that each one of these offers would fail, and they did.

Several miles and two states away visions were stirring in the hearts of Raymond Martin and Bishop Frank Kipe of the Allegheny Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Raymond was a business man living and working in Franklin County in south central Pennsylvania. He struggled for three months with God's call. Raymond recalls, "God would waken me every morning at 3:00 a.m. and speak to my heart. I remember one morning in August of 1992, I said, 'God, if you open the doors, I will follow you wherever you want me to go.'"

That morning, Raymond called Bishop Frank Kipe and told him his story. Bishop Kipe said, "I have on my desk plans for a church planting in the area of Martinsburg, WV, and I believe you and Sarah would make an ideal church planting couple."

One year later, on August 19, 1993, the Martins moved to property purchased from Mrs. Swisher in Bunker Hill, WV. The property included a home as well as a small church. Upon their first inspection of the property, Pas-

tor Martin said, "God spoke to my heart and said, 'This is where I want you to plant a church.'"

Mrs. Swisher quizzed the Martins regarding their intentions for the property. When Raymond indicated that they wanted it for a Brethren in Christ Church, she asked what the Brethren in Christ believed. She had been praying that God would send her a buyer who believed Jesus Christ was the Son of God. She wanted someone who exalted Christ and praised and worshiped God. After satisfactorily meeting her criteria, a contract was signed and the property was purchased. On settlement day Mrs. Swisher gave a donation by reducing the purchase price by \$10,000.

Plans were made to hold their first service on Easter Sunday of 1994. However, in late October 1993, Raymond and his wife Sarah were walking to the church to pray when Sarah said, "Honey, the Bible says that where two or three are gathered together in my name I will be there and bless. There are already three of us [Raymond, Sarah, and their daughter Nicki] plus whoever else comes. I think we should open these church doors as soon as possible." They prayed that day for God's direction and held their first service on December 4, 1993, with 37 people in attendance. Twenty-five people from the local community came that first Sunday. On Easter Sunday of 1994, there were 42 people present.

On May 22, 1994, they had their charter membership Sunday and the Bunker Hill Church received 17 charter members. More than 100 people have accepted Christ or made a recommitment to him. Their stories are testimonies of the power of Jesus Christ over sin. "God brought us here to reach those who were



The church after the new addition. A line on the roof (which may be visible in the photo) indicates where the addition, on the right, joins the older building.

Cooperative Ministries

Receipts, Year to Date January 1–December 31, 1997

| | United States | | Canada | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| | 1997 | 1996 | 1997 | 1996 |
| Proportionate | <u>2,347,982</u> | <u>2,260,907</u> | <u>431,781</u> | <u>421,016</u> |
| Congregational | 2,157,474 | 2,101,792 | 425,218 | 413,930 |
| Individual | 190,508 | 159,115 | 6,563 | 7,086 |
| Designated and Direct Giving | <u>1,075,093</u> | <u>786,944</u> | <u>107,843</u> | <u>36,742</u> |
| Congregational | 497,793 | 264,319 | 78,167 | 29,304 |
| Individual | 577,300 | 522,625 | 29,676 | 7,438 |
| Total to Date | <u>3,423,075</u> | <u>3,047,851</u> | <u>431,781</u> | <u>421,016</u> |
| Total Budget | <u>3,877,632</u> | <u>3,781,056</u> | <u>419,300*</u> | <u>472,000</u> |
| Received to Date | 88.3% | 80.6% | 103% | 89.2% |

*Note: Canadian Conference total budget does not include designated or direct giving. At the Canadian Conference in April 97, Conference approved a new budget.

lost and those searching for the truth of God's word," states Pastor Martin.

The little church building was only 36 feet long and 28 feet wide and seated 75 people. In 1996, the people of Bunker Hill had a vision for a growing church. If they were going to continue to grow, they not only needed more building; they also needed more land. Their average attendance in 1996 was 64. There were many Sundays in October, November, and December when their little church was packed. If they were to continue to reach new individuals and families, they needed more room.

Meanwhile, in 1996 the Leadership Council chose Bunker Hill Church as one of the two church planting congregations to receive proceeds from Funds for Facilities, a project which was launched at the 1996 General Conference. A goal of \$250,000 was established to assist the Bunker Hill and Hempfield congregations.

Additional land was purchased adjacent to the church and in February 1997, the decision was made by the congregation to build an addition to the present sanctuary, doubling its size. They broke ground on March 27, 1997, and completed their building on September 6, 1997. On September 7, they held their first service in their new sanctuary with 120 people present. On December 7, they celebrated their fourth anniversary and also dedicated their new facility. Bishop John Hawbaker preached the dedicatory message and presided over the dedica-

tion service with 175 members, adherents, friends, and guests present.

Mrs. Swisher attended the dedication service. Pastor Martin writes, "As we were singing our closing song, the Lord spoke to my heart. I went to Mrs. Swisher and invited her to the pulpit to see the new church filled with people and to let her see the answer to her prayers. She cried with joy and praised God. To God be the glory, great things he has done."

Pastor Martin also says, "We were blessed by the Funds for Facilities project. We received \$106,176.05, all of which we put toward our mortgage."

The dollars given by Brethren in Christ churches throughout North America have been a real encouragement to this young emerging congregation in northern West Virginia. This is really what the cooperative spirit within the Brethren in Christ is about—brothers and sisters in Christ helping one another. We are family, and God has ordained us to care for and encourage each other within the family.

The dollars you have given are

important. However, what really matters is the impact on people's lives: a lady who had never been to church in her life was saved; a man was healed of cancer and his doctors have declared him cancer free; 43 people were baptized; 75 members have been received; a man who was on drugs was saved and is active in the church; 750

were in attendance at five spring revival services; the church has a Sunday morning radio program; business persons in the community have donated material, equipment, and labor for the building project; often the altar is filled on Sunday mornings

with people seeking God; in their three-day fall revival 14 people were saved.

Rejoice in what God is doing at Bunker Hill! As you gave to Funds for Facilities, you had a part in this church planting ministry. One of the greatest truths of the Bible is that all Christians are "laborers together with God." This simply means that all members of the Brethren in Christ are partners with God in his plan to give the Gospel to the world. Christian stewardship is all of us working in partnership with God to proclaim his good news throughout the world.

This final comment was made by Pastor Martin: "I remember before we held our first service, God spoke to my heart and wanted me, as pastor, to tithe our offerings. 'Give 10% of your church offerings back to me,' is what God was telling me. Though I did not understand why, I obeyed. Since that first service, we as the Bunker Hill Church have given 10% of our Sunday morning worship offerings to Cooperative Ministries."

The congregation on Dedication Sunday



Phil Keefer (right) presents a "Funds for Facilities" check to Pastor Martin



prayer. Bill Miller gave a candle-light Christmas recital Dec. 12. ♦ On Dec. 14 the children's musical at the **Lakeview** church, Goodrich, Mich., was "Arch the Angel."

The **Mooretown** church, Sandusky, Mich., welcomed 12 new members Dec. 14. The Dec. 21 program included drama by the Victory Kids and Mooretown Miracles. ♦ The Bethel AME choir sang at the 24th annual hanging of the greens service Dec. 7 at the **Morrison**, Ill., church. The Six:Eight Players presented "Stuck Inside the First Noel..." on Dec. 21. ♦ The women of the **Northgate** fellowship, Tipp City, Ohio, had a party and cookie exchange Dec. 11 at Amber Rose Restaurant. ♦ The **Pleasant Hill**, Ohio, church planned caroling and a soup supper for Dec. 21.

The annual Christmas dinner Dec. 13 of the **Sippo Valley** church, Massillon, Ohio, was at Mrs. Yoder's Kitchen. Members Daniel and Helen Glick left Dec. 18 for several weeks of service in Mexico. ♦ The annual missions dinner recently of the **Valley Chapel** church, Canton, Ohio, netted over \$1,700 despite adverse weather and low attendance. Mozart's "Alleluia" opened the children's program Dec. 21. ♦ The **Wooster**, Ohio, church began a series Jan. 11 on marriage and family.

Midwest Conference

The women of the **Bethany** church, Thomas, Okla., had their annual salad supper and secret pals exchange on Dec. 8. The Dec. 14 children's program was "Christmas in the Country." ♦ The secret sisters party of the **Rosebank** congregation, Hope, Kan., was Dec. 2. The youth sold homemade candy for Christmas to help fund camp. ♦ On Dec. 21 the **Zion** congregation, Abi-

lene, Kan., took an offering to help pay heating expenses for struggling families.

Pacific Conference

"Love, Joy, Peace...And All That Other Stuff" was presented Dec. 21, 23, and 24 at the **Chino**, Calif., church. ♦ The **Pacific Highway** church, Salem, Ore., had a Great People of the Bible series on Wednesday nights in December. ♦ The teens of the **Redwood** church, Grants Pass, Ore., gave several outdoor performances of their Christmas program Dec. 21-23. ♦ The **Upland**, Calif., church hosted the Nov. 30 regional carol sing.

Southeast Conference

The **Holden Park** church, Orlando, Fla., had a work night Dec. 15 to assist replacing light fixtures. The Gramms hosted an open house Dec. 28.

Susquehanna Conference

The youth of the **Big Valley** church, Belleville, Pa., presented "The Valley Haven Christmas Program" on Dec. 28. ♦ Beginning Jan. 17 the **Carlisle**, Pa., church had devotional breakfasts for young couples to study growing together in Christ. ♦ On Dec. 14, 180 people enjoyed the cantata "Behold This Child" at the **Cedar Heights** church, Mill Hall, Pa. ♦ Christmas activities at the **Dillsburg**, Pa., church included the children's musical, "The Riches of Bethlehem," Dec. 7 and favorite stories and carols on Dec. 21. ♦ On Dec. 21 the choir of the **Fairview** congregation, New Cumberland, Pa., repeated their Christmas program, "Home for the Holidays" at Messiah Village. On Dec. 14 Ken Anthony spoke on "My Spiritual Journey...and Vision" regarding his church planting in Altoona.

The **Grantham**, Pa., church had an intergenerational Advent service Dec. 14. A Dec. 21 concert featured four vocal choirs and a brass ensemble. ♦ The children of the **Green Grove** church, Spring Mills, Pa., decorated the tree at the Dec. 7 hanging of the greens service. ♦ The **Jemison Valley** congregation, Westfield, Pa., celebrated Dec. 21 with a morning cantata and evening children's Sunday school program. ♦ The **Mechanicsburg**, Pa., church highlighted people and service at a Jan. 4 ministries fair. The evening service was slides from the Thailand trip. ♦ The four Advent Sundays at the **Messiah Village** church, Mechanicsburg, focused on healing...through expectations, justice,

death, and life. The church hosted a Dec. 28 concert by the Warren Hoffman family. ♦ The **Redland Valley** congregation, York Haven, Pa., caroled to shut-ins on Dec. 17.

For The Record

Births

Albrect: Allegra Caron, Dec. 13, 1997; Tim and Deb Albrect, Massey Place congregation, Sask.

Albright: Trista Sobaor, Dec. 14, 1997; Jonathan and Yari (Bon-tkes) Albright, Manor congregation, Pa.

Bartlett: Petra Joyce, Sept. 24, 1997; Mike and Caroline Bartlett, Rosebank congregation, Ont.

Bell: Elisabeth McKinnes, Nov. 19, 1997; Jeremy and Julie (Leister) Bell, Souderton congregation, Pa.

Birrell: Padraic William, Nov. 19, 1997; William and Brenda (Putman) Birrell, Bertie congregation, Ont.

Bream: Mackenzie Renae, Dec. 1, 1997; Tom and Gina Bream, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.

Brubaker: Cory Daniel, Nov. 26, 1997; Glen and Cindi (Lehman) Brubaker, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.

Cober: Patricia Beth, Sept. 29, 1997; John and Lucy Cober, Rosebank congregation, Ont.

Eichelberger: Katie Lynn, Oct. 11; Dale and Dianne (Lehman) Eichelberger, Mt. Rock congregation, Pa.

Gettel: Tia Kaitlyn, Nov. 5, 1997; Dana and Donna (Wiser) Gettel, Mt. Rock congregation, Pa.

Kimball: Isaiah Benjamin, Nov. 20, 1997; Blaine and Tracey Kimball, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.

Kramer: Kaitlin Noel, Nov. 26, 1997; Curt and Kelli (Lehman) Kramer, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.

LeCates: Robert Hamilton, Dec. 5, 1997; David and Kara (Swartz) LeCates, Manor congregation, Pa.

McCullum-Brown: Sharaya Rose, Oct. 27, 1997; Brian and Janice (McCullum) Brown, Bertie congregation, Ont.

Moyer: Camry Lynn, Nov. 29, 1997; Robert and Kristin (Leicht) Moyer, Fairland congregation, Pa.

Ocker: Janine Nicole, Sept. 19, 1997; Cliff and Celina (Gearhart) Ocker, Montgomery congregation, Pa.

Olesiuk: Christina Louise, Sept. 16, 1997; John and Fay (Harris) Olesiuk, Boyle congregation, Ont.

Perry: Mark Edward, Nov. 29, 1997; Todd and Jeannine Perry, Cross Roads congregation, Mt. Joy, Pa.

Rhoads: Joshua Robert, Dec. 3, 1997; Robert and Angie Rhoads, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.

Shockey: Alexis Chantel, Dec. 2, 1997; Dave and Ashlyn Shockey, Five Forks congregation, Pa.

Sigler: Kari Michelle, Dec. 14, 1997; Bill and Michelle (Davidson) Sigler, Mt. Rock congregation, Pa.

Weddings

Beamer - Wierenga: Jody Lynn, daughter of Klaas and Fennie Wierenga, Hamilton, Ont., and Jason Emmett, son of Glenn and Sheila Beamer, Fenwick, Ont., Apr. 12, 1997, at Boyle Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Darryn Colp officiating.

Binkley - Kanagy: Cynthia K., daughter of Leon J. and Frances Kanagy, Marion, Pa., and Brent Binkley, son of G. Robert Binkley, Venice, Fla., and Betty Wynkoop, Hagerstown, Md., Dec. 13, 1997, at Chambersburg Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Kevin Witter officiating.

Dunlap - Timmons: Tonia Linette, daughter of William and Barbara Timmons, and Robert Scott, son of Carl and Peggy Dunlap, Shippenburg, Pa., Oct. 18, 1997, at Mt. Rock Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Galen Lehman and Rev. Lloyd Zimmerman officiating.

Iacavone - Tyson: Jenny Darlene, daughter of Marilyn K. Tyson, Pottstown, Pa., and Irvin G. Tyson Jr., Womelsdorf, Pa., and Michael John, son of John and Nancy Iacavone, Hershey, Pa., Oct. 25, 1997, at Perkiomen Valley Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. David Croxford officiating.

Meyers - Kuhn: August, daughter of Michael and Cindy Kuhn, Greencastle, Pa., and Darwin B., son of Dean and Doris Meyers, Chambersburg, Pa., Oct. 18, 1997, at Chambersburg Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Kevin Witter officiating.

Ream - Wengert: Karin Lynn, daughter of Paul and Elaine Wengert, New Cumberland, Pa., and Craig Michael, son of Eugene B. Beam, Red Lion, Pa., and Wendy Bowman, York Haven, Pa., Nov. 22, 1997, at Grantham Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Eugene Beam Sr. officiating.

Shearer - Palamone: Linda Carol, daughter of Anthony and Esther Palamone, Irwin, Pa., and

Susquehanna Conference Missions Prayer Fellowship Workshop will be held during the Susquehanna Conference Annual Meeting on Saturday, April 18, 1998 at 9:30 a.m. at the Carlisle Brethren in Christ Church. We will be "Celebrating One Hundred Years of Brethren in Christ Church Missions in Africa."

Dale Warren, son of Tom and Annabelle Shearer, Hartstown, Pa., Nov. 22, 1997, at Chambersburg Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Arthur Ellison officiating.

Stitzer - Rider: Dorothea, daughter of Karl and Mary Rider, Madisonburg, Pa., and Vincent, son of Sam and Freda Stitzer, Spring Mills, Pa., Sept. 20, 1997, at Green Grove Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Darrell Smucker officiating.

Sytsma - Dykstra: Kimberley Gail, daughter of John and Mary Dykstra, St. Anns, Ont., and Steven, son of Bernie and Mary Sytsma, St. Anns, Aug. 2, 1997, at Boyle Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Darryn Colp officiating.

Obituaries

Bouder: Charles T. Bouder, born Jan. 19, 1925, son of Harvey E. and Kathryn A. Gardenhour Bouder, died Dec. 23, 1997. Surviving are his wife, Nellie E. (Bartles); his father; two daughters, Zandra I. Bricker and Sarah E.; a son, Charles L.; three grandchildren; a sister, Janet I. Hocker; and a brother, Richard H. For 47 years he was a member of the Hollowell congregation, Pa., where he served on the board of trustees for 14 years. He was an usher and member of the Kingdom Builders Sunday school class. Early in life, he worked for the Waynesboro Shoe Factory and the area high school. Before retiring in 1990 he worked for over 41 years for the Borough of Waynesboro. The funeral service was held at the church with Rev. James M. Sollenberger officiating. Interment was in Green Hill Cemetery.

Brandt: Clare S. K. Brandt, born July 31, 1926, daughter of William Otto and Gertrude Kemper Shalley, died Nov. 26, 1997. Preceding her in death were her first husband, James G. Kern; and a brother, Nathan Shalley. Surviving are her husband, Alfred R. Brandt; a daughter, Jamie Ingebritson; stepchildren, Alfred H. Brandt and Carol Schaak; two grandchildren; one brother; and two sisters. She was retired from Hershey Foods Corp., and an active churchwoman. She sang in the summer of 1996 in the 600-voice choir for the 3000th anniversary of the return of the Ark of the Covenant to the city of Jerusalem in Israel. She was a member of the Bunker Hill Evangelical Congregational Church where Rev. Roy Luckenbill, Rev. Dale A. Kramer, Rev. Albert Kline, and Rev. Ronald Slabaugh officiated at the service. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Deihl: Dorothy M. Diehl, born June 24, 1904, daughter of John and Emma Davidson Deihl, died Dec. 22, 1997. Preceding her in death were three brothers, George, LeRoy, and Victor. Surviving are many nieces and nephews. Dorothy was a member of the Christian Union congregation, Ind., where she taught preschoolers for many years. The funeral was at McKee-Miles Funeral Home with Rev. Jerel Book officiating. Interment was in Christian Union Cemetery.

Forrester: M. Grace Forrester, born Sept. 10, 1916, daughter of Norman B. and Dessie May Little Wenger, died Nov. 23, 1997. Her husband, John C. Forrester, a daughter, and 3 brothers preceded her in death. Surviving are 4 children: Graydon, J. Robert, Minerva Ojannen, and Janice Hockenberry; 10 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; 2 sisters, Lucille Cunningham and Daphney Upperman; 2 brothers, Richard and Raymond Wenger; and a stepmother, Treacie Wenger. She was retired from Musselman, Inc., and enjoyed gardening and making quilts. The funeral was at the Chambersburg church, Pa., where she attended, with Rev. Kevin Witter, and Rev. Daniel Kelchner officiating. Interment was in Parklawns Memorial Gardens.

Hess: Wilbur Auker Hess, born Dec. 23, 1926, son of Ezra and Martha Auker Hess, died Nov. 5, 1997. His wife, Lois (Nace) preceded him in death. Surviving are his children, Darlene Keller, Brenda Barton, M. Eileen Sentz, and W. LaRue Drace. Wilbur was a member of the Mt. Pleasant congregation, Pa. He loved hunting and fishing, enjoyed his daughters, and was a storyteller. The service was at Missley's Funeral Home with Rev. Roy Peterman and Rev. Robert A. Hess officiating. Interment was in Kraybill Mennonite Cemetery.

Horton: Mary Kathleen Horton, born July 3, 1909, died Oct. 5, 1997. Her husband, Clifford Horton, and a brother, Fred Schell, preceded her in death. Surviving are a daughter, Blanche Pollard; a son, David; foster daughters, Donna Borly and Mary Rowell; a foster son, Mahlon Semach; and two sisters, Pearl Long and Olive Traver. Mary was a member of the Boyle congregation, Ont., for over 60 years. She taught Sunday school most of her life, and was a willing worker. The funeral service was at Dixon Funeral Home with Rev. Darryn Colp and Rev. Gordon Gilmore officiating. Interment was in Maple Lawn Cemetery.

Kanode: Irvin Ginder Kanode, born Dec. 5, 1918, son of William

O. and Anna W. Ginder Kanode, died Dec. 1, 1997. Preceding him in death were a brother, Amos; and a sister, Anna Beaver. Surviving are his wife, Dorothy L. (Wenger); three children, Barbara Ann, Irvin, and Emerson; a granddaughter; and seven siblings, Isaac G., Earl G., John G., Esther Kauffman, Ruth Winters, Barbara Galeback, and Mary Hostetter. The Kanodes pastored three Brethren in Christ circuit churches in Knifley, Ky., then Madison Union Chapel, Wakarusa, Ind., and Millwood Chapel south of Nappanee, Ind. They represented World Vision Int'l. He was a printer for Evangel Press and *Goshen News*. For 10 years he was editor and publisher of the *Indiana NAV-MARCORMARS Bulletin* and was the Spanish, Portuguese, and French correspondence translator for World Missionary Press. After retirement he developed and owned Kanode Organ Service. Since 1972 he was a member of First Baptist Church, Elkhart, Ind., where he taught Sunday school. The memorial service was at the church with Rev. John Blodgett and Rev. Norman Wheeler officiating. Interment was in Air Hill church cemetery, with Rev. Charles L. Lehman officiating.

Kreider: Ruth N. Kreider, born July 21, 1907, daughter of Abram and Fannie Lauver, died Dec. 17, 1997. Preceding her in death were her husbands, Amos S. Gantz (1962) and Herbert H. Kreider (1996). Surviving are a daughter, Linda K. Hetrick; stepdaughters, Nancy J. Hoke, Kathryn A. Kreider, and Barbara K. Nissley; a stepson, H. Dale Kreider; two sisters, Alma Ebersole and Frances Gish; and a brother, Abram B. Lauver Jr. Ruth was saved at 10 at the Free Grace church, Pa., and walked with the Lord over 80 years. She taught Sunday school, headed kitchen services, and was a seamstress. She was a member of the Palmyra church, Pa., where the funeral service was officiated by Rev. Louis O. Cober. Interment was in Hershey Cemetery.

Minor: Helen May Minor, born June 3, 1925, daughter of Clarence and Emily Saylor, died Nov. 28, 1997. Two brothers preceded her in death, Bobby and Ronald. Surviving are her husband, Harold C. Minor; two daughters, Sheila and Linda; and two sons, Donald and Douglas. Helen lived in Stevensville, Ont., all her life, and was a member of the Bertie congregation for 63 years. The funeral was at the church with Rev. Don Middlemiss, Rev. Mike Zenker, and Rev. Ross Nigh officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Pace: Ethel M. Wingard Pace, born July 25, 1910, died Sept. 20, 1997. A son, Lewis; a daughter, Geneva; and her husband, Lewis, preceded her in death. Surviving are 2 sons, Ronald and David; a daughter, Sandra Stoak; 17 grandchildren; and several great-grandchildren. Ethel was baptized in 1984 and received into membership of the West Shore church, Pa. She was a member at death of the Fairview congregation, Pa. The service was officiated by Rev. Simon A. Lehman at the Neill Funeral Home. Interment was in Mount Olivet Cemetery.

Riegle: Chester Eugene Riegle, born Aug. 11, 1917, son of Albert and Ella Riegle, died June 30, 1997. Three brothers, Clarence, Glenn, and Raymond, preceded him in death. Surviving are his wife, Orpha; four children: Marvin, Terry, James, and Carol Ann Osburn; eight grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. Chester was a member of the Sherston congregation, Ont., where he was a trustee and Sunday school teacher. The funeral was at the church with Rev. Leonard J. Chester officiating. Interment was in the Bertie church cemetery.

Shonk: Lizzie Ginder Shonk, born Mar. 10, 1908, daughter of Simon B. and Katie Herr Ginder, died Nov. 13, 1997. Preceding her in death were three brothers, Irvin, David, and Paul; and a sister, Katie Schock. Surviving are her husband, Amos Shonk; three sons, Glenn, Leroy, and David; a daughter, Lois; four grandchildren; four stepgrandchildren; and three sisters, Mabel H. Hennigh, Stella Koser, and Fannie Heisey. She was a member of the Mt. Pleasant church, Pa., where the service was held with Rev. Roy J. Peterman, and Rev. Paul Keefer officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Wacker: Dessie Wacker, born Mar. 28, 1903, in York Co., Pa., daughter of John and Hilda Hake, died Nov. 29, 1997. She was the widow of John H. Wacker. Surviving are 7 children: John S., Ralph W., Miller R., Paul E., Wayne L., Genevieve D. Fleming, and Lucy K. Rinehart; 16 grandchildren; 26 great-grandchildren; and a sister, Melissa Estep. Dessie had been a homemaker and resident of Messiah Village since 1994. She was a member of the Fairview congregation, Pa., uniting with the Brethren in Christ in 1939. The service was at Stone-Murray Funeral Home with Rev. Simon Lehman officiating. Interment was in Crossroads Cemetery.

EV

Harvest Praise Service

Jesse and Wilma Dourte's farm barn in Lancaster County was the site of a Harvest Praise Service on Saturday afternoon, September 27. Some 150 persons attended the event sponsored by the Brethren in Christ Historical Society.

Typical of Harvest Praise Services, activities included singing, devotions, and testimonies, led respectively by Emerson Frey, Eber Dourte, and Gerald Wingert. A mixed octette sang several songs.

Myron Dietz of the Old Order River Brethren spoke of the tradition of the Harvest Praise Service among his people. In his message he reviewed various places where the Bible refers to feast and harvest and the meaning that those passages have for our lives today.

Gifts of food brought to the service were divided between New Hope Ministries and Water Street Rescue Mission (Lancaster County). A money offering was divided equally between Paxton Ministries



in Harrisburg and the Brethren in Christ Historical Society.

After the service, fresh cider from Jesse and Wilma's orchard combined with sunny weather lent a spirit of fellowship to the praise of the service.

Top photo: Myron Dietz of the Old Order River Brethren speaking.

Middle photo: A testimony meeting (note two persons standing to give their testimony).

Lower photo: A mixed octet. Back row (left to right): Elbert Smith, Ray Zercher, Ralph Brumbaugh, Robert Martin. Front row: Mary Long, Avis Brumbaugh, Ruth Zercher, Arlene Smith.

1997 Memorial Holiness Camp Report Holiness and hope for a disoriented world

Certainly now more than ever, the purpose of the church needs to be "S.O.S." The keynote message by Bishop John Byers was to respond to "Save Our Society." This concern was the heartbeat of our camp meeting theme. The evangelist was Rev. Steve Schellin, from Lancaster, Ohio.

Dr. Daryl Climenhaga led in a Bible study of the church and mission. Rev. Kevin Brubaker helped us see that judging (Mt. 7:1-6) is a hindrance to our pursuit of holiness. Rev. Henry Miller's message dealt with the physical and emotional needs for healing based on Ex. 15:26, "...I am the Lord who heals you."

Three electives also were offered. Dr. Jesse Heise led in a nature tour, helping us develop a fresh appreciation for God's handiwork. Dr. Leroy Steinbrecher dealt with "Ministering to an Abusive Society." Dr. Andrew Stoner addressed "The Foundation of a Christian Home."

Wednesday was Missions Day, directed by Rev. John Brubaker. Speakers included: Eugene and Ruth Medeira, Paul and Audry Eberhard, John and Ethel Sider, Mim Stern, Isaac and Connie Flag, and Trevor and Sherry Main. The offering for missions totaled \$7,347, which was more than other years. Our camp budget of \$18,500 was surpassed by \$33.

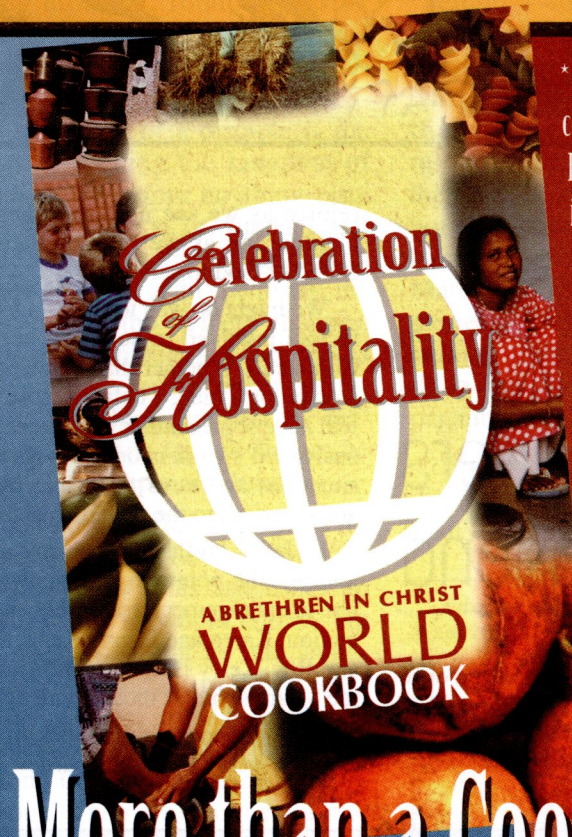
Rev. Henry Chafin was director of our "5 in 1 camp." Martha Miller, the children's preschool director, planted the seed of "The Fruit of the Spirit" into the minds and hearts of the 4-6 year olds. They purchased books, videotapes, and Bibles in Spanish for the Main and Eberhard children. Lynn Byers, children's camp director, visualized the importance of recognizing that our bodies are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 3:16) by cooking appropriate food to support the theme, "King's Kids in the Kitchen." Our well-attended youth camp was challenged by the theme "No Turning Back" with the emphasis on boldness in sharing our faith to a dying world. Rev. Henry Chafin II was the speaker and Fred and Angi Haney were directors. A new camp inaugurated in 1996 to meet the needs of young adults under 30 was led by Tom Hale, youth director of Fairview Church. The subject was "Truth Matters."

The dates for the 1998 Camp are July 18-26 with Rev. Merne Haris as evangelist and Rev. Luke Keefer, Jr. as Bible teacher.—Submitted by Paul Hess

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* Sweet potatoes are such a common everyday staple in India that guests would be insulted if they were served.

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Celebration of Hospitality is also available from the Brethren in Christ World Missions Office (P.O. Box 390 Grantham, PA, 17027).

Contact Evangel Publishing House at 1-800-253-9315 or (219) 773-3164 to order copies of Celebration of Hospitality.



Pontius Puddle

Bulletins and newsletters reprinting "Pontius Puddle" must pay \$10 for each use to Joel Kauffman, 111 Carter Road, Goshen, IN 46526.



Readers Respond

Could we help but be encouraged once again as we read of the ordination of Jeff Dunlevy in the December 1997 *Evangelical Visitor*? It should make our hearts

rejoice as we see new churches being planted and as we read of men being called of God to serve.

We might do well to reflect a bit on the factors involved in someone answering God's call. Whether that "someone" is a woman or a man, I believe those factors will have some similar ingredients. Obviously God's work in our lives takes many situations and turns them into blessings and draws us to the path he has for us.

In Jeff's "reflections on my spiritual journey" he points to persons who gave him encouragement, friendship, and affirmation. Karen and Denny Kapp, a friend, and Rev. Terry Burton—who "mentored me"—are some of those he mentioned.

It caused me to think back to similar persons in my spiritual journey such as

Elam Dohner—who wrote to me at one point and counseled or encouraged me to consider the pastoral ministry. There were many others. Viola Olinger is one who prayed with me when I was in the "thick of it" trying to make a wise decision. Pete Stern is another who gave me very helpful advice, but even more, took time to care about me and listen to me. Mim Stern was very much a part of this ministry.

Rather than go on and on about this, let me share a few words of concern. In the past several years, I have heard it said by a very few that maybe we are planting too many churches and we will not have enough leaders or pastors.

The reason I doubt that this is true is because God is able to supply our needs. However, there is something we can all be doing about it besides praying. We can each be diligent to look for young women and men who seem to have gifts of leadership, and we can affirm them. We can encourage them. We can help find avenues of service for them. We can, perhaps, mentor them. We can be positive in their presence. But above all, we can be their friend.

The next time you read of someone being ordained, rejoice! It is interesting to hear the stories of how God has brought his word and his people into the process of calling women and men into ministry—whether pastoral, or in some other area of service within the church and on the mission field.

We can be a part of God's process when we are open to him.

Jerel L. Book,
Garrett, IN

The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. Washington Office will host its annual spring seminar April 19 to April 21, 1998.

Titled "Guns To Plowshares: Toward a World Without Violence," the conference will focus on the issues of gun violence and militarism with a goal of encouraging people of faith to participate in Christ-centered public policy activism.

The two-and-a-half day seminar includes plenary addresses from theological, congressional and field perspectives; workshops on a variety of policy issues; and visits to congressional offices. The workshops will deal with topics such as land mines, criminal justice alternatives and arms transfers.

Cost for the conference is \$50 (not including lodging) for those registered by March 15, and \$60 for later registrants. Need-based scholarships are available. To request a seminar brochure—or to seek further information—contact:

MCC Washington Office
110 Maryland Ave. NE, Suite 502
Washington DC 20002
(202) 544-6564
mccwash@igc.apc.org



Opening the Word of Life

The "proton" of a disciple

by Edwin R. Kessler

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness,
and all these things will be given to you as well (Mat 6:33).

In 1919 Ernest Rutherford discovered a second fundamental particle of the atom, and named it the "proton." The electron had been discovered earlier, and thirteen years later the neutron was found. Today scientists are studying other components of the atom with names like "quarks," "gluons," and "neutrinos." The complexity of God's creation is amazing.

One interesting fact about the proton, however, is that scientists cannot observe proton decay, indicating that protons have a lifetime longer than 10 raised to the 28th power years (10 with 28 zeros after it). The proton is the stable part of an element. For example, ordinary hydrogen, the first element in the periodic table, has the simplest atomic structure of all the elements. Its nucleus consists of a single proton and one outer electron. Another form of hydrogen (an isotope of hydrogen) called deuterium, consisting of one proton and one neutron, has slightly different chemical properties. Deuterium is a different *form* of hydrogen and not a different element. However, adding another proton to a hydrogen atom results in a different element, helium. Adding or removing a proton changes the fundamental nature of the atom.

Rutherford took a Greek adverb, *proton*, to name his newly discovered atomic particle. The word in Greek means "first," "first of all," "above all else," or "to begin with," and was used to discuss what comes first regarding time, place, order, or importance.

In Matthew 6:32-33, Jesus makes a comparison between pagans (those people outside the kingdom of God) and disciples using the word *proton*. Jesus defines the difference in terms of what a person seeks first (*proton*). The *proton* of a pagan consists in seeking clothing, food, and drink above all else. The first line on the list of their priorities for life relegates God as secondary to survival. In contrast, the *proton* of a disciple is the activity of seeking the kingdom of God above or before anything else. This is the definition, or "fundamental particle," of a disciple. If the proton structure changes, as in chemistry, the basic nature of the element changes. Thus, if a person does not seek God's kingdom first, or if a person stops seeking God's kingdom first, by definition that person can no longer be defined as a disciple of Christ.

Jesus exemplified this priority structure in his life. Several times his consternated disciples asked him to eat, in fear that he would famish, but Jesus' reply was that he had something more important to do. "Meanwhile his disciples urged him, 'Rabbi, eat something.' But he said to them, 'I have food to eat that you know nothing about.' Then his disciples said to each other, 'Could someone have brought him food?' 'My food,' said Jesus, 'is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest'" (John 4:31-35 italics added). The *proton* of Jesus' life was to do God's will and finish God's work. Jesus took one look at the ripe Samaritan harvest fields and concluded that bringing them to himself superseded the satisfaction of his hunger.

The Philippians received a similar message in Paul's commendation of Timothy. "I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who takes a genuine interest in your welfare. *For everyone looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus*

Christ" (Phil. 2:19-21). The inherent basis (the *proton*) of being a disciple consists of looking out for the interests of Christ ahead of one's own interests.

In the church, many claim to be "hydrogen" when they are in reality "helium"—identifying oneself as a disciple of Christ, but not seeking the kingdom first (*proton*). Regardless of what a person says about himself, if that person's energy, time, and resources focus on himself and not on the Lord, he is *not* a disciple. We cannot flee from, back away from, circumvent, or rationalize the truth of Matthew 6:33. At the core of a disciple resides an essential particle—the seeking of the Kingdom of God. Anything else at a person's core results in paganism.

Bottom Line: The definition of a disciple—one who seeks God's Kingdom first!

Edwin R. Kessler pastors the Free Grace Brethren in Christ Church in Millersburg, Pa.

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Thoughts on using the Bible

Throughout my life, I have been amazed by the existence of conflicting interpretations and applications of the Christian Scriptures. As I've matured, I am less mystified, for I've learned something about the complexities of language, the intricacies of communication, the variations of culture with time and place, the impact of socialization, and the pressures of peers.

But although less mystified, I'm still amazed that people confessing the Savior as Lord, and indwelt by the same Spirit, and possessed of the same sacred writings, can look at those writings and come away with such conflicting conclusions about theology, about Christology, about humanity, about ethics. It becomes obvious that the way we look at the Bible, the

way we interpret it, determines its impact upon us and our behavior.

We all have "lenses" through which we view Scripture. A colored lens changes the appearance of everything: a red lens makes the view appear more red than it really is. A refractive lens changes the appearance of size. A cloudy lens hinders the entire view. A dirty lens obstructs visualization of part of the scene. A cracked lens distorts part of the view.

The lenses through which we look are not all of our making. The temperament we've inherited; the culture in which we've been socialized; the experiences, including education, which have shaped us; the consequences which threaten us—most (although not all) of the factors are outside of our choosing, and strongly influence our view of Scripture and the light we receive from it.

We can do some things about our lenses to improve our view of Scripture. We

can clean. We can replace a damaged one. We can change the optics. We can study the view using other's lenses. While we can't eliminate the lens effect in our approach to Scripture, we can get a better understanding of the Scripture if we know and understand the lens(es) through which we're looking. We can understand other Christians better if we understand the lenses through which they gaze. If we Christians could get our "lens act" together, we would project to non-Christians a much better picture of our Lord.

Analogies have weaknesses, and while illustrative, don't prove anything. But let's use one more as we explore further the challenge of understanding and applying the Bible. Is the Bible for me a mirror or a window?

The mirror on my wall shows me what's in my room, most of which I already know. It reflects back to me what I am. It's not the source of any light and cannot expel darkness. The light coming from it doesn't change the room. The mirror suggests to me that what's beyond is the same as what I see in the immediate surroundings.

The window in my wall provides illumination to my room, thus dispelling darkness and allowing me to see my circumstances, to see what darkness obscured. The light through the window can warm the room and can stimulate the life and growth of my plants. The window allows me to see beyond myself and the confines of my immediate circumstances, to increase and correct my understanding of reality.

So what's a Christian to do? How can I gain a better understanding of the Bible and let it guide me in living as God has revealed he wants me to live?

I'm determined anew to give careful attention to my lenses—to try to understand them, keep them clean and repaired, to discard any that I find needlessly or erroneously color the picture. And to work at viewing through others' lenses so that I can benefit by discovering what the Holy Spirit has shown them.

I also intend to reduce my use of the Bible as a mirror. I don't want to use it to reinforce my biases, preconceptions, and prejudices. Rather, I want to look at God's window, to see better himself and what he has done, and to let his light illuminate me, warm me, and stimulate my growth.

Samuel M. Brubaker, a regular columnist for the Visitor, lives in Arcanum, Ohio.

Focusing our mission...

continued from page 30

discipleship and what it means to be a true follower of Jesus. Such teaching is enhanced by a variety of discipleship nurturing opportunities. People are discipled to serve by helping start new churches, ministering overseas, and with various service organizations. Local staff is variously gifted but with great solidarity, all working in unity for the primary goal of building a strong community. In all the activities, Christ and the Holy Spirit are elevated as the primary focus, enabling people to exercise obedience through a variety of expressions. Warmth, grace, love and forgiveness dominate the landscape. What a vision!

Balanced vision builds strong, robust congregations. Many factors assist in developing healthy, vibrant churches. Two primary ones include: first, an expectation of people coming to Christ and then being nurtured and incorporated into the body, and second, exercising grace and love which accepts people where they are and provides for healthy body life.

General Conference will be a great opportunity to see how vision has impact-

ed the life of our denomination. A celebration of 100 years of overseas ministries will be a central feature. It was vision that thrust the Brethren in Christ into overseas missions and kept us expanding to the current 19 areas. As we celebrate "From Every Nation," we anticipate excitement, rejoicing and encouragement. Some of the fruit of missions will be very visible, including the drama team from Zimbabwe, an overseas guest speaker, international singing, and an international cookbook and story book. Three decades before the vision for overseas missions was born, persons like T.A. Long stirred a vision for evangelism and home missions within the United States and Canada, so that by 1871 a mission fund was created. The 12 new church plantings of 1997 represent a renewed vision for reaching people who need Jesus Christ. General Conference will be inspired by stories of God at work among us.

The biblical proverb is very true, "Where there is no vision the people perish" (Prov. 29:18 KJV).

But with a clear and focused vision there is a bright future for the Brethren in Christ Church.

EV



Onesimus

Readers may correspond with Onesimus by writing to him in care of the *Evangelical Visitor*, P.O. Box 166, Nappanee, IN 46550. Letters to Onesimus may be published unless they are marked "Personal-Not for Publication."

Dear Paul,

Did you ever dream about those people you wanted to meet when you got to heaven? I am sure Jesus is on everyone's list, but who else are you looking forward to seeing?

I am looking forward to seeing you there, of course, because both you and I fought against the faith at one time. I want to meet Peter, because like him, I have been loved and used by Jesus even though I denied him more than once. And I want to look up John Wycliffe. I want to thank him for having the courage to die so I could have a Bible in my language. And I would like to find Jacob Engle, to thank him for helping to start the denomination I have grown to love. And I hope I can find Sarah Bert and tell her that her courage and pioneer spirit inspired me greatly.

And I would like to visit with Saint Valentine. In our culture we have a day in February dedicated to him called Valentine's Day. Of course, as with most holidays here, it has been commercialized and most of the details about its true Christian origin have been obscured.

But I want to ask him if the stories about him are true. As I hear it, he was a priest in Rome 1700 years ago, during the reign of the emperor Claudius, and was put to death for teaching Christianity. You can identify with that, can't you, Paul?

It probably didn't help that he directly disobeyed the emperor. Rome needed soldiers, but many Roman men did not want to leave their homes to fight the emperor's wars. So Claudius banned marriage. That's right, he made it against the law to

get married. I guess he figured that if men didn't have wives and homes, they would be more willing to go fight in some far-off country.

But, Valentine's heart went out to the many unhappy young men and their sweethearts. He decided that he would defy the law and performed secret marriage ceremonies. Valentine was killed for his beliefs and later became the patron saint of lovers. Even today, people honor him and those they love by giving hearts, candy, flowers, and cards on Valentine's Day.

Well, Paul, you and I both know that life is more than a box of chocolates, and so is love....although that is one nice way for us to show our love. Love is more an action than it is a feeling, and what you wrote in your

Well, Paul, you and I both know that life is more than a box of chocolates, and so is love....although that is one nice way for us to show our love.

first letter to the Corinthians is so appropriate to consider this month as we celebrate love.

You said, "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails" (1 Cor. 13:4-8a).

"Biblical lovers" will display the characteristics listed in this Scripture and so it provides us with a good "Love Test." Those wanting to evaluate how well they are loving can try to fill in each of the blanks of the "Love Test" with their name.

_____ is patient.
_____ is kind. _____ does not envy. _____ is not boastful and proud. _____ is not rude. _____ is not self seeking. _____ is not easily angered. _____ keeps no record of wrongs. _____ is honest and truthful. _____ always protects. _____ always trusts. _____ always hopes. _____ always perseveres. _____ never fails to love.

In my relationship with my wife, I can honestly say that "Onesimus does not envy." But I would struggle with saying that "Onesimus is patient." When it comes to being a godly lover, I need some work there.

I hope everyone will take your "Love Test," Paul. And where we can not sign our name with integrity is where we need prayer and spiritual growth.

I'm sure Valentine would be honored to know a special day on our calendar was named after him. But I'm also sure he would say that demonstrating love in marriage is intended to be an everyday event. He not only reminds me to be romantic and loving toward my sweetheart at least one time a year, he challenges me to sacrificial love the year round.

In love with Jesus and my wife,
Onesimus

Focusing our Mission

250 Growing, Discipling,
Sending Congregations
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The primacy of vision

by Harvey R. Sider

True or false? "Where there is no vision, the people perish"

Some readers will say, "Of course it's true because it is biblical." Others will respond, "It must be true because it's the way it works. We experience this all the time."

I am constantly reminded of how vision helps to energize and shape our future. Five brief and simple illustrations support the power and primacy of vision.

Just three years ago the Leadership Council established what seemed a visionary goal of "250 growing, discipling, sending congregations by AD 2000." At almost every Leadership Council meeting we wrestle with facets of this vision. What a delight to discover in our last meeting of 1997 that we have already moved from 226 in mid-1995 to 242 congregations. Even though we have closed 11 long-established churches and new church plants in the past two and a half years, we are still well ahead of our target. Our vision constantly challenges us to seek new opportunities to plant churches.

Recently I met with two regional boards of directors as part of the bishop's biennial evaluation. In each case, vision casting was highlighted as an essential part of leadership. In the past two years, as five regional conferences (Allegheny, Atlantic, Canadian, Southeast, and Susquehanna) searched for a new bishop, a common demand was to secure a person with vision. What a healthy sign when regional leadership desires to focus and articulate a compelling vision!

Our Hispanic ministries continue to grow. The most recent roster indicates we have 6 ethnic church plants in the Pacific Conference, 1 emerging in the Atlantic Conference, and 19 in the Southeast Conference. With 1 Haitian church, the number of ethnic congregations in the Southeast now exceed the Anglo Brethren in Christ congregations.

The most recent church planting in the Atlantic Conference—Crossroads Community Church, Lansdale, Pa.—launched its first public service on December 7 with 326 present. Pastor Glenn Pfeiffer indicated that about 80 percent of the crowd was unchurched. On that opening Sunday, five persons professed faith in Christ and 12 recommitted their lives to him. Praise the Lord for this marvelous example of the primacy of a vision to reach the unreached!

In the Dec. 8, 1997, issue of *Christianity Today*, Billy Graham wrote an article, titled "Recovering the Primacy of Evangelism." Two of the key points he made included: (a) the challenge of a new century with the expanding non-Christian religions and the shifting frontiers of new fields, and (b) effective evangelism in the next century will mean the proclamation of the full gospel as well as mobilization of the entire church, along with a willingness to explore new methods and new fields. But what impressed me even more than the excellent article was the fact that this 79-year-old man, struggling with Parkinson's disease is still active in evangelism. In fact, he has even planned another crusade for Ottawa, Canada, when he will be 80 years of age. Billy Graham's vision for evangelism compels (constrains) him to practice Matthew 28:19 and Acts 1:8.

Each of these examples could be explored much further, but all are products of *vision* as a prime focus of life and ministry. If we expect the church to grow, disciple and send, then all of us must become convinced and committed to the vision. The Brethren in Christ vision of "250 growing, discipling, sending congregations by AD 2000" must become a primary focus for the Brethren in Christ Church. The heart of Christ's command to go and make disciples of all people should be the Christian's primary mission. But this vision must be nurtured to remain vibrant and alive.

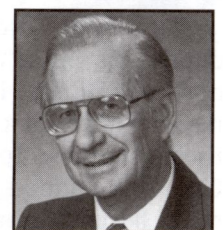
As we touch non-Christians in our places of work, at points of leisure, or in casual travel contacts, winning sinners to

Christ needs to become a primary vision. The temptation is to let good but secondary concerns sidetrack our energies to less important matters. Resources must be directed toward a primary vision. Significant efforts in new church plantings, local church growth, and overseas missions represents one way the Brethren in Christ believe in the primacy of the vision to reach people who need Jesus Christ. Philip Yancy says it well in his marvelous book, *What's So Amazing about Grace?* "How will we feel if historians of the future look back on the evangelical church of the 1990s and declare, 'They fought bravely on the moral fronts of abortion and homosexuality rights' while at the same time reporting that we did little to fulfill the Great Commission and we did little to spread the aroma of grace in the world?"

For Christ, evangelism was more important than the physical necessities of life (Jn. 4:31-38). Not only was evangelism a top priority for Christ, but he also accepted sinners (though never the sin). Jesus was so winsome that the rejects or marginalized, like Zaccheus and the Samaritan woman, gladly received him, resulting in radically changed lives. Does our vision cause us to approach sinners, even those we might naturally disdain, with such love and acceptance that we too will be instruments of God's transforming grace?

Healthy churches emerge from a balanced vision of growing, discipling and sending. Elizabethtown has nearly doubled in size from eight and one-half years ago when David Hall became pastor. Biblical messages which address holy living and peace provide a solid emphasis on

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Harvey R. Sider is Moderator of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Breakfast bloom: sacrifice in the desert

by Stuart Briscoe

Brilliant sunshine, blue skies, and endless expanse of white sand. Sounds like paradise. Why haven't the developers seen the potential?

Well, it's the Sahara. There is no water and the sand isn't always white. In fact, the terrain in one part of the Sahara is made up of something resembling black cinders—as far as the eye can see.

When my wife Jill and I flew in to a missionary outpost in this incredibly inhospitable desert, we thought that we had never seen any place so desolate, so dry, so drab. Nothing grew, and nothing moved.

In the midst of this black expanse of nothingness, in the backyard of the missionary dwelling, we noticed a splash of green and a flash of orange. On closer inspection, we found a tiny bush clinging tenaciously to life, proudly bearing a solitary rose. Beside the bush was a hole, a few feet deep, hacked out of the cinders and half filled with decaying vegetable matter from the kitchen.

The missionaries told us that the rosebush had been planted in a similar hole filled with vegetable matter. The missionaries, who had nurtured and nursed the plant into life and survival, proudly said, "This is the first flower we have produced in this desert!" There it bloomed—fragile and fragrant—a testimony to loving care, endless patience, and sheer hard work.

Jill, exhausted from much travel, extended ministry, and a chronic back problem that caused her constant pain, was promised breakfast in bed the next morning.

When breakfast arrived, lovingly prepared and meticulously arranged, there on the tray in a slender glass was the solitary orange rose. A handwritten card propped against the glass said simply, "Thank you for coming all this way." When Jill saw it, she cried. I, being a British male, swallowed hard. Our missionary hostess shyly explained, "We wanted to tell you how grateful we are that you came."

Many messages of appreciation have been showered on us through the years, but this one sticks in our memories. Why? Because the message of love was not just spoken or written; it was performed in a singular, gracious, and sacrificial way.

Jesus gave us a message of love too. But he didn't just talk about love. He performed it, sacrificially.

Now, on those extra-special occasions, I won't just send loving cards or speak grateful words. I will find my only "rose among the cinders," pluck it, and give it to those I love, thanking them for coming all the way into my life.

Jesus will understand. He did it too.

"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness."

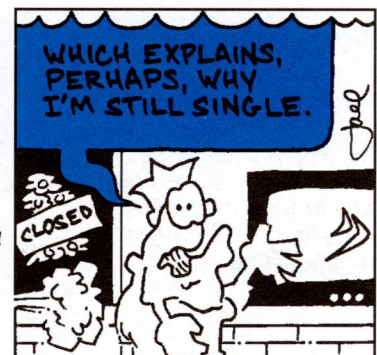
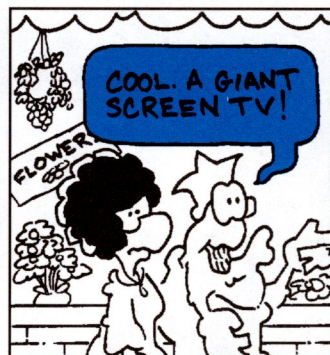
Philippians 2:5-7

From The Family Book of Christian Values by Stuart Briscoe, Chariot Victor Publishing. He is the pastor of Elmbrook Church in Waukesha, WI, and the author of more than 25 books. Used by permission.



Pontius Puddle

Bulletins and newsletters reprinting "Pontius Puddle" must pay \$10 for each use to Joel Kauffman, 111 Carter Road, Goshen, IN 46526.





God gave human sexuality a good place in creation. Being either male or female is integral to who we are, and in a complementary way provides for the full expression of our humanity. God has given standards for expression of our sexuality that are necessary for proper relationships among people. Human sexuality is affirmed within the chaste single life or a life-long marriage between a man and a woman.

*From the Brethren in Christ
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