THE MIAMI STORY

Partnership, Passion, and Promise
Brethren in Christ nurse spends pre-retirement years in Nepal

At an age when most people are winding down their careers, Esther Lenhert is spending her pre-retirement years on a new adventure—teaching nursing in Nepal. Mennonite Central Committee and Brethren in Christ missions are joint sponsors of Lenhert, who is from Arcanum, Ohio.

In 1995, Esther arrived in Katmandu, Nepal’s capital city, which is nestled in a valley among the towering Himalayan mountains. Initially she taught students in a registered nursing program. Last year Esther began focusing on four students who are working on bachelor’s degrees in nursing. She taught these students 100 hours of community health theory, and then supervised one month of field experience. This advanced degree will prepare the students, who are already experienced nurses, to be teachers and administrators.

One challenge for Esther and the other instructors is teaching abstract thinking skills, such as how to determine objectives and set goals. This kind of instruction is foreign in Nepal, where the basic education system stresses memorization of information for tests.

In Esther’s area of specialty—community health—critical thinking is especially important. Community health usually involves long-term planning that focuses on prevention. Unlike curative medicine, it is often difficult to see concrete results. Health professionals launch immunization campaigns, for example, knowing this saves lives and improves overall health, but they can’t point out exactly whose lives have been saved or predict exactly what would have happened without this intervention.

Like most teachers, Esther’s most satisfying moments come when she sees her students applying what they have learned and observes students’ enthusiasm when they experience success.

Outside the classroom, Esther enjoys life in her second-floor apartment with on-again, off-again electricity in a family compound. She has become a familiar sight in the neighborhood. Smiles and greetings cheer her 10-minute walk to and from school.

Esther pours energy not only into her teaching, but also into her vacation time. Her last holiday was a bus trip from Katmandu to Lhasa, Tibet, through some of the world’s most inhospitable, yet spectacular, mountains. While many of her peers back home might have preferred a trip to Florida, Esther endured a taste of altitude sickness and yak-butter tea—and says she enjoyed herself!

From 1966 to 1968 Esther served at Madhipura Christian Hospital in Bihar, India, with Brethren in Christ missions. During that time, Indian Christians were crossing into Nepal to share their faith with relatives and others; from these interactions a Brethren in Christ church was born in eastern Nepal. Esther has visited eastern Nepal several times and now is helping the church locate health teaching materials. Church leaders plan to add a health component to the annual two-month literacy classes they run.

Esther is a member of Fairview Brethren in Christ Church in Englewood, Ohio. The article was prepared by Pearl Sensenig, who works with MCC News Service.
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Front and back cover: The new Brethren in Christ worship center in Miami, Fla. (See the article beginning on p. 4.)
The Miami Story

Partnership, Passion,

By Carol Geiger

With names like “Word of Life,” “Salvation Source,” and “Eternal Refuge,” the south Florida area Brethren in Christ churches preach Jesus Christ with fervency and compassion. Recently, believers from many of the twenty Hispanic and one Haitian congregations gathered from March 12-15 for a “convention,” a time to celebrate what God is doing among them. Their story is a story of partnership, passion, and promise that can serve as a cause for rejoicing across North America.

Carol Geiger is a Brethren in Christ missionary to Colombia. She is currently on furlough with her husband Bob and their children, David, Rebecca, Nathan, and Joanna.

Partnership

From its inception in 1986, the Miami work, under the capable leadership of Pastor Eduardo Llanes and his wife Jill, has been characterized by a partnership approach to ministry. It was the partnership with the Board for Church Planting and Cooperative Ministries which sent the Llanes to Miami with a mandate to reach out to its burgeoning Cuban population. Before long, God drew special partners, in the form of pastors and associates, to identify with the Brethren in Christ. Their enthusiastic and sacrificial dedication has birthed an additional 20 churches. In only ten years, the work has expanded phenomenally. Today, the combined ministry of the Miami area Brethren in Christ churches includes more than 1,300 members, and touches over 1,600 others who participate.

Pastor Eduardo Llanes supervises this dynamic work according to these principles:

• Discover what God is doing and cooperate as fully as possible;
• Accept what the Lord sends with gratitude;
• Win the Lost with boldness;
• Expect the Lord to act in building his church.

These principles have produced dramatic results. Responding to the needs explosive growth brings, Cooperative Ministries and several caring individuals joined as partners once again to help Pastor Llanes fulfill his dream of a building large enough to enable the congregations to meet together.

After the land was purchased in
1993 with help from Cooperative Ministries, this partnership continued when Brethren in Christ throughout North America were invited to share in the ministry through participation in an Evangelism Priority Project. Thanks to the response, additional funds were supplied for the actual construction of the building. The soon-to-be-completed Bethel Brethren in Christ worship center will provide a place for fellowship, evangelism, and education to be enjoyed by all the Hispanic and Haitian Brethren in Christ congregations.

God’s response to this partnership was to miraculously provide Eduar-do with the good will of the neighborhood association, which had previously objected strenuously to the construction of a worship center in that area. (See the companion article on p. 6.) Even the building permit reflects God’s special provision. Construction began in early 1997.

Passion

Only a short time among our Miami area brethren reveals their deep passion for worship, evangelism, and service. These are characteristics which make them effective partners in the Lord’s work. Rene Perez, pastor of the largest Hispanic church, a congregation of over 600, is a good example. God has blessed Cristo Vive (Jesus Lives) church with both a television and radio outreach, and they hope to reach an attendance of 1,000 by the end of 1998. “We must do everything possible to reach the lost—invest everything we have!” Pastor Rene declares.

“God is calling us to persevere in evangelism,” affirms Pastor Ramiro Lopez of the Homestead congregation. Presently the small size of the storefront locales where most of the churches meet makes this a real challenge. Creative measures, such as several congregations sharing the same building at different times, help these believers “persevere.” The Bethel worship center, with its larger seating capacity, will provide new opportunities for cooperation and outreach.

Pastor Aner Morejón, who leads the 102-member Maranatha congregation, emphasizes the need for love and unity among all the Brethren in Christ churches. “We must perpetuate an atmosphere of faith, which will be demonstrated by changed lives,” he says. The Bethel worship center will facilitate this kind of sharing in new ways.

Promise

Because of their intense desire to serve Jesus, our Hispanic and Haitian brethren bring the promise of blessing, not only for the greater Miami area, but for other regions as well. The churches have a passionate interest in missions in North America and abroad. They contribute to Cooperative Ministries with the goal of supporting missions in mind. “Even the Haitians, who are very poor, are giving,” informs Pastor Llanes.

The needs of the poor concern these brothers and sisters greatly. For Pastor Valentin Fontanez, this is the thrust of his entire congregational ministry. “We exist to proclaim restoration in Christ and to give to others what the Lord has given us,” he explains. The Eternal Refuge church is made up of former addicts and those who are struggling to change their lives. It is gratifying to
see the support and encouragement
given Pastor Valentin and his new
believers by the other congregations.

In addition to new opportunities
for service, the Bethel worship cen-
ter will also pro-
vide greater capa-
bilities for leader-
sip development.

As most pastors
and leaders are bi-
vocational, they are continually
looking for ways to balance the
needs of the church with the
demands of the work place. The
Bethel center will be used as a
teaching and training facility which
promises enhanced opportunities for
encouragement and education for all
congregational leaders.

As the new Bethel Brethren in
Christ worship center nears comple-
tion, its mission of unity, education,
and cooperation promises to en-
hance the growth among our Haitian
and Hispanic brethren even more.
The greater Miami community will
now be able to identify this location
with the Brethren in Christ, and the
promise of the gospel. This is an
opportunity for Brethren in Christ
everywhere to celebrate the partner-
ship, passion, and promise of the
churches being planted and strength-
ened in the greater Miami area.

Eduardo Llanes was worried. He'd gone
to the meeting of the neighborhood
association hoping to convince them to
support the construction of the new Brethren
in Christ church. But they refused even to
speak with him. Instead, he'd been given an
appointment with their young representative
the next day. Eduardo wondered how the
Lord would take the project forward with a
reception such as he'd been
given. Things looked as
bleak as a Northern Min-
nesota winter, despite the
Florida sunshine!

That night Eduardo dreamed
he was a boy again, playing in the
surf of his native Cuba. One of his
favorite pastimes was to catch birds—
especially Cuban finches. These are
native only to Cuba, and are sparrow-like
except for their brilliant-colored breast feathers. In the dream, he felt impressed with the
importance of caring for the finches, and he
woke with thoughts of bright-colored finches filling him with longing for his island home.

Eduardo had made friends with the pet
shop owner next door to his church, and
stopped in first thing the next morning to
inquire about Cuban finches. They spoke of
the birds and of Cuba. After awhile, the pet
shop owner suggested that Eduardo buy a
finch she had for sale, which he did. Then it
was time to keep his appointment with anoth-
er young Cuban—the representative of the
neighborhood association which held the
power to veto the church building Eduardo
knew was so needed by the Miami churches.

“It’s up to you, Lord,” Eduardo prayed.

Upon arrival, Eduardo was directed to the
barn, where his impatient host delivered the
message his neighbors had instructed him to
give. “We don’t like you. We don’t want you.
And we’ll do everything we can to stop you
from building your church on that land. Our
lawyers will fight with everything we have,
so you had better look for some way to
recoup your investment.”

“I see,” Eduardo replied. Now what, Lord?
An animal-lover, he decided to request a brief
tour of the barn. To his surprise, his host
responded warmly, showing off his thorough-
bred horses and other livestock with pride.
After a little while, they came to a small
room with several empty bird cages. “Where
are your birds?” Eduardo inquired.

“I had some Cuban finches, but they are so
delicate. They keep dying.” There it was! The
importance of Cuban finches. Eduardo shared
of his boyhood and the hours of delight the
birds had given him while there in Cuba.

Eduardo’s young host suddenly changed
the subject. “You know what? I think that
you are a good man. I want to help you. I will
tell the neighborhood association to stop
opposing you. In fact, I will speak to our
lawyers and tell them to help you to get your
building permit.” And so it was that God used
a praying pastor and a little Cuban finch to
open the door for a great blessing for the
Brethren in Christ of greater Miami.
For as long as I can remember I have anticipated and enjoyed celebrations. In my early years, Christmas and birthdays were marvellous events. These were soon supplemented by family reunions, graduations, and weddings. I will always have fond memories of 4 more recent and outstanding occasions: our 40th wedding anniversary last year, the 200th birthday of the Brethren in Christ Church at General Conference in 1978, and the 50th and 75th anniversaries of the 1914 founding of Brethren in Christ missions in India.

After hundreds of celebrations I continue to approach such opportunities with eagerness. Celebration invites "community"—one rarely celebrates alone. Celebrations focus around a cause (Luke 15:32), so why not celebrate at General Conference an event which is strongly endorsed by God's people—the 100th anniversary of Brethren in Christ World Missions?

Jesus initiated the challenge to go and make disciples of all nations. The Greek ta ethne literally encompasses "all people groups" (Matt. 28:19) which extends beyond the normal concept of a nation. He expects his people to aggressively evangelize, to disciple, and to reproduce themselves by going everywhere so that persons from every people group will celebrate new life in Christ. One hundred years ago, when Jesse Engle and his party of 5 went to Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), they literally practiced the command of Christ as given in Matthew 28:19, Acts 1:8, and elsewhere.

The culmination of our obedience to the Great Commission is reflected in our theme focus "From Every Nation." John expressed it in words such as "And they sang a new song:...with your blood you purchased people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation" and "I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count from every nation, tribe, people and language standing before the throne and in front of the lamb" (Rev. 5:9 and 7:9). As God's people we anticipate joining in an unspeakable time of rejoicing as we surround the throne and the Lamb with others from every people group in the world.

Can we even begin to visualize or imagine such a gathering? Last year nearly 150 Brethren in Christ met in Calcutta, India, at the Mennonite World Conference with about 4,500 people from nearly 60 nations, encompassing perhaps more than 200 people groups (tribes, languages). In 1989, Don Shafer and I had the opportunity to share in Manila (Lausanne II) with around 3,000 Christians from about 150 countries representing hundreds of people groups. Awesome as they were, these gatherings pale in comparison to the scene portrayed in Revelation 5 and 7.

It is uncertain how many tribes, languages, and people groups there are in the world. Some sources estimate that number to be approximately 12,000. In a recent Mission America meeting it was announced that 1,739 significant, distinct blocs of peoples are still unreached for Christ. The smallest of these 1,739 "nations" numbers 10,000 with the largest in the millions for a total of 2,200,000,000—85 percent of whom live within the 10/40 window. Can we have faith to believe that by the end of A.D. 2000 we will reach the goal of some people from every "nation" knowing Jesus Christ? What a colossal celebration that will be!

In its 115th annual Conference, the Brethren in Christ will celebrate the theme "From Every Nation" in different ways.

Some, perhaps, would be happy to dispense with the business sessions. It would be a wonderful change, they think, to devote all our time to praise and reflect on what God has done, is doing, and will continue to do through the Brethren in Christ vision of 250 Growing, Discipling, Sending Congregations by A.D. 2000. We have not designed anything quite that radical. There will be "kingdom" business to do. At the same time, the entire Conference has been planned deliberately...
to celebrate God’s work among the Brethren in Christ as we have touched our Jerusalem, Judeas, and Samarias, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

In this introduction to the 115th General Conference, let me highlight 4 primary features, which will be integral to our gathering.

Prayer

The Brethren in Christ must give more than lip service to prayer. Reaching people for Christ, discipling, and sending them into the world is spiritual warfare. Zechariah, long ago, reminded God’s people that it is not by our ingenuity, wisdom, or force but by the Spirit that God’s work is accomplished. General Conference begins on our knees. As we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit, lives are transformed.

For months people have been praying for a special sense of God’s presence. In June, pastors and congregations will be encouraged to bathe their delegates and the Conference in prayer. We begin the 115th Conference with a morning concert of prayer led by Earl and Sharon Herr. All delegates and visitors are strongly encouraged to arrive early to participate and set the tone for a spiritual emphasis that will empower Conference to move boldly forward. Each business session has an intentional prayer period for focusing on what God wants to do in our midst. A prayer chapel has been designated for persons to quietly retreat, meditate, and intercede. Missions Prayer Fellowship will lead in a specific time of fasting and prayer during the Monday and Wednesday noon hours. Our celebration will take on a new dimension as we surround everything we do in prayer.

You can enter the vital ministry of prayer now and continue throughout the Conference. As we seek God’s direction and energizing thrust, there will be renewed zeal to strive to reach people from every nation. Prayer paves the way for true celebration in

**General Conference prayer focus**

I will long remember a story that Joe Aldrich told at a Leadership Prayer Network retreat. On one occasion he met a 78-year-old man who looked like the church janitor, only to discover he was the pastor of a congregation of 10,000 people—not a bad increase from zero. But the price of the increase was paid in fasting and prayer. The pastor arose each day at 2:30 a.m., consistently prayed until 4:00 a.m., and sometimes through breakfast. He surrounded himself with a group who would fast and pray one week every month. Prayer was not just serious work, it was the work of the kingdom.

Translate this now to the work of General Conference.

The 100th anniversary of overseas missions is a wonderful and exciting way to provide General Conference with a strong, celebratory note. But the impact of both the inspirational and business sessions will be contingent upon God’s presence. We have a part to play in this by preparing for and inviting the Holy Spirit to do an unusual thing for the Brethren in Christ on July 4-8, 1998, as we intentionally build a prayer ministry over the next 6 weeks. There are many things we can do to facilitate this. Let me suggest only a few.

Pastors and prayer leaders could dialogue on the most effective ways to engage the congregation in a concerted effort of prayer. For example, it would be marvelous if every congregation established a prayer focus for the 4 Sundays preceding General Conference.

A proposed format could be:

- **June 7:** In the morning worship prayer time, identify and pray for your congregational delegates.
- **June 14:** With agenda in hand, identify 2 or 3 key prayer foci, and then lead your congregation in prayer for these.
- **June 21:** Pray publicly for those in leadership at General Conference, such as the moderator, general secretary and staff, speakers and ministry leaders (youth, children, nursery, etc.).
- **June 28:** Create a General Conference Prayer Sunday by encouraging Sunday school classes, Bible study groups, and small groups to pray for delegates, issues, and General Conference leadership.

Hopefully, in addition to a Sunday focus, many congregations will find helpful ways to encourage prayer throughout June to the conclusion of the Conference.

- Would your church consider a 12, 18, or 24-hour prayer chain during one of the days of the Conference?
- For those not at Conference, would you—in the quietness of your home or office—join with the Saturday, 8:30 to 9:30 a.m. Concert of Prayer, as well as the Monday and Wednesday noon hour prayer/fast of the Missions Prayer Fellowship?
- During your personal daily prayer time would you include prayer for General Conference?
- Would you...? (Here fill in your own personalized way that you will commit yourself to specific prayer on behalf of General Conference 1998.)

Let us pray and expect God to give us a marvelous 115th General Conference.

—Harvey R. Sider, Moderator
our worship, work, and fellowship together.

**Worship and work**

Each morning and afternoon session will begin with a significant worship experience, carefully integrated with the theme “From Every Nation.” Dwight Thomas, who has done extensive research and videotaping of all our overseas mission areas for Brethren in Christ World Missions is giving leadership to these worship occasions. Learning and singing international songs will become an enriching experience for everyone.

A number of stories illustrating how God is at work will bring sparkle and enthusiasm as we engage in both worship and decision-making. What a great opportunity to experience a wide exposure to some wonderful ways the Lord is using the Brethren in Christ locally, regionally, and internationally!

The “work” of Conference has been designed to major on reports of how God is moving in our midst. We expect to witness how the Lord is active in stewardship, the media, missions, and church planting. While there will be recommendations from the appropriate groups and decisions to be made by the Conference body, the goal is to see all of this through the celebratory vision of “From Every Nation.”

Twelve seminars on Monday afternoon will provide a marvelous window for everyone to look at issues confronting the church. Some of these reflect present ministry opportunities while others will stimulate vision and direction as the church moves into the next millennium.

**Theme focus**

“From Every Nation” provides an exciting backdrop and focus for our Conference. Thank God for the way he has used the Brethren in Christ to reach around the world into 18 countries and approximately 35 different people groups in every continent except Australia. We will actually see and experience first hand some of the results of this ministry. The following represents some of the highlights:

Sunday evening, a team from Zimbabwwe will present a full-length drama depicting the beginning of missions in that country. Daryl Climenhaga, in an interview with the writer of the script, I. M. Mpofu, shared some helpful background in the December 1997 issue of the *Evangelical Visitor* (pp. 14-15). That evening, a special offering will be taken to help defray some of the cost in bringing the drama team to North America.

Singing throughout the Conference will reflect the music of various cultures. Becoming acquainted with cross-cultural music will be a very enriching experience if, at times, somewhat curious and stretching. It makes me wonder in what language we will sing, what will be the international (heavenly?) tune of the people groups as we join the great throng portrayed in Revelation 5:9 and 7:9?

The Brethren in Christ Missions will have a variety of special items for purchase. The international cookbook/storybook, *Celebration of Hospitality: A Brethren in Christ Cookbook*, is unique in its combination of stories and recipes from cultures of Brethren in Christ ministries. A child’s book, *Zulu*, is a “timely tale about life in Africa and the effects of Brethren in Christ Missions from a child’s perspective.” An original, 30-minute video presenting worship in music from our various people groups worldwide will provide lasting inspiration and enrichment. These ought to become reminders to pray, to go, to better understand world missions, and to give generously as the Brethren in Christ continue to bring persons to faith from the earth’s people groups.

Speakers have been selected to represent a cross section of fruit and ministry efforts around the world. Eduardo Llanes, David E. Miller, Bijoy Roul, and David Hall have accepted the invitation to reflect on the theme “From Every Nation.” Each person will bring an inflection that will challenge us in our goal of building the worldwide body of Christ.

**Family event**

The Brethren in Christ believe that General Conference can and should be a family event. A significant portion of the program is designed to make it attractive for families who wish this to be a special time in the lives of their children and youth. The Program Committee has engaged competent leaders to prepare for an effective ministry to the youth and children.

Jim Gambini will provide leadership to a dynamic youth program focusing the Conference theme on how teens can reach their world. A special concert and guest speakers along with plenty of “activities” and a “band” to enhance great music will be highlights of this junior and senior high event.

Quizzing continues to be an exciting part of our General Conference. The closing event of the 115th gathering will be the quiz playoffs on Wednesday evening. Thirty-five teams are currently enjoying and benefitting from the study and memorization of Scripture. Quizmaster John Sider expects ten teams to compete at General Conference.

Laura Sider will provide oversight for the children’s ministry under the theme “Our Weakness His Strength.” Children will grow in understanding of how God provides strength at our points of weakness. Jesus’ dealing with handicaps will help children grasp the practical meaning of the theme.

Nursery care is being arranged by Dawn Isley, coordinator of Children’s Ministries at the Grantham church. The warm, friendly, and efficient environment she is providing will make it possible for parents to know their little ones are in good hands.

Much more information is included in the programs which have already been sent to your congregation. Please support this great Conference with your prayers. Those planning to attend should send in their registrations immediately and take advantage of the early bird registration fee.

Come, let us rejoice together from July 4-8 as we celebrate “From Every Nation.”
The Leadership Council met in Grantham, Pa., from April 29 to May 2, and began work on issues for the coming biennium. On the final day, the council met with church leaders and executives of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

One item of business focused on a process for vision development. The current church-wide vision for *250 Growing, Discipling, Sending Congregations by A.D. 2000* culminates in two years. In anticipation of the need for a new vision statement when General Conference convenes in July 2000, the council projected a spiritual and strategic reassessment of vision over the next two years. Specifically, the council affirmed a four-step process of church-wide intercession, discernment, consultation, and coordination. The aim is to articulate a new statement of vision for the first decade of the new millennium.

### Changes in Denominational Communications Proposed

The Leadership Council continued to study issues related to church-wide communications. While communications is not a new issue, the council took a decisive step in December by securing the services of J. David Schmidt and Associates as a consulting team in communications. At the request of the council, Schmidt and his team conducted about 100 telephone interviews with administrators, editors, and a sampling of persons across the church. In addition, the Schmidt team reviewed Brethren in Christ publications and communications materials developed over the past two years.

At this Leadership Council meeting, Schmidt presented an 80-page report. Schmidt described cultural trends which tend to undermine the life and health of denominations. To counter these pressures, he urged the Brethren in Christ to strengthen the common bonds of mission, vision, and values. He reported major findings from the interviews: that current communications efforts lack coordination, that there is a need to reach a broader audience among the church constituency, that materials need to be more visually appealing, and that electronic media need to be utilized more effectively.

For church-wide communications to be more focused, integrated, attractive and, thus, more effective, Schmidt called for major changes. His recommendations called for blending elements of the *Visitor*, *Vision News, Therefore*, and *Shalom* into two newly-designed and formatted publications, for upgrades of other publications, for the development of a denominational website, and for a Communications Coordinator to give leadership to these initiatives. The council affirmed the direction of decisive change in church communications, directed council members to solicit perspectives from their respective boards, and appointed a task force to shape and refine the Schmidt recommendations and to report back to the council at its mid-July meeting.

### Interaction with Mennonite Brethren

In other work, the council devoted three sessions to interaction with church leaders and executives from the Mennonite Brethren Church. This dialogue, which began about six years ago, continues with one meeting a year. The purpose has been to share common concerns and consider possible cooperative ventures. At this meeting, representatives described their respective approaches to world missions, church planting, pastoral placement, and education. There was informal discussion about the respective views on sanctification and the perseverance of the saints. In order to review the need for continuing dialogue, the group agreed to appoint a task force of four persons, two from each denominational group to consider issues of broader cooperation.

The Leadership Council, which meets quarterly, is composed of ten church leaders entrusted with major areas of church life—world missions, church planting, congregational development, stewardship, media ministries, and overall leadership. Specifically, the council is composed of the Moderator, General Secretary, the five bishops of regional conferences, and the executive directors of missions, stewardship, and media ministries.

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*Leadership Council looks ahead*

*—Warren L. Hoffman, General Secretary*
DAWN Dubose and her children experienced a miracle on their way home one Friday in March. They were traveling south on Interstate 77, going 65 miles per hour on a three-lane highway when one of her rear tires blew out! The car never wavered and she wasn’t even aware of what had happened. Then she noticed that drivers were waving her over to the side. She pulled off the highway and was looking at the damage when a tow truck pulled up in front of her. The driver asked if he could help her. She said yes, and he changed the tire. Dawn asked if someone had called him, and he said, “No, I was on my way to a call and was early. I saw what happened and pulled over to help you.”

She thanked him and offered to pay him, but he refused. Her husband Morris brought the tire to church to show when he shared the story during our time of praise. The entire side wall separated from the main part of the tire! Both parts remained on the wheel of the car! Dawn and all four of the children could have been killed if it weren’t for God.

—Loretta M. Krause, Valley Chapel, E. Canton, Ohio

What a Great God We Serve

THANKSGIVING DAY, November 27, 1992, I had a severe attack of nausea with excruciating pain in my back. I tried to rest, but it became worse. About 4:00 a.m. I asked my wife Fannie to call an ambulance to take me to Holy Spirit Hospital in Camp Hill, Pa. There I was admitted to the surgical intensive care unit.

I cannot recall many details of the next four weeks. The medical records show that many doctors, specialists, and surgeons did their best to diagnose my illness. X-rays failed to locate the problem. Was it my heart, my lungs, or my stomach? Tubes and monitors of many types, including a respirator, were attached to my body. Blood was taken many times for analysis to detect any infection. I was given oxygen, and at one point, shock treatment.

During this time I had weird, unbelievable dreams and at times had to be restrained. Strong medication retarded my ability to think intelligently. My sense of location and direction was confused. It was difficult to recognize my family and friends. Ability to think and concentrate returned slowly. I could not read with understanding. Fannie read the Bible to me. Now I enjoy reading. The Lord helped me to meet situations with hope, faith, and purpose.

I was ready for the journey to that celestial city...

After four weeks in the hospital, I was transferred to Messiah Village Nursing Care under a medical doctor’s supervision. Nurses and aids gave me special care. I progressed from bed to a wheelchair, and then, with physical therapy, to a walker. Walking with someone holding my arm or hand encouraged me.

After seven weeks in the hospital and nursing care, I was able to return home. How happy I was! But recovery was slow. It was some time before I enjoyed food. Fast moving objects such as automobiles troubled me.

This illness was a blessing in disguise because in the initial examination, an aortic aneurysm was discovered. If it had ruptured it would almost certainly have meant death. (About three months later successful surgery was performed.)

Looking back to some of those traumatic experiences is puzzling. Heavy medication brought mental confusion, even relating to my relationship with the Lord. Fighting depression became a real battle. My recovery is a miracle from God. In difficult situations we ask, “Why me, Lord?” But experience helps me to understand with compassion when others pass through difficult illness.

Friends ask, “What was the diagnosis of your illness?” Medical authorities gave no satisfactory answer. Thus the diagnosis remains obscure. Later, one of the doctors told us that he had thought I would not survive, but the hand of God was on me. As I look back, there is no question but that the first day brought me to “the valley of the shadow of death.”

I express my appreciation and thanks to the following: to the medical profession for their skill and knowledge in trying to analyze my illness, and to Messiah Village for their loving care; to friends and relatives across America and Africa for the large volume of prayer, “get well” cards, telephone messages, and visits; to family, church, relatives, and friends, including Messiah Village pastoral staff who prayed for me; and to Fannie, my wife, for her faithfulness in intercessory prayer that the Lord’s will would be accomplished in my recovery and healing. As a wife of two months she shared her love in the dark, depressing moments of my illness, visiting me faithfully in the hospital and nursing care. Family members and friends assisted with transport even in wintry weather.

I was ready for the journey to the celestial city where I’ll meet my Savior. But, my recovery has brought to me a new awareness of my helplessness and dependence upon the Lord. I testify to his “sufficient grace” (2 Corinthians 13:9). He still answers prayer.

—Paul McBeth, Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

May 1998

Evangelical Visitor 11
When I was a kid growing up in Hershey, Pa., ice hockey was big stuff. Hershey had a pro team and the kids played in the Pee Wee League on the big rink. I got to play, because I promised my mom I would not for-sake my trombone for hockey. She lost on that deal.

The older kids cashed in on another privilege. They got to scrape the ice between periods of the pro games. This was before the Zamboni machines wiped out the fun. Anyway, without those kids and their scrapers, skating would have been a disaster. Hockey is a high-speed sport, and no respectable player would have ventured out on rough ice.

Today in countless rough spots around the world, people are keeping the ice clean so the players can do their jobs. I can’t begin to list all of the things they do, so I’m going to pick just one of them: they take care of and teach the children of our missionaries. Just like those boys who scraped the ice at Hershey Sports Arena, these people try to clean up the rough places, the cracks, and the gouges in the lives of the children.

Missionary parents agonize over whether to send their children to local schools (in many places there are none, or they are unfit, or too expensive), or to boarding schools, or to teach them at home. Some try a combination of these alternatives, keeping their children at home for a while before sending them to boarding schools. But taking a long look at the history of world missions, it’s hard to imagine how the gospel could have spread into the world’s nooks and crannies without the faithful and difficult work of teachers and house parents.

Missionary parents not only face changing educational options for their children, they also face the prospect of losing the boarding school option in some places, because there are not enough teachers and house parents. Mission agency recruiters will tell you that getting someone to teach missionaries’ children is as tough as getting volunteers to push a peanut up Pike’s Peak with their noses.

Our educational culture is changing, but so is our view of Christian service and world missions. With so many choices, and so many missionary hot spots, would-be missionaries can pick and choose. For example, if witnessing to unreached Muslims is your priority, then teaching at a school for missionary children ranks very low. This pecking order of missionary service usually puts teaching at the bottom.

Of course, in world missions, we do not neglect Muslim witness to staff our boarding schools. At the same time, however, we cannot afford to overlook the critical importance of taking care of our missionaries’ children.

When we look at the potential pool of teachers, we have to admit that a teaching career in the U.S. looks much more promising in many ways than burying yourself in some low-paying, understaffed school in Papua, New Guinea. Why push an old, clumsy ice scraper, when you can drive a Zamboni?

However, this is where we have to shine the searchlight of Jesus’ teaching about the cost of discipleship. I would say that Christian teachers first must look Jesus squarely in the eye, and talk to him about self-denial, before they dismiss outright the possibility of teaching overseas.

The more choices we have, the harder it is to pick the hardest one. Teaching missionaries’ children is tough, and it demands our best people. But if we try to save our lives in some comfy place, we’ll lose in the end. Much better to save your life teaching missionaries’ children than lose it in a high-paying suburban post with all the latest computers and stuff.
Language acquisition is...

by Eleanor Poe

When we were children, we learned our parents’ language. We imitated their pronunciation and sentence structure until we spoke like they did. Language learning happened naturally. Later someone taught us to read and write, skills we value and use daily. This part of language learning took a little more effort.

When we as a family were preparing to go to Nicaragua as missionaries, we knew we needed to learn to speak Spanish, but we were not entirely prepared for the impact this experience would have on us. As we faced language school, Marshall and I knew that we were not going to become fluent in Spanish simply by going to class, learning the material, and passing the tests. We had to realize that language learning involved constant practice of what we were hearing. It meant listening and speaking by imitating, the way we had learned our first language. Language learning would mean developing some skills that we had not practiced recently.

Upon arriving in Costa Rica (August 1980) to study the language, we were immediately surrounded by Spanish. This, we now know, was good for us. All our neighbors spoke Spanish. All TV and radio programs plus newspapers and billboards used Spanish. Even the octagonal sign at the intersection did not say, “STOP.” It said, “ALTO.” In our first visit alone to the supermarket, we could not make decisions or be in control as we wanted to be. We felt embarrassed when we sensed that someone was bored or amused with our attempts to speak. We felt hurt when someone treated us like children because we could not speak well. Some adult students cried, while others became impatient, angry, or argumentative. Most of us were discouraged at times, worrying that we would never learn this language. Language learning became painful and overwhelming.

Knowing that learning Spanish would be our only way to communicate effectively in the areas where God was sending us, we kept working. As we practiced our new words and sentences with Spanish speakers willing to correct us, we gradually learned to speak Spanish. Language learning was possible.

Should you pray for the missionary in language school? Certainly! What are the results of your prayers? An encouraged missionary, a missionary better able to deal with the stress of the day, a missionary gaining confidence in his or her ability to master new situations, and a missionary acquiring the facility to communicate fluently and accurately the message he or she wants to share. Language acquisition has become an ongoing challenge and a reachable goal.

Eleanor Poe looks at photos with her neighbor Juana and her grandchildren.

Eleanor Poe and her husband Marshall have been serving in Nicaragua since early 1997, following a refresher language course at Rio Grande Bible Institute in Texas. In the 1970s and ’80s they also served under Brethren in Christ World Missions in both Zambia and Nicaragua. Their church home is Lancaster (Pa.) Brethren in Christ.
Focus on Malawi, Africa

MEET REV. AND MRS. EPHRAIM DISI

by A. Graybill Brubaker

Rev. Ephraim Disi and Lida Phuka were married at the new Diwiza Church in Ntcheu District of Malawi on Saturday, January 24, 1998. Participating in the wedding were Reverends Chauluka Gama, Gary Andricks, and Graybill Brubaker. The wedding ceremony in the church was followed by exuberant celebration in the bride’s home village, which included the presentation of gifts and a feast enjoyed by about a hundred guests.

Ephraim Disi was born in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, on January 30, 1958, the sixth of eleven children. He went to school in Bulawayo until the seventh grade. After working for two years, he traveled to his ancestral home of Malawi. He finished his schooling and then entered government service in the survey department.

On a Sunday in 1985, he attended a Brethren in Christ Church service in Ndirande, Malawi, and was asked to serve as translator (from Ndebele to Chewa). He then traveled as interpreter to Chikwawa and to Kuphanga with Rev. P.M. Kumalo and Jonathan Dlodhlo and their wives from Zimbabwe.

A year later, Ephraim was chosen Church Secretary at Ndirande. In 1988, when Bishop Kumalo and Stephen Ndlovu came to Malawi and found some financial problems, Ephraim was appointed treasurer. The next year, he was appointed General Secretary. (This title was later changed to General Director.)

During these few years, Ephraim had been a nominal Christian, but in December 1989, he determined to follow the Lord wholly and was spiritually renewed. He was serving as General Secretary in 1990 when he and Chauluka Gama were sponsored to attend the International Brethren in Christ Fellowship in Canada. In 1997, he again attended the International Brethren in Christ Fellowship in India, renewing acquaintances with Brethren in Christ Church leaders from around the world.

In 1992, Ephraim resigned from his government job and went to Nigeria for further training in evangelism, returning to Malawi in May of 1993. Two years later he was ordained to the Christian ministry by Bishop Jacob Shenk of the Brethren in Christ Church of Zimbabwe on the request and recommendation of Rev. Jack McClane, Executive Director of Brethren in Christ World Missions. In September 1995 he began a four-year course of training at Likubula Bible Institute and expects to graduate in July 1998. Lida is enrolled in the course for student wives.

Earlier, in July 1986, Ephraim had married Mercy. Mercy was a Muslim Yao who became a Christian three years after their marriage. Doctors at both the Malamulo Hospital and the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Blantyre could find no reason why they could not have children. Friends told them that it was because of witchcraft instigated by Mercy’s mother. Mercy and Ephraim both refused to resort to witchcraft to overcome this curse. On March 4, 1995, Mercy died after a long illness during which Ephraim lovingly cared for her.

Rev. Disi continued to serve the Brethren in Christ Church as its titular head during the following lonely years. His young niece Monika served with distinction in the taxing role of hostess, as those who have been entertained in the home will testify. After much prayer, in which Ephraim was joined by friends on several continents, the Lord has provided a companion for his worthy servant. Let Ephraim’s friends throughout the International Brethren in Christ Fellowship praise God and join in prayer for God’s richest blessings on Ephraim and Lida.

On a Sunday in 1985, Ephraim attended a Brethren in Christ Church service in Ndirande, Malawi, and was asked to serve as translator (from Ndebele to Chewa).

A. Graybill Brubaker and his wife Ethel are serving the Malawi Brethren in Christ Church since April 1997. They are members of the Upland (Calif.) Brethren in Christ Church.
“Christianity for me!”

Rachel Kibler and her husband George are serving the Lord in Zambia as host/hostess at the Nahumba Mission. They are from the Cumberland Valley (Pa.) Brethren in Christ Church.

The Jesus film ministry has started for this year. Last weekend we showed it and 30 serious seekers remained for prayer. One young woman, about 22 years old, whom Rachel counseled, said, “I have never before been convinced that Christianity was for me, but when I saw how he suffered, I knew I had to accept him.” As she prayed to receive Christ and repent of her sins, she wept uncontrollably with love and thanksgiving for the one who had died for her. This makes it all worthwhile. We look forward to the 17 more showings we will have in the next months.

New Christians with a purpose

Gene and Ruth Madeira serve the Lord in various Latin America countries for several months at a time. From September through early May, they provided leadership training to Venezuelan national pastors. Their home congregation is the Lancaster (Pa.) Brethren in Christ Church.

Mireya de Arroyo wants to start three evangelistic Bible studies for the unconverted. She wants these Bible studies to be evangelistic—in the homes of persons who do not attend any church. She also leads prayer group activity for the church, and is herself an example of a person who prays in the Spirit.

Lorena de Magliano is the wife of the youth minister at Montalban Brethren in Christ Church (Venezuela) and the mother of two lovely girls. She coordinates the worship teams of the church. She wants to serve the Lord better with a humble heart, fully consecrated to God to do his will. She wants to identify persons gifted to participate in the worship teams. She wants to develop a body of musicians who will use instruments in worship to the glory of God. She wants to help the worship leaders to understand the role of music in worship based on the Word of God. The congregation recently added an electric guitar and drum to the worship team. Pray for Lorena as she develops different teams to share in the leadership of worship.

Why don’t they come back?

Bruce and Merly Bundy have been serving in Spain since September 1988 as church planters. They are members of the Mount Pleasant (Pa.) Brethren in Christ Church.

During our third year anniversary as a church, Bruce mentioned we had seen some 200 people through the house groups and jail ministry. Where were all of them? What was going on? Why didn’t they come back? It seems we were planting on rocky ground where the seed didn’t take root.

Well, this morning a young lady who had been coming to church quite a while ago came to us in tears, confessing that she had turned her back on God and had decided to go her own way. She told Merly how many times she thought of our church and wanted to come, but something always stopped her. Now she was at her wit’s end and cried out to God for mercy and deliverance.

Yesterday, a friend whom we met nine years ago phoned. She felt rejected by her husband and cried desperately for help because she didn’t know where to turn. She said that she knew that she could trust us, since we always gave her words of hope and comfort and were truthful with her.

Two days ago, Merly spoke to an old friend who has been suffering from back problems for 13 years. Although we spoke to her about Jesus many years ago, she listened earnestly for the first time. She wants us to visit her and pray for her healing and tell her more about Jesus.

Two weeks ago, a member of the church whom we had baptized two years ago returned after disappearing for six weeks. She also returned humbled and looking for a way out of her predicament. We often pray for those who have gone or were only here a short time. We’ve asked the Lord to bring them back or at least get them on the right path. Could we be starting to see a turn around?

Report on Brethren in Christ Church growth:

- **ZIMBABWE** is projecting 50 new churches by the year 2000; 39 have been planted to date, placing them ahead of schedule.
- Revival fires continue to burn in the island of **CUBA** where church growth has gone from two churches three years ago to an additional 17 house churches and five cell groups. Annual conference has grown from about four dozen people to 550.
- **ORISSA**, India, now lists 45 churches, each one having five preaching points.
- **NICARAGUA** reports 18 new church plantings.
- In the last eight months, two churches have been planted in the Kathmandu Valley in **NEPAL** and the third church in the valley has begun.

May 1998 Evangelical Visitor 15
Keeping in touch with high-tech is a new excitement for older adults. Residents of Messiah Village, a continuing care retirement community located in Mechanicsburg, Pa., have taken the leap into the world of computers. A group of seven residents with interest in computers met in May 1997, to discuss the possibility of promoting the use of computers among residents of Messiah Village. The group was appropriately named “The Golden Mouse Club." A fascinating part of this is that the momentum has been driven by residents.

The founding members of the Golden Mouse Club sought out the learning resources available in the community. They met with Dr. Barry DeRoos, professor at Messiah College, who advised them that a classroom setting would be the most effective way for seniors to learn the computer. Residents, Erla Stump and Clara Rouse, co-chairpersons of the Golden Mouse Club took the advice of Dr. DeRoos and found a class at the Computer Learning Center called “Solutions for Seniors.” With training available, it was time to see if there was interest among residents.

A meeting for residents with interest in computers was held in October 1997. More than 70 residents attended this first meeting of the Golden Mouse Club. Some of these residents already owned their own computers, while other residents had never seen a computer.

The interest in computers ranged from basic word processing to surfing the Internet. Since a number of Messiah Village residents are retired missionaries, there was a great interest in communicating with family and friends all over the world. John Fry, Vice President of Operations, stated, “They are very excited to learn how to communicate with their relatives around the world. For me it has been very rewarding.”

Out of the large group of 70, 7 residents completed a course of training and celebrated their “graduation” at a luncheon on January 30. When asked why the Golden Mouse Club was so important to residents, Ms. Stump replied, “It is important for residents to get over their fear of computers and know that it is not too late to learn something new.” Resident Dick O’Neill, stated, “It is important to keep your mind active at any stage of life, and the computers help us do that.” Dick O’Neill has kept the computers functioning and his jovial manner has encouraged his fellow residents.

What is on the horizon for the Golden Mouse Club? With all the interest shown at the first meeting, four new computers were installed in the Village Center. This computer room is becoming a popular place of activity. On January 23, the Golden Mouse Club sponsored a two-part computer seminar from 10:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m. Approximately 60 residents attended the morning session on how computers are made. About 50 attended the afternoon session on models, sizes, options on equipment, and counsel on how to purchase. During February, there was further training on campus. Seven staff and residents have volunteered to further train the seven graduates. In addition, several other residents are preparing to get in on the activities of the Golden Mouse Club.

It is exciting that most of these people are now prepared to handle e-mail, which is on the computers supplied by Messiah Village for those who do not have computers at their residence. With computers here to stay, residents of Messiah Village are certainly up to the challenge and are running, not walking, into the twenty-first century. As Erla Stump writes, “Messiah Village is a place where getting older is an interesting life of constant learning in many areas—with computers being one of them.”
The cool air of a Canadian spring greeted the 29 Bible Quiz teams that had assembled on the campus of Niagara Christian Collegiate and Riverside Chapel Brethren in Christ Church in Fort Erie, Ontario, on Saturday, April 4, 1998. Teams from Ontario, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, New York, and Maryland—representing the Brethren in Christ, Church of the Nazarene, and Evangelical Free Church denominations—had gathered to compete in the 14th Annual Can-Am Bible Quiz Tournament.

The tournament was divided into two divisions, based on years of quizzing experience, as outlined in the Brethren in Christ rules. The Junior Varsity division, which included quizzers with less than two years’ experience, was composed of nine teams. The Senior Varsity division, which included all other quizzers, was a 20-team division.

Throughout the day, teams competed in a double round-robin tournament in 12 different quizzing areas. Each team had ample opportunities to demonstrate the knowledge they had gained during the previous months’ studying of the book of Romans.

By the end of the round-robin portion of the Can-Am, teams were ready to begin the playoff rounds. When all the playoffs had been completed, the results were as follows:

**Junior Varsity Division**

9. Palmyra Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
8. Highland Brethren in Christ (Ohio)
7. Manor Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
6. Lakeholm “U Guyz” Nazarene (Ohio)
5. ParaMt. Rock (Pa./Md.)
4. Welland Brethren in Christ (Ont.)
3. Dillsburg Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
2. Pequea Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
1. Rochester “Sweet Repeat” Nazarene (N.Y.)

**Junior Varsity top quizzers**

10. Stephanie Hollinger (Palmyra)
9. Hannah Mosher (Lakeholm)
8. Nathan Eisen (Welland)
7. Leah DiSabatino (Rochester)
6. Daniel Blokzyl (Welland)
5. Chris Fuchs (Rochester)
4. Jessi Baer (ParaMt. Rock)
3. Bryan Huber (Pequea)
2. Angelina Shannon (Dillsburg)
1. Sarah Ludlow (Rochester)

Sarah Ludlow of Rochester was recognized as the top Rookie (first year) Quizzer at this year’s Can-Am.

**Senior Varsity Division**

20. Palmyra Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
19. Harrisburg Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
18. Mt. Pleasant Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
17. Lakeholm “Eternal Flames” Nazarene (Ohio)
16. Highland Brethren in Christ (Ohio)
15. Faith Evangelical Free (Pa.)
14. Millersville Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
13. Pequea Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
12. Christian Union Brethren in Christ (Ind.)
11. Hershey Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
10. Skyline View Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
9. Mt. Rock Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
8. Dillsburg Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
7. Lakeholm “Adventure Club” Nazarene (Ohio)
6. Grantham Brethren in Christ (Pa.)
5. Rochester “Issachar” Nazarene (N.Y.)
4. Nappanee Brethren in Christ (Ind.)
3. Paramount Brethren in Christ (Md.)
2. Rochester “WQF” Nazarene (N.Y.)
1. Rochester “Zebulun” Nazarene (N.Y.)

**Senior Varsity top quizzers**

15. Kimberley Kipe (Paramount)
14. Ruth Rosentrater (Nappanee)
13. Aaron Van Valkenburg (Adventure Club)
12. Ben Bixler (Grantham)
11. Jonathan Cahoon (Zebulun)
10. Josh Murry (Pequea)
9. Esther Rosentrater (Nappanee)
8. Scott Benedict (Mt. Rock)
7. Rachel Spurrier (Dillsburg)
6. Courtney Powley (Issachar)
5. Danielle Powley (Issachar)
4. Erica Brubaker (Dillsburg)
3. Justin Tallo (Zebulun)
2. Vaughn Climenhaga (Christian Union)
1. Carrie Messick (Hershey)

The final award of each Can-Am since 1990 has been the Jason Rosado Memorial Award For Outstanding Contribution To Bible Quizming. Jason was a quizzer with the Mechanicsburg Brethren in Christ quiz team who passed away as the result of a car accident while his team was traveling to the 1989 Can-Am tournament. Quizzers, coaches, and officials vote on this award. This year’s recipient was Esther Rosentrater of the Nappanee Brethren in Christ team.

A very big “thank you” goes out to NCC and Riverside Chapel for their excellent facilities, and for hosting us for this year’s Can-Am. An even bigger “thank you” goes to all of the quizmasters and officials who took time out of their busy schedules to make Can-Am 1998 a success. Finally, thanks to all the coaches and quizzers who put in many hours during the quiz year.

R. Aubrey Hawton has been involved in organizing 13 of the 14 Can-Am tournaments. On April 18 he concluded his responsibilities as Canadian Conference Brethren in Christ Quiz Director.
Kenneth Abell ordained

Rev. Kenneth Abell was ordained to the Christian ministry on Sunday, March 29, at the Morrison Brethren in Christ Church in Illinois.

Rev. Abell is the pastor of the Morrison Church. The congregation expressed its appreciation to him for his warm and caring ministry among them.

The four sons of Ken and Anita participated in the service. Michael read Scripture and Ken sang. Jonathon and Wesley did a dialogue, "The World According to Dad."

Kevin Kelley ordained


Rev. Kelley is a graduate of Messiah College and Asbury Theological Seminary. He has been serving at the Susquehanna Valley Church since April 1993.

Rev. Kelley and his wife Barbara have three children: Sarah, Josiah, and Erin.

Allegeny Conference


Ron Burgard of Messiah Village was the Mar. 29 guest speaker at the Martinsburg, Pa., church. The congregation hosted Allegheny Conference on Apr. 4. On Mar. 10, 18 people from the Montgomery, Pa., church helped process 5,000 cans of meat for MCC. Eight persons were baptized Mar. 15. On Mar. 7 the Mt. Rock congregation, Shippensburg, Pa., had a pot pie dinner and concert by Cathy Parson and Dan Colcock. Proceeds went toward youth trip to Haiti in July. On Mar. 15 the New Guilford congregation, Chambersburg, took an offering to support 13 youth and adults going to Romania June 11-15 to work in an orphanage. The South Mountain congregation, Shippensburg, welcomed a new member on Mar. 15.

Atlantic Conference


Average attendance in March at the Hempfield church, Lancaster, Pa., was 156. Terry Brensinger spoke on Mar. 8. On Mar. 15 the Niagara Christian Collegiate drama missions team performed at the Lancaster church. Jim DiRaddo gave a seminar Mar. 28 on "Understanding Your Teenager." On Mar. 15 the pastors and deacons of the Manheim, Pa., church hosted their quarterly pizza party to get acquainted with new attendees. The Conestoga Brass were in concert Mar. 29 at the Millersburg, Pa., church. A new women's Bible study meets every other Thursday. John and Esther Spurrier were Mar. 1 missions speakers for the Mount Pleasant congregation, Mt. Joy, Pa. The youth led Sunday school and the worship service Mar. 29.

Two members of the New Covenant church, Quakertown, Pa., went to Honduras for 10 days recently for missions work. The Mar. 22 "spring celebration" service at the New Hope church, Harrisburg, Pa., featured Jim Law of Second Chance Ministries and musicians, The Centurions. The New Joy congregation, Akron, Pa., held its fourth birthday celebration Mar. 22. First-time guests received free tickets to the evening roller skating event. The Mar. 25 MPF meeting of the Palmyra, Pa., church featured Jim and Karen Avella, on assignment to an island near Honduras.

The NCC drama team led an evening of skits Mar. 22 for the Pequanna church, Lancaster, Pa. The film "The Ride" was shown Mar. 15. The Refton, Pa., congregation recently completed the 50-Day Adventurer. "Untapped Miracles for Tapped-Out Christians." The Silverdale, Pa., congregation viewed the film "Repeat Performance" on Mar. 8. The youth hosted an Apr. 11 Easter egg hunt for the community. On Mar. 22 the Skyline View church, Harrisburg, Pa., congregation had a luncheon and raised over $1,300 at a rent-a-teen auction. The youth of the Speedwell Heights church, Lititz, Pa., cooked a meal Mar. 8 with proceeds going to youth functions. The church hosted a music and worship seminar Apr. 4 with hands-on instruction in conducting, instruments, and resourcing.

Canadian Conference

The Bertie congregation, Stevensville, Ont., planned revival meetings for Mar. 22-25. The Torchmen Singers ministered in the Mar. 22 evening service of the
Boyle congregation, St. Ann’s, Ont. 
- Two people were baptized Mar. 1 at the Bridlewood church, Agincourt, Ont. Charles and Leone Byer spoke on Mar. 15 about Navajo Mission.
- The Falls View congregation, Niagara Falls, Ont., had a nine-week double service experiment Apr. 5—May 31.
- The Heise Hill church, Gormley, Ont., has a new cookbook with proceeds to the building fund. Bishop Winger spoke in the Mar. 1 evening service.
- John Klassen was guest speaker in the Mar. 22 service of the Houghton church, Langton, Ont.

- The women’s ministry of the Massey Place church, Saskatoon, Sask., had a Mar. 28 “spring salad eggstraordinary” and an Apr. 9 bake sale.
- The Oak Ridges, Ont., church enjoyed an evening Mar. 29 with Charlie and Leone Byer from Navajo Mission.
- The Orchard Creek congregation, St. Catharines, Ont., recently heard a sermon series on “Marriage: Can It Work?” Linda Lambert has joined the staff in the area of pastoral care and counseling.

The Emmanuel Bible College Singers and the Niagara Christian Collegiate Singers provided services in March for the Port Colborne, Ont., congregation.
- The Rosebank congregation, Petersburg, Ont., welcomed two new members on Mar. 15.
- Ray and Sandy Sider presented their vision for Camp Kahquah to the Springvale, Ont., congregation on Mar. 11. Adolph Hahn led renewal services Mar. 27-29.
- The Stuyver, Ont., church hosted a World Day of Prayer service for area churches on Mar. 6; and Canadian Conference on Apr. 17.

On Mar. 8 Neale and May Sider shared with the Wainfleet, Ont., congregation about their recent trip to mission points in Africa. On Mar. 15 the congregation enjoyed the new Billy Graham film “The Ride.” March was “Ray of Hope” month at the Westheights church, Kitchener, Ont., featuring testimonials, speakers, and prayer for the ministry to young offenders and the inner city.

Central Conference
- On Mar. 27 the women of the Amherst congregation, Massillon, Ohio, had an outing to the ATI craft show in Wooster. Seventeen people had perfect Sunday school attendance during the second quarter.
- Sam Hollingsworth led a Mar. 8 baptismal service for the Beulah Chapel congregation, Springfield, Ohio. The church hosted an egg hunt and “gospel magic” during the Easter Sunday school hour.
- The Highland church, West Milton, Ohio, began a new Sunday school class Mar. 8 using Life With God: Being the Church led by Pastor Weber.

Bookstore Manager Opening
A great ministry opportunity is available for someone with strong business sense. Christian Light Bookstore is accepting applications for manager of the bookstore in Chino, Calif. Applicants should have some retail work experience as well as strong abilities in management of people and merchandising in a competitive business environment. Salary will be in the $25,000-30,000 range, plus bonus based on sales increases and profitability. The Chino operation is a beautiful store in a strong location with well-trained and able staff.

For more information, contact:
Mr. Ray Earl
Christian Light Bookstore
158 East Market Street
Napppane, IN 46550
Tel: (219) 773-4041
Fax: (219) 773-2033

Applications will be accepted until June 15, 1998.
PROSPERITY OR ADVERSITY

Which will you choose?

by Phil Keefer

Phil Keefer is Director of Stewardship for the Brethren in Christ Church.

Cooperative Ministries
Receipts, Year to Date January 1–March 31, 1998

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*Note: Canadian Conference total budget does not include designated or direct giving.

IF YOU were given the choice between prosperity and adversity, which would you choose? Many would say, “That’s easy, I would take prosperity.” Some may pause to compare the benefits of adversity against those of prosperity. May I suggest that the answer depends on our focus in life or the context in which we consider the question?

Given the choice, I believe most of us would choose prosperity. Or would we? If prosperity involves the love of money, then prosperity is fraught with dangers according to the Scriptures. “Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness” (Ecclesiastes 5:10, NLT). “No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money” (Matthew 6:24 NLT). “And how do you benefit if you gain the whole world but lose or forfeit your own soul in the process?” (Luke 9:25 NLT). “But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction” (1 Timothy 6:9, NLT).

Prosperity has the ability to reveal character traits which we may not have known about ourselves otherwise. Prosperity often creates a sense of discontentment. Discontentment can be described as craving more and more of what we already have. Greed can lead to evils such as marriage problems, robbery, blow-ups in relationships. However, there is a positive side to prosperity. Prosperity is a character test in disguise. Paul wrote, “Dear brothers and sisters, whenever trouble comes your way, let it be an opportunity for joy. For when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be strong in character and ready for anything” (James 1:2-4, NLT).

In essence Paul is saying, be happy when your faith and your character is tested. The testing of one’s faith and character has a way of bringing growth in our lives. Therefore, prosperity as a character test can be a good thing.

Adversity has a way of testing our faith as well. Will we stand up to life’s challenges, or will we turn tail and run? Adversity has its unique way of bringing us to greater dependency on God. Most of us will handle a demotion better than we will handle a promotion. The reason? When adversity strikes, life becomes rather simple. What choice do we have but to accept the demotion or quit?

Thomas Carlyle wrote, “Adversity is sometimes hard upon a man, but for one man who can stand prosperity, there are a hundred that will stand adversity. Precious few are those who can keep their moral, spiritual, and financial equilibrium...while balancing on the elevated tightrope of success.” Many of us have read about people who won a lottery, but were unable to handle it well.

When we think of prosperity and adversity in the context of God’s test of our character and character development, then prosperity and adversity become somewhat like Siamese twins; they are inseparable.

Poverty and adversity both have benefit when we consider them as God’s opportunity to develop character in our lives. Where do you turn when difficulty strikes? Do you remember God as much in your successes as you do in your failures? For some, prosperity may be a greater test of character than poverty. “And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them” (Romans 8:28, NLT).
Orleans. The church hosted a Mar. 28 conference with Donna Partow. The Northgate fellowship, Tipp City, Ohio, had Easter breakfast at the church following the community sunrise service. • The Pleasant Hill, Ohio, congregation hosted Bishop Byers in his annual visit on Mar. 22. • Joanne Calderone, Raymond Kaiser, and a mixed quartet provided music for March services at the Sipsey Valley church, Massillon, Ohio. • Mar. 22 was Friend Day and the fourth anniversary celebration at the Wooster, Ohio, church. • Two members of the Valley Chapel congregation, East Canton, Ohio, attended a teacher training event in Akron Mar. 5-7.

Midwest Conference

On the evening of Mar. 8 the Bethany congregation, Thomas, Okla., saw the first in a series of 12 films titled "A.D." The BYF held a bake sale Mar. 16. • On Mar. 15, the Rosebank congregation, Hope, Kan., spent an evening looking at ways to put their purpose statement into action. • The Zion church, Abilene, Kan., hosted Jr. Quiz finals at the Mar. 29 joint fifth Sunday evening service. The church has retired the pulpit furniture given in honor of the late Samuel Zook, bishop in the late 1800s.

Pacific Conference

The Pacific Highway church, Salem, Ore., hosted a pizza party Mar. 4 for Sunday school students, parents, and friends. Interim pastor Doug Drysdale closed the event with a devotional talk. • The Upland, Calif., church welcomed the church following the communion service. • On Mar. 15, the Rose Valley church, Westfield, Pa., saw the film "Repeat Performance" Mar. 1 in the evening. Mar. 22 was Sunday school rally day with a potluck following the service. • Chris Sharp is the new director of children's ministries and Paul Hensel is the new business administrator for the Mechanicsburg, Pa., church. • On Mar. 22 Paxton Street Ministries presented the play "The Captain and His Crew" by Diane Buckingham for the Messiah Village congregation, Mechanicsburg. Frank Kipe led Holy Week services. • The Redland Valley women, York Haven, Pa., had a retreat Apr. 24-26 led by Martha Burton. • In the evening of Mar. 8 Pastor Gerald and Jane Tyrell shared pictures and thoughts from their recent tour of the Holy Land with the West Shore congregation, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

Southeast Conference

The Highland Park church, Dublin, Va., had renewal services Mar. 22-25 with evangelist Buckwalter for the Redman Valley church, Westfield, Pa., saw the film "Repeat Performance" Mar. 1 in the evening. Mar. 22 was Sunday school rally day with a potluck following the service. • Chris Sharp is the new director of children's ministries and Paul Hensel is the new business administrator for the Mechanicsburg, Pa., church. • On Mar. 22 Paxton Street Ministries presented the play "The Captain and His Crew" by Diane Buckingham for the Messiah Village congregation, Mechanicsburg. Frank Kipe led Holy Week services. • The Redland Valley women, York Haven, Pa., had a retreat Apr. 24-26 led by Martha Burton. • In the evening of Mar. 8 Pastor Gerald and Jane Tyrell shared pictures and thoughts from their recent tour of the Holy Land with the West Shore congregation, Mechanicsburg, Pa.

For The Record

Births

Bodner: Kody Ross, Mar. 16; Kevin and Sue (Keebaugh) Bodner, Mt. Rock congregation, Pa.
Brubaker: Alana Joy, Feb. 22; David and LuAnne (Miller) Brubaker, Grantham congregation, Pa.
Cober: Dylan Thomas, Nov. 7, 1997; Bryan and Daria (Tarnawsky) Cober, Falls View congregation, Ont.
Delaney: Matthew Adam, Feb. 26; Stephen and Sandy (Timmons) Delaney, Chambersburg congregation, Pa.
Forrest: Stephanie Lorraine, May 20, 1997; Gary and Mary Lynne (Campbell) Forrest, Falls View congregation, Ont.
Ginder: Tandi Cheleasa Naomi, Feb. 24; Barry and Cathy Ginder, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.
Hackman: Jesse James; chosen son, Feb. 10, of Rick and Kristi (Zimmerman) Hackman, Fairland congregation, Pa.
Horn: Chandler Elliot, Feb. 19; Rodney and Melissa (Muffitt) Horn, Manor congregation, Pa.
Knepper: Jordan Kyle, Feb. 15; Roger and Mardell (Boyd) Knepper, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.
Lebo: Bronte Michala, Mar. 25; Layne and Greta Lebo, Mechanicsburg congregation, Pa.
Mathews: McKinley Isaiah, Mar. 4; Carey and Tina (Vincent) Mathews, Houghton congregation, Ont.
Moore: Emily Elizabeth, Nov. 21, 1997; Rodger and Lori Ann (Pychel) Moore, Falls View congregation, Ont.
Moore: Kiley Kristine, Oct. 28, 1997; John and Shawnaw (Stuter) Moore, Upland congregation, Calif.
Roberts: Brandon Chase, Mar. 8; Jimmy and Roxanne (Curry) Roberts, Millerfields congregation, Ky.
Sider: Cody Robert, Feb. 26; Daryl and Robin (Halbert) Sider, Falls View congregation, Ont.
Thorton: Zachary Mark, Jan. 21; Mark and Ruth Ann (Grieve) Thornton, Cedar Heights congregation, Pa.
Wolgemuth: Corryn Nicole, Feb. 28; Justin and LaVonne (Lehman) Wolgemuth, Manheim congregation, Pa.
Zeimis: Wyatt Steven, Jan. 15; Steven and Kimberly Zeimis, Upland congregation, Calif.

Weddings

Dyck - Nemecek: Glenda L. Nemecek, daughter of Ken Pate, Duncan, Okla., and Judy McKnight, Upland congregation, Calif.

E.V. TimeLines

continued from page 19

response toward such an occasion. Nor is it appropriate to regard lightly the sacrifice these men made at the call of their country... [But] the Christian must have a better word and better news... ‘Out of loyalty to Christ who I claim as Saviour and follow as Lord, and out of love for my brethren in all nations, I refuse to participate in war which denies both. I am prepared to suffer the loss of all things and am willing to lay down my life for what I believe, but I refuse to kill another for any cause, no matter how right I may feel it to be.’"

10 Years Ago

May 1988 — The editorial reported on the cease-fire between the Sandinista government and the contra forces in Nicaragua, and quoted John Paul Lederach, who had assisted in prior mediation between the Nicaraguan government and the Miskito Indians: “I feel we are called to be involved...our pacifism and nonviolence has to move into the violent world. If we are against military solutions, we need to know what we have to offer as alternatives and how we can help them happen. If we have skills in mediation or conflict management, we should offer them.”

May 1998

Evangelical Visitor 21
PRE-REGISTRATION DEADLINE

Pre-registration at the $25 per person rate must be postmarked or hand delivered no later than June 1. The rate after June 1 is $30. Transportation requests must also be made by June 1.

Confirmation of reservations will be sent by mid-June.

TIME OF GENERAL CONFERENCE

The first session begins promptly at 10:00 a.m. on Saturday, July 4, with the “Celebration of Nations,” an international flags procession. All attendees are expected to be in their selected seats prior to the start of Conference. The final session is the Bible Quiz Finals at 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, July 8. Members of Conference are expected to attend all sessions.

EARLY ARRIVALS

Members of Conference arriving on Friday evening, July 3, should pick up registration packets (which include room assignments and meal cards) after 6:00 p.m. at the main entrance of Eisenhower Campus Center, centrally located on the main campus. College personnel will assist in finding assigned rooms and parking areas. Only vehicles displaying standard handicap signs may be parked in unassigned areas.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Full refund of fees will be made when Bonnie Hershberger, (717) 697-2634, is notified by June 22. After June 5, cancellations should be made by phone, fax, or e-mail. After June 22, refunds will be provided only for emergency situations.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FOR YOUTH

Tuesday Evening—“Battle of the Bands.” Area youth are invited to join Conference youth in this special event. Come and hear (even put together your own) youth bands from throughout the church honor God with contemporary music. Individual players can join a “pick-up” band. Non-registered youth will be charged $5.00 for the evening.

For more information on the Youth Program, contact Jim Gambini, Elizabethtown (Pa.) Church, (717) 367-2651 or ebiccjg@aol.com.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS? Call David P. McBeth, Conference Director, at (717) 766-0598.
Kassab; 2 sisters, Louetta B. Stone and Mary A. Cook; 9 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. He had resided at Messiah Village since 1990, was a retired carhauler, and owner/operator of S&H Lehner Co. He was a member of the Messiah Village church, Pa. The funeral was held at the Chambersburg Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Marion J. Heisey officiating. Interment was in Lincoln Cemetery.

Long: Velma P. Long, born May 8, 1922, daughter of Norman and Rose Grant Pressey, died Mar. 19. Preceding her in death was her husband, Yorkley Long. Surviving are a son, Clifford; and two daughters, Shirley Garon and Ruth Wilkens. Velma was a member of the Houghton congregation, Ont. The funeral was at Ostrander's Funeral Home with Rev. Dale Collier and Rev. John R. Sider officiating. Interment was in Cultus Cemetery.

Mackie: Kenneth E. Mackie, born Dec. 28, 1923, son of Alfred J. and Mildred P. Mockie Mackie, died Mar. 2. Preceding him in death were his wife, Millie Pauline (Hutson); and four children, Cynthia Engler, Zane G., Tim, and Pamela Morsberger. Surviving are a sister, Dolly Reynolds; and 14 grandchildren. Kenneth owned and operated Mackie Sew Shops. He was a professional musician, an avid fisherman and hunter, and member of the Fisherton Community Bank. The funeral was held at Clear Creek Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. John E. Geyer, Rev. Merle Horton, and Rev. Gayle Reeves officiating. Interment was in Greenlawn Cemetery.

Mackie was called to pastor the Spring Hope church in 1975 and served there until his retirement in 1990. He was ordained on Mar. 25, 1984. His pastoral ministry was characterized by diligent study, generosity, and patience.

The Brethren in Christ in the Altoona to Cumberland areas in Pennsylvania have seen a faithful servant of God in Kenneth Mackie. He has now gone to share his master's happiness.

Martin: Dorothy M. Martin, born May 30, 1916, in Elizabethtown, Pa., died Mar. 7. Two brothers, Walter and Harold, preceded her in death. Nieces and a nephew survive. She was a resident at Messiah Village since 1979; a former Brethren in Christ missionary and teacher in Zimbabwe from 1948-1979, all but two years at Matopo Mission; and a former teacher and librarian at Messiah College. She was the founding person in secondary education involvement in a Christian setting in Zimbabwe. Her evangelism visits led to the establishment of many Brethren in Christ congregations in Zimbabwe. She was a member of the Grantham congregation, Pa., where the funeral was officiated by Rev. Robert B. Ives. Interment was in Mount Tunnel Cemetery.

Reaman: Elmer David Irving Reaman, born Aug. 17, 1908, son of William and Adeline Reaman, died Feb. 27. Preceding him in death were his wife, Grace (Lilley); a daughter, Evelyn Reaman; a grandson and two granddaughters. Surviving are 4 sons, Douglas, Bruce, Keith, and David; 2 daughters, Jean Minor and Audrey Kares; 24 grandchildren; 34 great-grandchildren; 2 sisters; and a brother. Elmer was a member of the Bertie church, Ont., where the funeral was held with Rev. Don Middlemiss and Rev. Mike Zenker officiating. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Sollenberger: Mary C. Sollenberger, born Sept. 17, 1908, daughter of Samuel and Catherine Wenger Sollenberger, died Nov. 16, 1997. Surviving are her husband of 64 years, Paul H. Sollenberger; 3 daughters, D. Jean Sentz, M. Margareta Groff, and Janice L. Stauffer; a son, Earl E.; 10 grandchildren; and 10 great-grandchildren. She was a former Sunday school teacher and sewer for the New Guilford congregation, Pa., where she was a member. She managed the kitchen at Roxbury Holiness Camp for 15 years. The funeral was held at the Air Hill church with Rev. Robert D. Verno and Rev. Maurice Bender officiating. Interment was in Air Hill Cemetery.

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Director of Administration
Manor Church is seeking a full-time Director of Church Administration, to begin Jan. 1, 1999. Responsibilities include administering the church's financial and physical assets. Interested persons should contact Pastor John Hawbaker for further information.

Manor Church
530 Central Manor Road
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e-mail: ManorBIC@aol.com

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[24x211]ber of the Locust Grove congrega-
[24x221]at Messiah Village. He was a mem-
[24x239]grandchildren; and three great-
[24x249]two sons, Ray and Dale; three
[24x277]died Feb. 18. His wife, Miriam A.
[24x312]funeral was held with Rev. Ronald
[24x349]Chambersburg Mall Walkers Club;
[24x358]Christ Sunday school class and the
[24x433]er, Russell; and five sisters, Edna
[24x452]died Feb. 21. Her husband, Hershey
[24x461]kassab; 2 sisters, Louetta B. Stone
[24x481]ألمان: مارجريئ أستا رورهير، مولودة في أشلند كاب، أوهايو، في 20، 1912، وتوفيت في 20، 1997. discouraged was forbidden in death. Surviving are his wife, Mary Jane (Cook); four daughters, Lois Haverstock, Susan Reynolds; and four children, Cynthia Engler, Zane G., Tim, and Pamela Morsberger. Surviving are a sister, Dolly Reynolds; and 14 grandchildren. Kenneth owned and operated Mackie Sew Shops. He was a professional musician, an avid fisherman and hunter, and member of the Fisherton Community Bank. The funeral was held at Clear Creek Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. John E. Geyer, Rev. Merle Horton, and Rev. Gayle Reeves officiating. Interment was in Greenlawn Cemetery.

We thank God for the fruitful ministry of Kenneth Mackie. Kenneth was brought into a deep and lasting relationship with Christ through the Clear Creek church in the summer of 1951. He grew in grace, and four years later was elected teen Sunday school teacher. After that he advanced to the adult teacher.

Because of the urging of some of his more mature brethren, and the call of God, he became a lay minister in 1963. Pastor Mackie credited the church for spiritual things to men and women like Rev. Ross Mornings, Floyd Ritchey, Marshal Clark, and Jola Dixon. He stated that the Clear Creek church had a large part in his maturing in the Christian faith.

Bro. Mackie was called to pastor the Spring Hope church in 1975 and served there until his retirement in 1990. He was ordained on Mar. 25, 1984. His pastoral ministry was characterized by diligent study, generosity, and patience.

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May 1998
Evangelical Visitor 23
Trembling at God’s Word

“Trembling at God’s Word” is a phrase that suggests敬畏 in the presence of God. In the Bible, the word “tremble” is used in several contexts to describe a reaction to God’s presence or message. The Old Testament, in particular, uses the Hebrew word פחד (pachad) to describe a deep, overwhelming fear, awe, or respect for God. This word is often translated as “tremble” or “be afraid” in English, reflecting its connotation of a profound, visceral response to encountering the divine.

When we see this word used in the context of hearing God speak, it often connotes a sense of awe and reverence. For example, when Moses encountered God at Mount Sinai, he was so overwhelmed by God’s presence that he fell to the ground in fear and trembling (Exodus 3:11-14). Similarly, when God spoke through Isaiah, Isaiah felt his face burn with the presence of God (Isaiah 6:5).

The New Testament also uses words like ἐμπληροῦμαι (emplooomai) or ἐνθάλασσαμαι (enthalsamai) in Greek, which can be translated as “to tremble” or “to be afraid.” Paul wrote about being shaken by the truth of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 2:2) and Peter was said to tremble in fear upon hearing the voice of the Lord (Mark 14:62).

The experience of trembling is not limited to the Old Testament. In the Book of Revelation, John describes seeing the Lord’s face shining like the sun (Revelation 1:16), which so filled him with fear and awe that he fell prostrate before the Lord (Revelation 1:17). This powerful imagery reflects the idea that encountering God can be a transformative experience, one that fills us with a sense of profound reverence and respect.

In conclusion, the word “tremble” or “trembling” is a powerful reminder of our need to approach the LORD with awe and reverence. It serves as a call to recognize the awesome reality of our God and to respond with humility, fear, and respect, even as we seek to understand and engage with his Word.
Messiah Village announces “Enhancing Care, Same Compassion” campaign cabinet

Messiah Village, a continuing care retirement community located in Mechanicsburg, Pa., recently announced their campaign cabinet for the “Enhancing Care, Same Compassion” capital campaign. This $1.5 million campaign is to raise the necessary funds to renovate the Nursing and Special Care facilities of Messiah Village. Currently, the amount pledged or given to the campaign is $951,511.00.

Residents Robert K. Worman, M.D. and Winifred Worman, M.S.N. are the general co-chairs of the campaign cabinet. Dr. Worman states, “As health care delivery systems change, it is essential to recognize the fundamental ability to care for one another. Enhancing the care in nursing will have a positive impact on the daily lives of residents.” The Wormans have been residents of Messiah Village since 1993 and bring significant experience in the area of health care.

Other members of the campaign cabinet and their congregations include: Lenora Stern, chair of Leadership Gifts—Trustees (Mechanicsburg), Georgette Musser, chair of Leadership Gifts—Management (Mechanicsburg), Judith Bowman, chair of Leadership Gifts—Staff (Camp Hill), Donald R. Zoek and Anna Ruth Zoek, co-chairs of Pacesetter Gifts (Mechanicsburg), J. Kenneth Long, chair of Special Gifts (Lancaster), Rowland Shank, Sr., chair of Constituency Gifts (Palmyra), Roy Miller, Auditor (Mechanicsburg), John O. Hershey and Mona Hershey, co-chairs of Awareness Committee (Mechanicsburg), Ruth Engle, chair of Named Gifts Committee (Elizabethtown), Lane Hostetter, chair of the Trustee Development and Public Relations Committee (Mechanicsburg), and Dorothy Gish, chair of Board of Trustees.

Development and resident John Martin, Senior Associate, meet regularly with the campaign cabinet to monitor its progress and offer counsel.

The construction team, which is designing and building the project, consists of Reese Lower Patrick and Interiors 2000 of Lancaster, Pa., and R.S. Mowery of Carlisle, Pa., etc.

The Messiah Village Board of Trustees, the campaign cabinet, and key volunteers are all working to reach the financial goal by summer 1998, and construction could begin as early as July. Dr. Lesher states “This campaign is critical to the future of Messiah Village. It responds to current needs and positions us for future ministry and growth.”

Brethren in Christ World Missions presents

A STRANGE NEW RELIGION COMES TO THE NDEBALE

An original Zimbabwean Drama by playwright Isaac Mpfou

A troupe of Zimbabwean Actors will be traveling across the eastern portions of North America, portraying the earliest days of Brethren in Christ World Missions at Matopo Mission in Africa. Noted author Doris Dube will be accompanying the group and will be available to sign copies of her newest book Zulu, published as part of the centennial celebration.

SCHEDULE OF PERFORMANCES

Sunday, July 5, 7:00 p.m. General Conference, Grantham (Messiah College), Pa.
Wednesday, July 8, 6:30 p.m. Kitchener-Waterloo (West Heights Church), Ontario
Thursday, July 9, 6:30 p.m. Fort Erie (Riverside Chapel - NCC), Ontario
Saturday, July 11, 7:00 p.m. Martinsburg (Roaring Spring Middle School), Pa.
Tuesday, July 14, 7:00 p.m. North Baltimore Mennonite Church, Md.
Wednesday, July 15, 7:00 p.m. Mifflintown (Cedar Grove Church), Pa.
Thursday, July 16, 7:00 p.m. Mechanicsburg (Messiah Village), Pa.
Saturday, July 18, 7:00 p.m. Lancaster (Mennonite High School), Pa.
Wednesday, July 22, 2:00 p.m. West Milton (Memorial Holiness Camp), Ohio
Friday, July 24, 6:30 p.m. Massillon (Amherst Community Church), Ohio
The Mainline Trajectory and the Brethren in Christ

It is true that, starting in the first half of this century, the mainline denominations pursued a consistent policy of centralization and bureaucratization. And it is also true that the mainline denominations have seen a consistent decline in membership. Of course, theological and spiritual issues are also a critical factor in this decline. But the additional, perhaps prior role of intensive administrative centralization in this process is more easily discerned due to a resurgence of serious scholarly interest in and study of the mainline denominations. Excerpts from some recent studies on this issue will constitute the bulk of this article.

What follows are excerpts from papers reporting the findings of a Lilly Foundation study on the mainline experience with no further commentary. The question: To what extent have we anything to learn from the experience of what were also once passionately orthodox communities of the faithful?

Denominations and Denominationalism: An American Morphology, Russell E. Richey*

[p. 89] That [the aforementioned] regulatory behavior also increasingly characterizes all denominational agencies, which find themselves resorting to a variety of new mechanisms to achieve results that used to come easier—to effect policy, to implement programs, to disseminate resolutions. So agencies at times function like regulatory agencies, controlling through expectation or rule. In so behaving, denominations internalize one prevalent mechanism for continuing the rule from the top down.... Regulation—rule making, monitoring, on site visiting, indicting, exposing, forcing adherence—reaches for the cooperation, unity, coordination that used to link congregation to state, to region, to nation in denominational life. Regulation substitutes for the older dynamic and adhesive principles. Regulation, often adversarial in premise or tone, suggests a collapse of a denominational cohesion and purpose.

...The same problems and struggles, the same regulatory, grant making, consulting, franchising and training mechanisms, the same quest for unity and purpose can be seen on other levels and in other sectors of denominational life.... Congregations increasingly chart their own courses. Less pre-

*LFrom Reimagining Denominationalism: Interpretive Essays, Robert Bruce Mullins and Russell E. Richey, eds. Oxford University Press, 1994. This study was the product of a project sponsored by the Lilly Endowment.
occupied with denominational identity and less impressed with denominational [p. 90] delivery systems, congregations, particularly those with sufficient resources to function independently, buy program modules or curricula from various places. They behave like consumers.... The ultimate in that style emerges in the megachurches and family life centers.... Some replicate the entire set of services once rendered by denominations.... Such congregations boast of their family atmosphere, their family-like unity. Other congregations evidence the family disorder characteristic of other levels of denominational life and "adhere" through the array of regulating, grant-making, franchising, caucusing, consulting and training functions. In either case, as quasi-family or as a local arena for organizational experimentation, the congregation drifts from denomination and so contributes to the diffuseness of denominational identity.

At the other extreme, and partly in response to denominational consumerism or indifference, can be found an exaggerated denominationalism. Bishops and their counterpart judiciary officials struggle to regain direction, to maintain program momentum, to keep the ship financially afloat. At times, they put high premiums on denominational identity and loyalty; virtually shouting denominationalism. Adherence to denominational practice and structure attests or tests denominational integrity. Polity rather than creed or confession becomes the denominational norm....So in areas having to do with ministerial recruitment, training, and credentialing, hyperdenominationalism surfaces, while amid laity and congregations consumerism and indifference prosper.

All of this—the damaged corporate structure, the caucuses, the regional initiatives and variety, the congregational independence, the hyperdenominationalism—shows mainline denominations groping for a new order and for new purposes to replace those once given by a Christian America. In the meantime they focus within, as though their purposes were to be discovered there. And the conservative denominations, until recently seemingly imperious to modernity, now begin to show some of the same strains.

Presbyterians and the Mystique of Efficiency, 1870-1936, James H. Moorhead

[p. 281] Quote of John Higham: "Contrary to what the progressives supposed, technical organization is essentially undemocratic. Not equal rights, but the hierarchical articulation of differentiated functions is its working principle. The more complex the knowledge required for maintaining a system, the further the professional expert is from the common life and the more the centers of power are hidden from public view."

In the 1920's Presbyterians did not forsake the search for efficiency, but they directed it toward finding ways to 'cooperate effectively' within their own denominational structure. At the beginning of the decade the General Assembly had ten boards and four permanent committees. To streamline and coordinate these operations, the Assembly created in 1920, a Special Committee on the Reorganization and Consolidation of Boards and Agencies.... When the committee made its recommendations to the General Assembly, it proposed four boards to supervise the denomination's work.... It recommended that the work of other existing committees and agencies...be assigned to departments within the appropriate board....

Stone's recommendations aroused opposition. Those whose boards would be subsumed under larger agencies objected to the implicit demotion of their work....[p. 276] But the recurring phrases the Stone committee employed to justify its proposals—"simplicity, efficiency, and economy"—had such appeal that opposition was overrun at the 1922 Assembly after only five hours of debate, and reorganization won lopsided approval....The Assembly also charged the Stone Committee with the task of implementing the plan. Choosing to interpret its mandate broadly, the group appointed members of the reconstituted boards and decided to drop many veteran leaders deemed resistant to the new order. By the time the 1923 Assembly convened, the Stone Committee had thus completed an organizational coup....

In some instances theological conservatives resisted administrative centralization and liberal to moderate Presbyterians favored it.... J. Gresham Machen...despised what he saw as the collectivist tendencies of the age and attacked "the centralization of power which is going on in the modern Church."

[p. 279] The mystique of efficiency was perhaps disproportionate to its goals in a more fundamental sense. The ideal had arisen in the milieu of corporate business where efficiency could be measured by the volume of goods sold and profits earned. Yet churches traded in the intangibles of symbolic rewards less susceptible to precise computation.... Yet aside from periodic grumbling about the church being overrun by its machinery, few persons, if any, systematically explored the implications of this complaint. The failures to do so would have far-reaching consequences. With uncertainties and unresolved questions built into the search for an ill-defined efficiency, Presbyterians could never be sure whether they had completed the quest and thus returned again and again to the pursuit of an elusive goal. Institutional reorganization would become an endemic feature of Presbyterian life.

Curt Byers
Mechanicsburg, Pa.
To bring them together and make them one

by Samuel M. Brubaker

The words of our title are found in John 11:52. They are an editorial comment inserted by the author into his report of events which had occurred a half century (or possibly a quarter century) earlier.

That John was an eyewitness to the events reported in his gospel is well established. We also know that he was involved in the life of the early church, and that he suffered persecution and banishment for that involvement. From the vantage point of several decades' involvement and observation of the early Christian movement, he now offers an assessment of the purpose of God as expressed in the death of Jesus.

John is commenting in reference to a statement made by Caiaphas, the Jewish high priest. The Sanhedrin has been struggling to find a way to stop the progress of Jesus' influence. Months before, the word was out that the Jewish leaders were trying to kill Jesus (John 7). Whether the Sanhedrin had come to that decision seems uncertain, but John indicates that Jesus believed it (John 7:1). Now, however, the Sanhedrin is deliberating what to do after the raising of Lazarus from the dead. The miracle has greatly increased Jesus' followership. The Sanhedrin acknowledges that their efforts to thwart Jesus' movement have been unsuccessful. If we let this continue, "everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our place (temple) and our nation."

Why would the Romans care about Jewish religious matters? Was Jesus really a threat to Rome? Throughout his ministry he hardly incited folks with anti-Roman sentiment. But his teachings certainly did pose a challenge to the Jewish religious establishment. If his movement grew to sufficient strength, the Sanhedrin would lose control of life in the Roman province of Judea. They were the body responsible for local administration. If they lost control, they reasoned (perhaps rightly), the Roman governor might well make moves to establish some other control. Thus, the Sanhedrin perceived Jesus as a threat to their power, but they began to predict exaggerated national consequences of his movement, even reduced control of their own national affairs.

Into the middle of this deliberation, Caiaphas makes a statement: Don't be so dumb! By equivocating about whether to get Jesus killed, you are failing to realize that Jewish national prospects would be brighter if Jesus were eliminated, rather than to risk the ire of the Romans against Jewish life in Judea.

Decades later, John writes his gospel, and as he describes this setting and Caiaphas' statement, he notes editorially that the high priest said a whole lot more than he knew. God used, says John, this selfishly-motivated man to utter a profound statement of God's plan—that in the death of Jesus, there would be salvation not only of the well-being of the Jews, but of "the scattered children in God, to bring them together and make them one."

This declaration of John echoes the words of Jesus himself: "God so loved the world...that whosoever believes on him should not perish"; and "I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one"; and of St. Paul in his letter to the Ephesians: "For he himself is our peace, who has made the two (Jew and Gentile) one...His purpose was...to reconcile both of them to God through the cross"; and "His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known."

Yes, Caiaphas long ago said more than he knew. And it's been difficult even for the 20th century followers of Jesus to act as if we understand what the statement really means. Let's listen again as God, through the New Testament, reveals the mystery to us.

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

May 1998
Dear Paul,

Greetings to you from the culture on the move. Our highway system here has become very crowded with wheeled vehicles called automobiles and trucks. I know you can sympathize some because in your day the busy Roman road system was also crowded as people and products moved from one area to another.

But I have a question for you, Paul. Did your chariots have bumpers? And if so, were there any “bumper stickers” in your day?

It seems like every bumper around here has some kind of message stuck onto it. Even Christians have taken to pasting ideas onto the bumpers of their vehicles. Sometimes I am not sure whether it would honor God more to read all of them or to watch the road.

I saw one the other day that said, “Honk if you love Jesus.” We have horns on our wheeled vehicles that will produce a loud blast by just pushing a button. We call it “honking your horn.” If honking your horn really does mean that you love Jesus, then people in New York City must be close to the Lord.

Paul, the idea of honking for Jesus may be really cute, but I have to ask, “Has the great commission really come down to this?” Are there actually Christians today who believe they are being “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria” by putting bumper stickers on their cars and honking their horns?

Granted, having a bumper sticker that encourages horn honking may be an easy, pain-free way to get the name of Jesus in front of people. But is it being pain-free and easy what Jesus had in mind when he said, “All men will hate you because of me” and “...they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. This will result in your being witnesses to them” (Luke 21:17, 12-13)?

Is easy and pain-free witnessing what Peter had in mind when he told his readers, “...rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ...” (1 Pet 4:13)?

Is pain-free and easy witnessing what you had in mind when you told the Philippians, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him...” (Phil. 1:29)?

Too many Brethren in Christ today seem to believe that witnessing for Jesus is as simple and easy as honking your horn. They believe if they are just “good and decent people,” the Lord will be glorified and everyone will see their light. But you and I both know that is not enough.

Too many Brethren in Christ have never shared their personal testimony with anyone outside the church walls. Too many Brethren in Christ who pray regularly for world missions have never personally led another individual to Jesus Christ. If someone else doesn’t do it, many of their friends and neighbors will end up going to hell. Too many Brethren in Christ have never even bothered to learn a short “plan of salvation.” “Honk if you love Jesus” must seem like a sufficient witness to them.

Our General Secretary, Warren Hoffman, presented a plan of salvation as simple as “ABC” at the last General Conference. There are other plans that are easy to learn, like the Roman Road or the Bridge or the Four Spiritual Laws. They all work when the seeker’s heart is ready. But I suppose it is easier to just, “honk if you love Jesus.” That’s what many do.

With so many believers trying to love Jesus by merely “honking their horns,” it is not hard to see why the church growth rate is slow. Someone else has to do the hand-to-hand loving and the heart-to-heart witnessing for evangelism to become a reality. May God help some Brethren in Christ to do the work.

Oh, by the way Paul, what I didn’t tell you was that the guy driving the car with the “Honk if you love Jesus” bumper sticker had just cut me off in traffic in a very rude manner.

I guess those committed to the cause of honking for Jesus will have to toot their horns a little extra to compensate for the damage being done by that kind of witness. I just hope I have the courage and stamina to keep my horn going long enough.

Making a joyful noise for Jesus,
Onesimus
Problem solving empowers mission

by John A. Byers

The potential for a denomination or congregation to fulfill its mission is in direct relationship to its commitment to God, its vision, and its ability to manage conflict. Conflict is inevitable and provides an energy that benefits ministry when properly handled. An unhealthy response to conflict burns up that energy, thereby harming ministry.

Believers struggle with the idea of conflict in the church. Some of that struggle is caused by denial, but part of it is due to a misunderstanding of what conflict is. There does not need to be aggressive–physical behavior for there to be conflict. In fact, passive-aggressive behavior, where a person refuses to share their disagreement with an individual but goes around talking to others, is a greater danger. It may seem harmless, but it has destructive powers.

God inspired writers of Scripture to record conflict incidents. Adam and Eve began it (Genesis 3:12-13). Abraham and Lot kept it alive (Genesis 13:5-6). The Children of Israel practiced it (Exodus 15:24). And the New Testament church had its moments (Phil. 4:2). The church of the 1990s is no exception. The above passages provide a definition of conflict. It is when two or more people want to occupy the same space (Adam and Eve). It can occur over a scarcity of resources (Abraham and Lot). It also includes the need to have one’s own way (Euodia and Syntyche).

The Chinese character for “crisis” means both “danger” and “opportunity.” The character for danger means a face-to-face encounter with a powerful animal. The other character is a blueprint of an open universe. Likewise, every tension-filled issue has two possible outcomes. It depends first on how the conflict is viewed—as danger or opportunity, and on how it is managed—positively or negatively.

While most of us prefer to live in a conflict-free environment, that is not possible. Conflict is universal and our task is to manage it so it is constructive rather than avoid it and have it become destructive.

The church is no exception. Its very nature—being a body with many parts and differing gifts—makes it susceptible to stress and tension. Community life (brotherhood) is highly valued by the Brethren in Christ. It does, however, have dynamics that create opportunities for danger.

Communities are valued for their care and love. There is a connectedness that provides support and a commitment factor that is expressed in strong ownership. The common vision that motivated the beginnings of the denomination and every congregation is challenged by newness: new people and a changing culture. Our values are biblical, so preferences and convictions tend to get garbled.

There is another side to community. The dynamics of ownership and strong values move all groups through various stages of growth. These natural transitions seem like a threat to what has been. Consequently, listening diminishes and defending increases.

We are also impacted by the change in what society sees as the function of a community. Community has previously set the norm for beliefs and behavior. Now, according to Leadership Net Fax (Number 92, 2/28/98) influence of those beliefs and behaviors is determined by an evaluative dimension. Or in other words, people value community, but its degree of influence upon their lives is tied to the value a person receives by being part of that community, rather than by the security and support it offers.

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The church’s challenge is to make changes and transitions productive. It is necessary to own and see problems as opportunities to grow as persons and as congregations, otherwise they become competitive and result in win-lose situations that lead to flight and/or flight. The following comments assume we are prayerfully seeking God’s direction as part of the process.

Early detection of strong differences helps. There are moments when special attention is beneficial. Be alert to times of unresolved grief or when loss occurs. Study the make-up of groups at times of major decisions. Is it usually the same persons or group, or does it change according to the issue? Keep an eye out for reduced participation, especially during a pastoral transition.

Healthy management of conflict involves attitude and practicing good principles. Matthew 5:23 and Philippians 2:5 speak to the attitude factor. We are to focus on the mission not personal acclaim. We are to serve other members in a spirit of vulnerability (Galatians 6:1). Thus we offer a helping hand rather than become a “hindering hurdle.”

It also helps to practice good principles of relationships. In times of stress it is important to affirm the other(s) where we can. It is necessary to be certain we have the story straight and check to see if we are responding to truth or to assumptions. Be sure we understand what the other person really wants. Then if the stance is inappropriate, be hard on the problem but soft on the person(s). Seek to find a way the vision can be fulfilled—the mission accomplished. C. Douglas Lewis in his book Resolving Church Conflict says, “at the core of the Christian faith rests a confidence and trust in the future, even when there appears to be no visible hope, because ultimate hope lies...in God’s hands.”

The Brethren in Christ are fully committed to a life of godly obedience—to becoming “250 Growing, Discipling and Sending Congregations by A.D. 2000.” The journey involves transitions, leadership shifts, ministry adjustments, and more. There will be times of tension and problems to solve. If we view them as interventions of the Holy Spirit opening up new possibilities for growth, and if we see conflict as opportunity, it will energize us onward. We must so act in order to fulfill our mission.

John A. Byers is bishop of the Central Regional Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church.

May 1998
Readers Respond

No need for dialogue on this

I have some very grave concerns with the article by Pastor Robitaille in the February issue of the Evangelical Visitor on the subject of homosexuality.

First of all, I would not advise that the Brethren in Christ churches engage in discussion on this subject. This was the method used by the Mennonite Church during the seven years in which I pastored the local Mennonite Church in Grants Pass, Oregon. I did not do so in our congregation and strenuously resisted it in the Pacific Conference.

Jesus did not enter into discussion when he was tempted by the devil. Instead, Jesus simply said, “It is written,” or “again it is written.” This should be our stand as well.

I agree with Pastor Robitaille in his statement, “there are no biblical grounds on which to base an acceptance of an active homosexual lifestyle, regardless of the context in which it occurs.”

But, in the next sentence he questions, “why God allows some human desires that fall outside the parameters of acceptable expression.”

Doesn’t he believe in the fall of man? What does he mean when he states, “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.”

Are men to embrace looking on a woman and lusting in their hearts? He does provide some help in saying, “It is possible to work through desires that fall outside of the parameter of appropriate sexual expression.”

I would, however, point out that it is not in our working through these desires, but God working in the believer. I refer to Phil. 1:6, “He that hath begun a good work in you...”

We see this illustrated in the lives of believers in the wicked city of Corinth. The bold declaration of 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God which is followed by a list of sins including homosexuality.

The best part is found in verse 11, “And such were some of you. But you were washed...sanctified...justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (NKJV).

Recently, I went to my files and found that the Brethren/Mennonite Council of Gay Concerns has been sending me their publication, Dialogue, for 15 years. According to their official statement, one of their goals is “to foster dialogue between gay and nongay people in the churches.”

It is clear that they want to change the church instead of looking for change in their lives. They are seeking for acceptance of homosexuality as a gift of God which includes gay marriage. In one issue, Tony Campolo’s wife describes a gay marriage and says it moved her to tears to see the love these two men had for each other. In her disclaimer she stated that her husband does not agree with gay marriage, but he does think they should be in the church.

Glenn F. Diller
Grants Pass, Oregon

Dear Onesimus

Upon receiving the March 1998 issue of the Evangelical Visitor, I was moved to write to you. When I read your letter in the January 1998 issue my spirit was encouraged. Finally, someone was addressing the issue of direction of the denomination and hitting some touchy issues. I was hoping to read letters from others affirming your courage in writing what you did. While you do have a “shield of anonymity,” we will eventually discover who you are, and at that time I would like to personally thank you for your courage. Thank you for challenging us in our thinking.

I have been attending Brethren In Christ churches from birth and have been a member of the denomination for over 20 years. While I believe it is important to affirm that which makes us a denomination, we need to be mindful that not everyone is drawn to the Brethren in Christ Church because of our distinctives. Some may be. But others are not.

We need to ask ourselves what the bottom line is. What is the core value we hold as followers of Christ? Is it that we are “Brethren” or that we are “in Christ”? The membership covenant of the denomination does not demand people be in agreement with every doctrine of the church, but only that people seeking membership “consent to instruction in Bible doctrine” as taught in Brethren in Christ churches. So what is the core value—being “Brethren” or being “in Christ”? Or, are the two not mutually exclusive? (That may be another issue for another time.)

The Brethren in Christ have wrestled with change for years. But that wrestling has been fruitful because it has helped to bring us to where we are today. I am grateful to be a minister within the Brethren in Christ denomination, not because of our distinctives, while I do value them, but because of the desire of those in leadership—pastors and lay people—who have as their heart’s desire reaching those who are not experiencing the transforming power of Christ. Isn’t that the bottom line?

Dan Keefer
Retfon, Pa.

Re: Persecuted Christians

For two years now, some Christian leaders like Chuck Colson have been trying to raise the awareness of Christians about their suffering brothers and sisters. There is a day of prayer for persecuted Christians.

We are members of the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE). Yet I have never seen announcements or news relating to efforts of the NAE to support Christians suffering persecutions, nor have our bishops tried to raise our awareness. Some good books have been published, and I see no reviews of them either.

One million Christians and other religious minorities have been killed in the Sudan alone. The Islamic government there has engaged in a coordinated campaign of systematic murder, starvation, crucifixion, infanticide, and child enslavement. Are the Brethren in Christ so comfortable that they don’t care about the fact that more Christians have been killed in the past 10 years than the first 100 years of the church?

One book I recommend you read is Paul Marshall’s, Their Blood Cries Out (Word, 1997). It is a very comprehensive textbook of persecution.

Gene Madeira
Bogotá, Colombia
As the new Bethel Brethren in Christ worship center (pictured here) nears completion, its mission of unity, education, and cooperation promises to enhance the growth among our Haitian and Hispanic brethren even more. The greater Miami community will now be able to identify this location with the Brethren in Christ, and the promise of the gospel. This is an opportunity for Brethren in Christ everywhere to celebrate the partnership, passion, and promise of the churches being planted and strengthened in the greater Miami area.