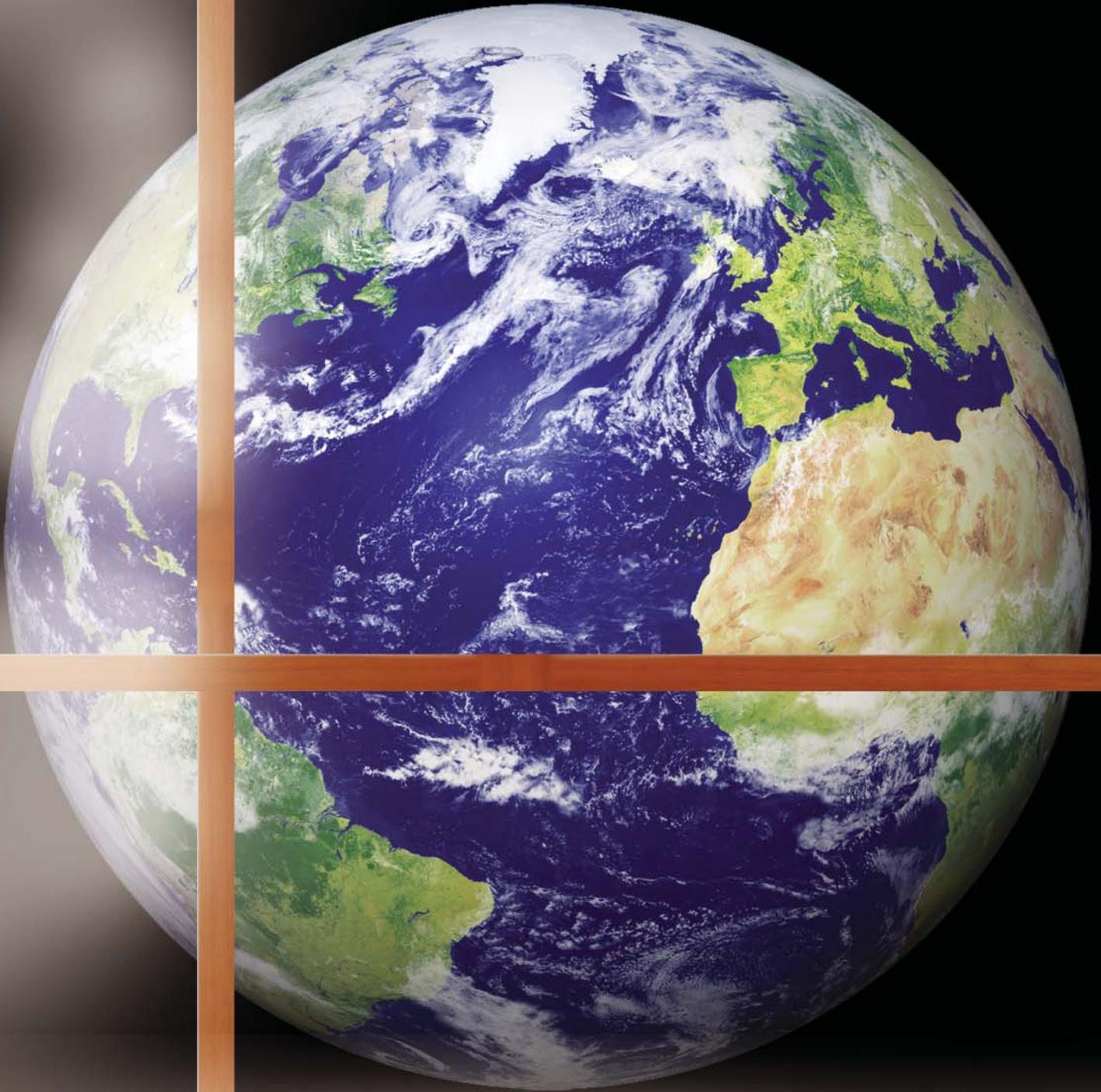


Wonder & Word

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BETHANY
Theological Seminary

Into the World

Wonder & Word

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The Mission of Wonder

RUTHANN K. JOHANSEN

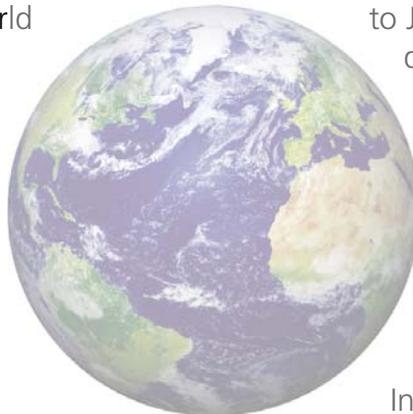
Frequently when traveling, I meet people along the way who ask about this denominational seminary of which I am a part. They listen attentively, even curiously, as I describe the core testimonies of the Church of the Brethren and the vision and educational philosophy Bethany Seminary practices, and then they often observe how timely these testimonies are in today's world. In ecumenical groups or among non-Brethren biblical and theological educators, people wonder how the Brethren, and especially a seminary, will assist the Christian community and the world to address deep human hungers for acceptance, integrity, mercy, justice, and peace. Human beings long for experiences of God rather than political and social ideologies that take the place of religion.

Such encounters lead us to reflect on the intersection of the political and religious conditions of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Germany and the minds and spirits of our Pietist and Anabaptist forebears. What was the role of wonder in the questions the small Schwarzenau group raised and the community they built? Their sense of wonder led to deep religious experience unmediated by priests or official clergy. What spiritual attributes prompted them to proclaim a priesthood of all believers and challenge social hierarchy practiced by the state church, to embrace equality by expressing reverence for men and women alike, to reject violence, to abandon wealth and hold property in common, or to break with some of the Radical Pietists and establish a visible

faith community? What turned the Schwarzenau movement toward scripture, through which they sought the mind of Christ together and which led them, as a community, to disciplines of simplicity, service, equality, and nonviolence, all arising from their love for God, for neighbors, and for enemies?

These practices of our forebears, who were not afraid to honor values that seemed peculiar and were misunderstood in their prevailing culture, were rooted in their radical discipleship to Jesus Christ and their capacity to question the status quo of existing political and religious allegiances. By wondering about another way of living in the existing order, they were transformed by the indwelling Holy Spirit and became transforming agents as they sought to live in the reign of God.

In the twenty-first century we have much to learn about wonder, which gives birth to vision and prepares us for mission. Wonder experienced as awe, reverence, curiosity, surprise, respect, or gratitude opens us to the rich diversity of all life forms. It permits us to connect with the dispossessed and outcast, to encounter but not be consumed by fear, to stand outside selfish political ideologies and economic priorities, and to accompany and serve with compassion those who suffer. Living with wonder as faithful presences of God's love transcends the sovereignty of the world's powers and invites us to live in the reign of God that is both in our midst and not yet.



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Ruthann Knechel Johansen is president of Bethany Theological Seminary.



Anabaptists, Pietists, and the Missional Church

DENISE KETTERING



When a small group in Schwarzenau began the Brethren movement in 1708, laws governed and restricted the practice of religion in their German homeland. Rulers stipulated which branch of Christianity—Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed—was the official religion of a region. Alternatives were limited, and believers dissatisfied with the status quo were forced to find modes of meeting that escaped the notice of authorities. Given these restrictions, the early Brethren faced the difficult task of determining how and when to spread their message. Yet we know that these Brethren spread their Anabaptist and Pietist interpretation of Christianity enthusiastically, despite the potential repercussions. Were early Brethren then a *missional* church? Can we claim that community models embraced by our Anabaptist and Pietist forebears embodied the missional church model advocated by many Christians today? While we must always be cautious about applying contemporary concepts to historical situations,

commonalities between the Anabaptists, Pietists, and missional church models certainly exist. Let's consider some elements of the missional church movement and how they were manifest in the historical roots of Anabaptism and Pietism, namely the priesthood of all believers, alternative church arrangements, and integrity and service.

Anabaptists and Pietists embraced a notion of the priesthood of all believers in ways that were unprecedented in the more formal church structures of the early modern period. Philipp Jakob Spener, the so-called Father of Pietism, in his *Pia Desideria*, called for more use of the spiritual priesthood of all believers in the Lutheran church. While careful to maintain that there was still a need for ordained clergy, he urged all Christians to become more actively involved in the ministry of the church, a notion that many Radical Pietists and Brethren embraced. Similarly, Anabaptists called on members to lead Bible study and gather groups together to embrace tasks of everyday ministry in their communities. The early Brethren drew strongly on these two streams in their own sense of ministerial leadership. This flexibility of community leadership, particularly as Brethren migrated westward, allowed the Brethren to more easily adapt to life on the frontier than other religious groups. While eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Brethren maintained various orders of ministry, they retained a sense that all members had responsibility for the basic tasks of maintaining and ministering to the community. Missional models of church call for more activity

among the laity rather than hiring additional staff to assume responsibility for church ministries. Returning to earlier Brethren models of ministry will give the laity greater responsibility for building up the Christian community and will utilize all the gifts of the priesthood of all believers.

Anabaptists and Pietists also urged the development of connections outside the traditional church building. Anabaptists frequently met in homes and other locales to avoid authorities. Likewise, Spener advocated the meeting of *conventicles* (i.e., assemblies for religious worship) in homes as opportunities for Christians to discuss sermons and scripture. He relocated religious matters by moving beyond the walls of the established Lutheran church. In doing so, he inspired many Radical Pietists to take conventicles even further. The early Brethren began as just such a conventicle, embracing the possibilities created by the Pietist movement to move beyond the traditional church. Understanding church buildings as a way to promote ministry can help congregations better understand when a building is advancing ministry and when it has become an albatross to the church's activity. Congregations can also follow the model of the Anabaptists and Pietists by moving the location of meeting and service into the community; utilizing other places of possibility in their communities for small groups, Bible study, mission activities, and service; and embracing the opportunity to speak about and portray the transformative power of Christ.

Brethren have typically displayed high standards of integrity and service. In the current culture where distrust, polemic, and apologia often reign and

skeptics expect hypocritical behavior among Christians, the Brethren have drawn strongly on their Anabaptist and Pietist roots, which advocated lives characterized by integrity and service to others. In the *Pia Desideria*, Spener urged Christians to live more godly lives in order to be an example to non-Christians and those who may have become too comfortable in their own patterns of belief. Anabaptist traditions have long served as exemplars of mutual aid and service to others. Meeting the needs of the suffering has long been a hallmark of the Brethren movement and remains an area where Brethren can contribute to the larger conversation about the missional church.

Anabaptists and Pietists valued, espoused, and enacted many of the same characteristics being called for by proponents of missional churches today. Brethren must consider how to best engage culture in order to embrace the possibilities that are at the root of the Brethren movement: an active priesthood of believers, the ability to be a mobile church, and the practices of integrity and service.



Denise Kettering is assistant professor of Brethren studies at Bethany Theological Seminary.



Meant to be Missional

TARA HORNBACKER

Missional church—perhaps you have heard this term and are curious as to how it is understood in the context of the Church of the Brethren. Does it fit us? How do we fit the missional church idea? Is this just the latest buzzword for the old missionary church? Questions are a good place to begin the conversation of the missional church. Are we meant to be missional?

What does the word *missional* mean? Missional does not mean "missionary" in the Western civilization sense of the word. It does not indicate establishing foreign missions or outposts of evangelism. The missional church is primarily concerned with a different kind of question and a way of seeing ourselves as the body of Christ. Even as Anabaptist-Pietist believers, we have been influenced by modernity and an institutional model of church. Most of our ecclesial questions in the last half of the twentieth century have begun with the church at the center of our questions even though we as a denomination have operated at the margins of Christendom. Mission and evangelism were defined as winning people for Jesus and bringing them into the church: the attractional model. The questions that are asked by the attractional model begin with the church rather than with God's reign among us. The questions that are asked are more about how to get people into the church and keep them. Our default setting has become more about bringing people in than sending us out as disciples.

This mindset became clear for me as a student reported this question asked in a local worship committee: "What does this church need?" It seems like a completely faithful question. It is a question I asked as a pastor. What does the church need? What does the church want? How can this church grow? Missional church questions begin in a different place.

Missional church questions would be: What does God desire? Where is God at work in this community? What is God's urging/yearning for this situation? If we believe the kingdom of God is at hand, what is ours to do? There is a difference between asking, "What will bring people in?" as compared with, "What is God calling us to be in the world?" There is a difference between thinking about what brings people *into* the church and what is God calling us *to be* in the community. Who is God calling us to serve? What is God already doing? How might we join in that kingdom/kingdom work—the *missio dei*?



In a recent lecture tour, Stuart Murray, Anabaptist missiologist from Britain, said, “We need to stop starting with the church.”¹ At first that seems counterintuitive, and yet, our spiritual ancestors did not start with the church. They began with scripture, read in community with the help of the Holy Spirit for the sake of the kingdom/kingdom of God.

Jesus talked about the kingdom of God. He invited people to enter or receive the kingdom. He announced that the kingdom² had come near, and to repent and believe in the good news. We are called to live into that good news by being a foretaste of all that is the kingdom of God, both now and not yet. This is where our understanding of our life as our witness has flourished. We Brethren have traditionally thought of an embodied, incarnational faith that is pragmatically manifest in service. We see a need and move toward it with Brethren Volunteer Service or Brethren Disaster Relief or any number of local acts of love in the name of Jesus. Our sense of evangelism and mission is naturally interwoven to our way of living our lives before God. Love in action has been our way of the now and not yet of the good news. The early Brethren believed in this radical discipleship and it was out of this whole life of seeking

the mind of Christ that our practices drew us into worshiping communities. Our practice of living our lives as kingdom people (or kin-dom people, adopted children of God, heirs of the promise) sets us apart from others. We are a people seeking to understand and participate in God’s mission (*missio dei*), continuing the work of Jesus.

How might your congregation discern next steps? There is no “one size fits all” in this missional vision of faithful following. Perhaps the same questions we ask in Ministry Formation at Bethany would guide your own discipleship in community.

- Where is God in all this?
- What is really going on here?
- What is mine/ours to do?

Imagine what your congregation could be if every action were to be lifted to God for clarity so that we might become more coherent with God’s purposes; if every day, believers saw their community with God’s eyes so we might understand what is going on; if every moment of our lives were lived to the glory of God and our neighbors’ good so that the good news of God’s love would be the work of our hands. Aren’t we meant to be missional?

¹ Stuart Murray at Somerset Church of the Brethren, November 16, 2010, author’s notes.

² Mark 1:15.

Tara Hornbacker is associate professor of ministry formation at Bethany Theological Seminary.



A Personal Story: Pursued and Called to Serve God's orchestration for my life in the missional church

JOHN N. NEFF



John, the consultant, leading a workshop.

“Oh God, I’m going to stand still and you move me!” Those were the words that God was longing to hear and I was not willing to give! But let me reflect on how those words finally came from the mouth of

a community and business leader who was not willing to surrender.

Over the past ten years, the emotions of apprehension, expectation, frustration, and anticipation have enveloped my heart, mind, and spirit. One who had been in total control of the direction of his life was to come full circle in releasing (uncomfortably) control of his life over to God! My innermost spirit was to surrender to extreme shifts of turbulence as forces of the world tried to absorb my time and energy, and allure me away from an intimate walk with the Savior.

Through this spiritual transformation, God has orchestrated my life from “it’s all about me” to “it’s completely about God.” You see, for many years, I was focused upon two things: career and

community. Everything I did, and every decision I made were all focused on the growth of Nielsen Builders, Inc., the construction firm I owned and managed.

Where was my relationship with God? Where was my attention for my spouse and family? I was obsessed with one thing: what was good for me was good for the family. Oh, how shallow and wrong I was!

There are key milestones that occurred in my spiritual journey that shed some light on my worldly perspective on life and how God moved to change it:

Palm Sunday 1964 – I was baptized into the Church of the Brethren. Notice it states “baptized into the church”, which is significant. I joined the church with friends, not as a true acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and baptism of the Holy Spirit.

1970-1996 – These were twenty-six years of turning from God and toward idols of power, prestige, and possessions. I was so focused on career and community (mayor, president and CEO) that faith and family were secondary in my life.

1997 – The prayers of a godly woman—my wife, Linda—were answered by God. I accepted a calling to become a leader in an interdenominational Bible study. I also experienced the passing of my sister to cancer and her encounter with angels the night before she died, a clear revelation of God’s presence.

2000 – I experienced an “encounter on the road to Damascus” at a revival as I responded to an invitation to surrender to Christ, feeling God’s hands push me forward and sensing baptism of the Holy Spirit.

2002 – God spoke audibly in worship, telling me to return to my home church to accept a call to teach and serve in leadership.

2003 – God placed a yearning on my heart to pursue a calling for ministry.

2004 – I was licensed to the set-apart ministry and began seminary and formal educational training.

2005 – Through prayer and discernment, I called on God to simplify my life by bringing order into its turbulent rhythm and rule. In a single day, I heard a call to pastor a church from my spiritual mentor, a close friend, and my district executive.

It was on that day that I went to my knees wondering how I could possibly do what God was asking of me. God made it clear that all of my experiences in leadership with the business and the community were preparation for this call.

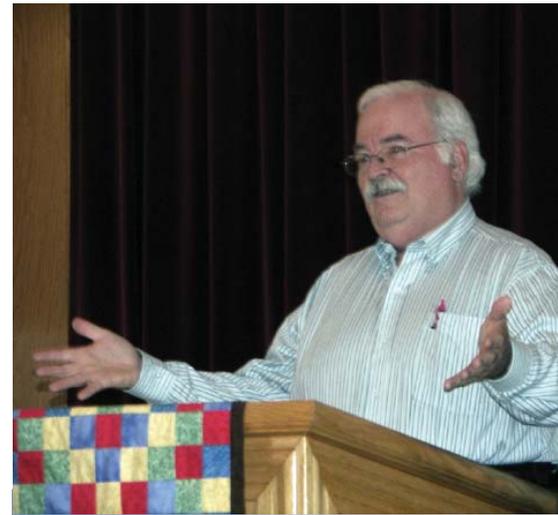
So how did I respond? “But Lord, I have invested so many years in fulfilling my vision, my goals, my work. How will it carry on?” God’s words were humbling: “John, everything you have accomplished was from me! Just surrender it; throw down your net and follow me!” There was a deafening silence until I said those uncomfortable words: “Oh God, I’m going to stand still and you move me!”

Oh, no! What had I just said? What was God planning for me? I was now focused solely upon God’s direction for my life. Many doors were opening for me to use my gifts in building God’s kingdom.

God brought a spiritual reawakening into my life, not unlike the story of the transformation of the apostle Paul. I had given up my former life and walked through the wilderness of experiencing an intense relationship with the risen Christ. Through the truth of God’s word, every day is a new encounter with the living God as I seek to walk in Jesus’s footsteps.

It is through these experiences that God wants the church to journey as we pursue and discover God’s very nature through intense encounters and revelations. The church is called to make disciples as persons discover their unique gifts and focus on becoming the hands and feet of Jesus to a world desperately in need of his love and peace. This is God’s orchestration of the missional church as we take Jesus public, get out into the streets, and focus on building God’s kingdom.

From the moment that I opened myself to the intimacy of being one with Jesus, he has molded and positioned me to serve as his vessel with an intense passion for rescuing those who do not know him. It is with this same level of intimacy that God desires to encounter the church. God is pursuing each of us as I was pursued so intensely. To God be the glory for great things he has done and will do in our lives—if we will let him!



*John, the pastor,
leading in worship.*

*John Neff is Pastor of the Grottoes, Virginia, Church of the Brethren
and a member of the Bethany Theological Seminary board of trustees.*



Back to the Future: Missional in the First Century

TOM ZUERCHER

The call to be missional in the church today represents a foundational paradigm shift. From the traditional focus of building up the ministries and facilities of the local congregation, *missional* is understood to be the building up of the kingdom of God in all settings where Christians live and work. It is an intentional engaging of an unbelieving culture.

To understand *missional* in the biblical context, the book of Acts provides a powerful narrative of the first-generation Christians. Commonly accepted as being authored by Luke in AD 63 as a sequel to his Gospel, Acts covers the time span of approximately thirty years from the day of Pentecost to Paul's imprisonment in Rome. Within its twenty-eight chapters, the exploits of bold Christian missionaries are authenticated with miraculous signs and effective proclamation.

Acts is an ancient writing with a contemporary relevance; it is missional without apology. Beyond the historical significance, it provides crucial understanding for today's task: being missional in the twenty-first century. Consider these three responses: motivation, implementation, and apprehension.

Motivation - Words commonly associated with *missional* in today's conversation are *renewal, reawakening, returning, and reviving*. In many church settings, being missional is motivated by a desire to recapture the passion and fire, to

refocus the priorities. But obviously, the early Christians were the initiates—they didn't need to "re" anything. Their motivation was simple. It was what Jesus told them to do: Go into the world and be my witnesses, first in Jerusalem, then in Judea, then to Samaria, and then to all the ends of the earth.

Motivation is critical because ill-conceived notions of new programs created within the fertile emotion of panic are destined to fail. If we are simply hoping to find more people to fill the pews and pad the offering total, we are doomed. That traditional paradigm of organizational stagnation is on life support and fading fast. The first-century Christians were missional because they couldn't help it. The experience of Jesus Christ in their lives was so radical, so life changing, so transformational, they couldn't help themselves. Anything less than that level of intensity in our current culture will be quickly exposed by a world that is already suspicious. To engage the world in the twenty-first century, we must be as "sold-out to Christ" as they were in the first century.

Implementation – Those first Christians took the gospel of Jesus Christ wherever they went, and the world reacted. On four different occasions, the scripture tells us that crowds came to them (Acts 2:6, Acts 3:11, Acts 13:44, and Acts 21:30). Even under house arrest in Rome, Paul continued to receive those that came to him (Acts 28:17-31). Crowds came because there was something

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to see and hear! Lame men walked, blind men could see, and a dead woman was restored to life! Miracles were the sign of holy authority, and it confirmed the message beyond dispute (Acts 4:14).

Being missional was not an exercise of social relief or cultural improvement. The first (and only) mention we have of any marketplace ministry is in 17:16-17, which describes Paul's preaching in Athens both at the synagogue and in the marketplace. And while we can certainly infer that Christians shared acts of kindness and mercy, that is not the scriptural focus. Instead, Peter, Barnabas, and Saul most often went to the synagogues and other places of prayer where they engaged whoever they could find, and they proclaimed the good news of the resurrected Christ. There are thirty references to preaching, proclaiming, speaking, teaching, and refuting. They were prepared to verbally engage anyone who would listen at any opportunity.

What did *missional* mean to the first-century church in Acts? They were so committed to Christ and the cause of the gospel that they were willing to sacrifice their desires for the good of others. They understood the facts about Jesus Christ, and they proclaimed him as supreme Lord with persuasion and conversion as their goal. They were Christians who understood the need to release their most capable individuals for engaging the world and reaching the lost. This was a church that specifically depended on the Holy Spirit and gave top priority to prayer and moral purity.

Apprehension - We cannot read the book of Acts without an awareness of the reckless boldness that characterizes the ministry of the first disciples. They had no apprehension. In spite



of the risks, Paul's vision motivates his journey, "concluding that God had called [him] to preach the gospel to them" (Acts 16:10). The panic of arrest never came. The fear of beatings never materialized. The instinct to preserve comfort never emerged. These Christians had a mission, and nothing would stand in their way.

But today, in most church settings, we are plagued with apprehension when we consider our mission in the world. We are often silenced by feelings of inadequacy, shackled by an unwillingness to be inconvenienced. Our experience of faith is so shallow that we fear being overwhelmed and defeated by enemy forces.

The book of Acts is an account of effective ministry and victorious boldness. It is the story of what God's people can do when their lives are totally under the control and authority of Jesus Christ. And if we are to be missional in the twenty-first century, then we must go back to the future and be Spirit led and Spirit driven as they were—fearless and bold.

Tom Zuercher is pastor of the Ashland Dickey Church of the Brethren, Ashland, Ohio.



The Missional Brethren

FRANCES TOWNSEND

People who study church leadership are currently excited about what is a new concept for them: the missional church. This means a congregation of people who are not merely passive recipients of blessings. They actively participate in worship, instead of attending to be entertained. Instead of thinking that they have put in their time serving God by attending worship on Sunday morning, they devote their lives to God, building up their communities through volunteer work and through the careers they choose.

Being missional is not a new concept. It was probably first stated in Genesis 12:1-3 when Abram was called by God. He was to have uncountable descendants and was to be given land, and most important, God said, "in you, all the families of the earth will be blessed." God's people have always had the mission to share God's blessings with all people far and wide, to share and not merely receive.

It has been my pleasure for the past seven years to serve the Onekama, Michigan, Church of the Brethren, which has been missional since before the word was coined. Worship usually involves several participants and at least a dozen could come up with a sermon if they needed to. Many folks are teachers, nurses, or medical workers; have other service professions; or are retired from such work. One person works in the field of conflict resolution. Along with others in the church, he or she is also deeply engaged in local community activity, from being firefighters to teaching parent education classes. A few years ago, local ballots listed nine people from this small

congregation standing ready to serve, from both major political parties.

How did the church raise up so many people who actively spread God's blessings in the community? I know a lot of the church's history since studying it last year for the congregation's centennial celebration, so I could hazard a guess or two. But for the real scoop, there is nothing like asking someone who was there. Ninety-six-year-old Mary Joseph came to Onekama in 1920. Not only is she the matriarch of the extended family to which many church members belong, but she and her husband David led out in mission. As retirees they did Brethren Volunteer Service work in Kentucky, and during several winters they volunteered in the Georgia office of Habitat for Humanity. This October, Mary was the oldest walker in the local CROP Hunger Walk.

I asked Mary why she and David chose to volunteer and why the others in the church are so active. She thought about it and then began to tell me the stories of missionaries. She understood that "missional" in the current usage does not equate with "missionary." But she had her reasons for telling the stories. One of her earliest memories is of the church in New Enterprise, Pennsylvania, where she was born. Stover Kulp had just been called there as pastor, and by 1922 he was in Nigeria. So one of her early childhood memories was about a missionary.

The founding pastor at Onekama, who served some fifty years, was Reverend J. Edson Ulery.

As a young man he wanted to be a missionary, but his lungs were too bad, and so he came to northern Michigan for his health. Rev. Ulery invited many missionaries to speak and show pictures at the church, and several people connected to missions lived in Onekama at different times. They all had a strong effect on the congregation.

The missionaries told of evangelistic efforts and also of the schools, hospitals, and other services they were involved in. They helped people, especially children, see the world in new ways. Creativity and imagination were sparked. So many things seemed possible. People who heard the stories were different from their neighbors in the surrounding community who had never traveled out of the county and did not know why anyone would want to. Folks in the church also learned to think of people in other places as real people with whom they had some connection.

Mary Joseph told me that when she was a teenager, she and the other youth started and ran afternoon Sunday schools in several rural schoolhouses in the neighborhood for children with no other church connections. That was just the beginning of living a life inspired by the missionaries.

Mary's stories reminded me of my own brush with the missionaries of the past. My first grade teacher was Zalma Weaver, E. Paul Weaver's wife. It was the only year she taught in that school, as she became too ill to continue working. She told us that she and her husband had been missionaries in Nigeria. I remember the vivid pictures that came to my mind as she spoke of teaching children there where school was held outdoors in the shade of a big tree. Every other missionary I encountered after that only intensified my feelings that we live in a big, interesting world and that a life dedicated

to building up the kingdom of God would be well spent.

The mission movement will never be what it was ninety years ago, for many reasons. But along with Mary Joseph, we may draw lessons from the past. She said that her children, now in their sixties and seventies, also received inspiration from National Youth Conference and other youth events. Younger generations have gone to Christian Citizenship Seminars. What all these things have in common is that connection of faith and imagination, of God and God's creative force unleashed in the believer. These are things that

make possible a congregation which does more than sit and seek God's blessings for themselves. These things form people who take the blessings out into to the world.



Frances is pastor of the Onekama, Michigan, Church of the Brethren and a 1996 MDiv graduate of Bethany Theological Seminary.

Incarnational Mission

A CONVERSATION WITH JABANI ADZIBIYA

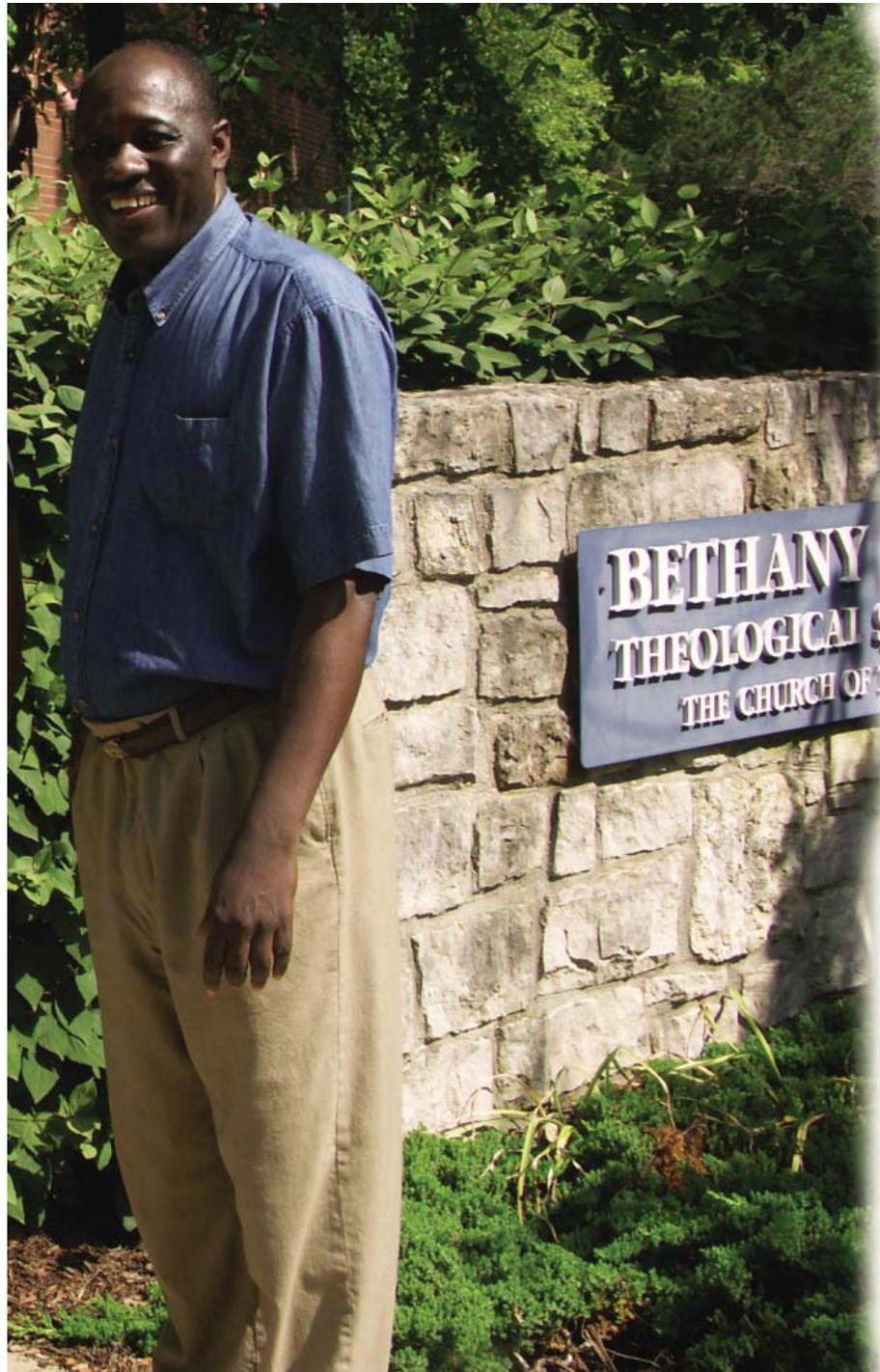
Jabani Adzibiya, a member of the Ekklesiyar Yan'uwu a Nigeria (EYN—the Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), is a senior master of arts student at Bethany. In this article, he shares his insights about the concept of missional church in the EYN context.

W&W: One of the concepts you've studied at Bethany is *missional church*. How do you understand missional church in the EYN context?

The EYN exists because Church of the Brethren members in the United States were willing to share the gospel with the Nigerian people. They sacrificed and suffered to do this. Their willingness resulted in our acceptance of the gospel. They shared from the heart, and we received the gospel in a way that changed our hearts and spirits.

W&W: The EYN has grown quickly and now has a larger membership than the Church of the Brethren in the United States. To what do you attribute this rapid growth?

The United States missionaries taught by example. Their faith was not just something they explained as a theory or concept, but it was lived out. Beginning with the first Nigerian Brethren and



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continuing today, EYN members strive to live out their faith. This demonstration of faith attracts others. Our commitment to peace makes us especially unique.

The missionaries referred to not only the first churches but every member as a "mission." Perhaps that helps to explain why we are passionate about sharing our faith. Expansion to other villages always begins at the member level. A church petitions our annual meeting to begin work in a new village. When these initiatives are approved, it is church members who begin the work there.

Everyone takes responsibility for bringing new members to Christ and the church. This often happens through interest groups, such as choirs, or fellowship groups, such as men's fellowship, women's fellowship, youth fellowship, and Gospel Teams. These fellowship groups are very strong and active. The entire church board helps with pastoral care. Every member is expected to attend worship regularly, and if someone is absent for a few weeks, someone from the church board will check on them. This is an expectation—not doing so means that the person would not feel cared for.

W&W: It has been said that the EYN—or perhaps more accurately, the Christian church in Nigeria—has been so successful that they may have exhausted their mission field. Do you agree or disagree with that statement? Why?

There are places in Nigeria that we have not reached, especially southern Nigeria. EYN Lagos has two autonomous churches with two local church branches. There also is potential to start a church in Abba. We also are considering branching out to other countries, such as Togo and Niger.

W&W: What have you learned at Bethany that will be useful when you return to Nigeria?

My master's thesis title is "Love for Enemy in Nigeria: A Contextual Reading of Matthew 5:43-48." In Nigeria we face complex religious and political power struggles. My studies have affirmed for me that the most powerful people are those who are able to forgive and not fight back and to love those who hate them. We can change the world with this Incarnational witness, one family and one person at a time.

W&W: Do you have any advice for your American Church of the Brethren sisters and brothers regarding becoming a more missional church?

There is a significant difference between EYN and the United States Church of the Brethren in both overall size and the size of the congregations. EYN has forty-four districts. My district has fourteen congregations but a total membership of about 9,000. I would encourage Church of the Brethren congregations to remember that even where two or three are gathered, God is in their midst. If everyone in the church is committed to reaching out to their neighbors, even a few can perform wonders!

Jabani Adzibiya is a master of arts student at Bethany Theological Seminary and district church council secretary in Suleja/Abuja, Nigeria.



Missional: A Sent People

RICHARD F. SHRECKHISE

Missional—it has a nice ring to it, doesn't it? Becoming missional is a healthy and needed direction for the church that can deepen our impact in a world crying out for hope. Becoming missional is a complex, church-changing journey. The Church of the Brethren is not a missional church. However, our theology and doctrines are in place: the priesthood of all believers; the value of community; our baptismal vow to follow the teachings and example of Jesus; and, our heart for service, justice, and peace as hallmarks of acting out our faith.

Through the Sustaining Pastoral Excellence Vital Pastor program, four pastors journeyed to New Zealand and Australia in May 2007. Our critical question was whether or not the emerging or missional church movement in those countries had any theological intersections with Anabaptist theology. All the doctrines, practices, and theology listed above turned out to be very real connections. These churches expressed a great heart for service. Every church we visited had a significant ministry with the poor. They spoke of peace and justice with great passion and practiced the priesthood of all believers to the point of what we would call a "free ministry" approach to leading the church.

The one thing that stood out was a sense of *sending*. In Sydney, Australia, there is a church called Small Boat, Big Sea. The worship we attended ended with a young woman telling the story of her day-to-day life, work, responsibilities, family, friendships, and free time. The church members responded by sharing where they saw

Jesus in her life, speaking a blessing to her. This was followed by a laying on of hands and act of sending her into the mission field of her life. The impact on her was visible through her tears. As I spoke with her afterward, she said, "It is so amazing to be sent to serve others by showing God's love through my life."

Missional church is seeing the mission right outside the doors of our church and our homes. It is about graciously befriending the culture around us rather than condemning it. The churches we visited saw God in the culture and felt sent to be a blessing in the culture. Their evangelism effort was simply to engage with the culture, live their faith, and point out God's presence.

We go to church to worship God, for fellowship, to study God's word, to grow in faith, and to be inspired. We attend church dinners, programs, meetings, small groups, etc., and end up not having time to spend with the poor, serve our neighbor, volunteer to clean up community parks, or attend community events. What if we felt sent out as much as we feel the need to be in church? What if we measured our hours of serving outside the church as diligently as we measure the attendance and offerings at our church services? Warning: This may involve cutting out some church programs in order to free us to be sent out to serve our local community.

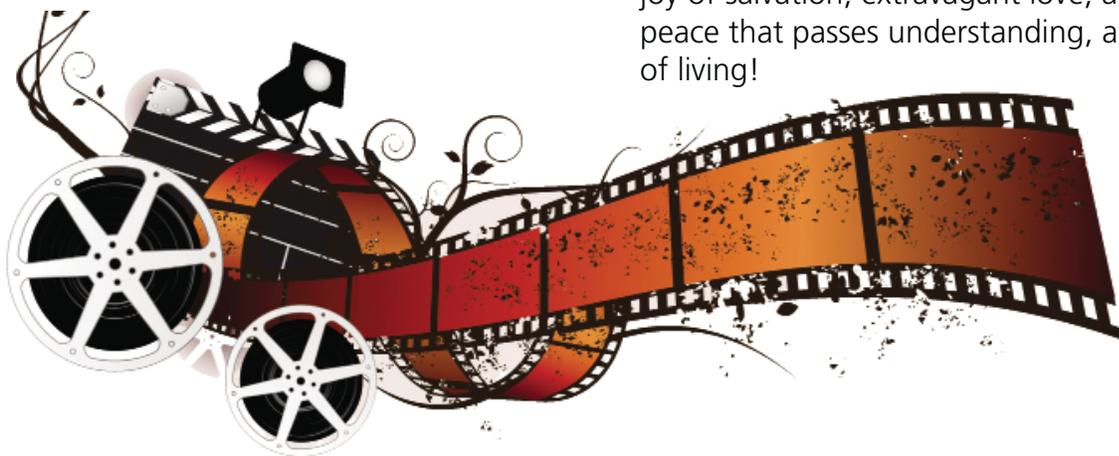
What if we invite some neighbors out for a night at the movies and back to our homes for conversation and late-night snacks? Movies are the most widespread art form in our culture. And

God is in those movies! God pays no attention to the sacred-secular split. It is a great way to practice seeing Christ in our culture.

I preach a sermon series twice a year called "God at the Movies." We use movie clips to illustrate the scriptures and the sermon. The goal is to open our eyes, to practice seeing God everywhere. God is present in Hollywood as much as in Lancaster County! Movies reveal more "God moments" than we might think. We simply need to pay attention and look for signs of grace. Watching movies with a biblical lens can be a way of training people to see Jesus in the culture.

Recently we used clips from *The Mighty*. We learned a meditative way of reading scriptures, we saw an illustration of what it means to be the body of Christ, we considered a way of being sent to live our faith on the streets, and we celebrated the joy of transformative friendship. The great thing is, we did not exhaust the scenes that we could have shown!

We are a sent people, sent into the world to show the wonder of God's grace, to demonstrate the love of Christ for all, to point out the transformative power of the Spirit. God is the one who gathers us in and breathes his Spirit into us, and sends us to our neighbors, the stranger, and to the ends of the earth with good news of the joy of salvation, extravagant love, amazing grace, peace that passes understanding, and a new way of living!



A brief listing of movies that have teachable God-moments in the story:

The Mighty
The Shawshank Redemption
Freedom Writers
Secondhand Lions
The Secret Life of Bees
Iron Jawed Angels
Akeela and the Bee

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Missional Ministry with Youth and Young Adults

CHRISTOPHER W. ZEPP

In his book, *They Like Jesus but Not the Church: Insights from Emerging Generations*, Dan Kimball names six common perceptions about the church that are often held by those outside the Christian “bubble.” In brief, those perceptions are:

1. The church is overly concerned with its institutional organization and political agendas.
2. The church is judgmental and negative.
3. The church is male dominated and oppresses women.
4. The church is homophobic.
5. The church is arrogant in its exclusive truth claims.
6. The church is plagued by fundamentalists and biblical literalists.

In more than nine years of focused ministry with youth and young adults, I have observed that these perceptions are also very frequently held by the young people within our congregations. In my more cynical moments, I confess that I often hold them myself. Like so many of our youth and young adults, I wrestle with a love-hate relationship with the church.

People often ask me why our youth and young adults are leaving the church. If they happened to catch me in one of those cynical moments, I might tell them that it’s because they haven’t found a good reason to stay. But in those moments when I am feeling positive and hopeful

in my own relationship to the church, I might tell them that these young people have not really left the church. They can’t leave the church because they are the church.



When we ask, “Why are young people no longer coming to church?” I believe we are asking the wrong question. Such questioning focuses our energy on the church as an end in itself, rather than as the means to an end. It’s the kind of question that leads to the cynical conclusion that the church only cares about its own survival. Instead, I believe we should be asking ourselves, “Have we prepared our youth to take and live the gospel wherever they go?” In other words, “Are we sending out mature Christian young adults into the world to incarnate the gospel wherever life leads them?”

Youth ministry is an inherently missional enterprise. As we journey with our young people into adulthood, our hope is that through our nurture, teaching, and example they will grow into a mature faith, ready to live and share their faith independently when we send them on beyond the youth ministry. My experience working with youth and young adults has suggested that far from being apathetic and uncommitted, young people in the church (and even around the margins of the church) are interested in and dedicated to many issues that reveal maturing faith. Many, if not most, have a passion for the environment and a deep concern for justice and understand both as primary to their faith.

Many are ready, willing, and eager to serve their communities and their fellow human beings. Many are intensely aware of the need for tolerance and mutual understanding among the religions of the world. Many are deeply thoughtful about social issues, ethical questions, the meaning and purpose of life, and the role of God and faith in all of these.

Thus while many lament our ever-shrinking membership rolls, note the conspicuous absence of young people in attendance at weekly worship services, and bemoan the failure of young adults to commit to regular patterns of monetary giving to the church, I see no reason to fear the future of the church. For I see emerging generations of our young people being sent from our youth ministries to live the gospel and be the church in a rapidly changing world. They may not be concerned about church membership, but they will be committed to following and staying connected to Christ. They may not be concerned about attendance at worship services, but they will see caring for the earth, serving the needy, and working for justice as acts of true worship. They may not be concerned about tithing, but they will seriously consider giving their whole lives to something they really believe in.

They may not know it, and we may not realize it. But our youth are being sent on a mission—a mission to reinvent and transform the church. They can and will incarnate the gospel in new and exciting ways in our changing world. They can and will change many of those negative perceptions about the church both for those outside and within the Christian bubble. And most important, they can and will continue to be the church wherever they go.

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Try Us!

LOWELL FLORY

It might come as a surprise to some that at its founding, Bethany's stated purpose was not as much to prepare pastors for the pulpit as to offer practical training for missionaries. Though the terms sound similar, missionary work as widely understood in the early twentieth century is not synonymous with notions of missional church of the twenty-first, and attempts to make them so would probably draw hasty critique from contemporary writers on missional church.

In a variety of ways, several writers have addressed missional church in this issue of *Wonder & Word*. They aren't unanimous on a simple definition of missional church, but neither are those who are writing books on the topic from contemporary publishers. It is with some degree of consistency, however, that perspectives on missional church in our day revolve around thinking of ministry differently, wondering about another way of living in the existing order, establishing visible faith communities that seek the mind of Christ through scripture, engaging and graciously befriending surrounding culture in new ways, asking what is God calling us to be in the community, and asking who is God calling us to serve. One recent book on the subject, Roxburgh and Boren's *Introducing the Missional Church*, says that missional church is about an alternative view for being the church. It is about entering a world influenced by a radically different imagination about how things work. A missional strategy is shaped through dialogue and engagement with the contexts and neighborhoods in which we live.



For the next chapter of its story, Bethany is charting a path that focuses on new ways of defining and doing ministry. Included in that objective is increased attention in our curriculum to missional church. While Bethany is itself not a church, it has occurred to us that our own process of reimagining ministries could and should include walking in partnership with churches as they imagine themselves into their own futures. It gives us an opportunity to dialog and engage the contexts and neighborhoods in which our partner churches live.

Have you thought about inviting Bethany faculty or staff to be at your church for a weekend seminar? Try us! Have you considered asking Bethany leadership to offer a district conference or area workshop on Bible or practical theology or lay leadership? Try us! Have you explored electronic connections—the possibility of bringing Bethany faculty to your church through a webcast? Now there's an idea! It might be a very rewarding journey for both of us to explore alternative imaginations for church together.

When Bethany was established on the south side of Chicago over a century ago, it was clear that its founders wanted to provide opportunity for engaging a variety of ministry contexts. Bethany still embraces that purpose. We welcome invitations from ministering communities for us to bring Bethany to you, to explore our mission together.

A FINAL WORD

Lowell Flory is executive director of institutional advancement for Bethany Theological Seminary.



Wonder & Word

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CREDITS - *Photography*

Inside front cover, images 1 and 2, and page 12: Marcia Shetler

Pages 2-3: members of Bethany's charter class

Page 9: from Bethany's Special Collections: Woodcut 46: "Day of Pentecost" (Acts 2) from *Hauspostill uber die Sontags und der fürnemesten Feste Evangelien durch das gantze Jar.*, Martin Luther, 1569

Pages 10-11: photo of Nigeria from Bethany photo archives

Page 11: A Church of the Brethren medical delegation works with earthquake survivors in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, in March 2010. Photo by Cheryl Brumbaugh-Cayford. (c) Church of the Brethren

Women and children in the area of Mirebalais, Haiti, carry water and supplies to help out with a Brethren Disaster Ministries-led project to rebuild homes in their community. The homes had been destroyed in a hurricane. In this mountainous region, much of the supplies for rebuilding including water for mixing cement, had to be carried in by hand. Photo by Jeff Boshart. (c) Church of the Brethren

Pages 6-17: Members of a Church of the Brethren workcamp celebrate on a beach in Oregon. They spent a week in the summer of 2009 helping out at Camp Myrtlewood. (c) Church of the Brethren

Our Mission

Bethany Theological Seminary equips spiritual and intellectual leaders with an Incarnational education for ministering, proclaiming, and living out God's *shalom* and Christ's peace in the church and the world.

Our Vision

Incarnational education at Bethany Theological education is:

- Grounded in Jesus Christ, as the Incarnation of God's reconciling love
- Founded on Scripture, read in community, guided by the Spirit, for discerning wisdom, ethics, and theology
- Rooted in distinctive Anabaptist and Pietist traditions of the Church of the Brethren
- Experienced in a curriculum that explores the comprehensive gospel of Christ's salvation using multiple communication formats
- Practiced in spiritual disciplines, intellectual inquiry, Christian discipleship, and cross-cultural engagements that bear fruit where God is working toward *shalom*
- Committed to preparation for ministry in a variety of models and settings: congregational life, pastoral leadership, theological education, each engaged locally and globally at the intersections of the church and the world
- Embodied in transformed and joyful service that integrates the values of simplicity, community, reconciliation, and care for creation.

Our Mission and Vision are enhanced by partnerships that make educational opportunities accessible in other locations: graduate courses through the Susquehanna Valley Ministry Center and nongraduate study and continuing education through the Brethren Academy for Ministerial Leadership and SVMC.

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