

News from the Brick

Nettle Creek Church of the Brethren
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Hagerstown, IN 47346

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Established 1820



February
2004

Eloise Beeson, Secretary
Sunday School: 9:00 a.m.
Worship: 10:00 a.m.



*Continuing the Work of Jesus.
Peacefully. Simply. Together.*

Mission Statement of Nettle Creek Church of the Brethren: *As the body of Christ, we are Christ-centered in our caring, sharing, and service.*

Carol's Comments

"Our God Box"

O taste and see that the Lord is good; happy are those who take refuge in him. (Psalm 34:8)

Have we confined God to a little box? Relegated God to a corner of our lives? We tend to come and visit God in that little box. Take God out. Converse awhile. Then put God right back to go about our business.

But perhaps our little box isn't big enough now. For God tends to burst out. God calls us to see there is more to the Christian life than a little box of our making. Maybe we have been obedient to prayer...church activities...scripture...service. Yet there is still an emptiness, because we may be trying to define God within our limited understanding. But...we can't contain God. God never is contained.

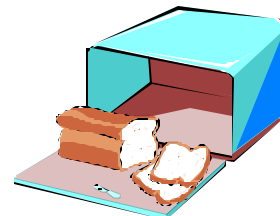
We want to label God saying, "My God is like this!" But the labels don't stick. We can't escape seeing God in tormented faces. In peaceful times. Frightening moments. Joyous occasions. Unexpected situations. We meet God everywhere we go. Everything we do reminds us of God when we pay attention.

When we confine God, we think God isn't present when we encounter a situation that doesn't fit our description of God. When we allow God to burst out of our self-made descriptions, we recognize God **is** like a friend we meet **everywhere** we go. All our wrestling we do is only an attempt to keep God restrained. Controlled in our infinite world to make sense...to get our way.

It may take struggle to "...grasp how wide and long, high and deep is the love that surpasses knowledge..." (Ephesians 3:19).

God is a God of open spaces. So let us walk with our Open-spaced God. It's time we admit God can't be suppressed into the confines of our imaginations. It's hard to experience comfort and relationship from a God-controlled box...a box that only gives momentary peace, joy, love, and forgiveness.

God's life in us is boundless. God is waiting. Waiting to be more than stuffed in a box. Open up the box and see. "O **taste and see** that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8)



Caring Like Jesus Study at White Branch Church of the Brethren Continues

The study *Caring Like Jesus: The Matthew 18 Project* co-authored by Daniel Ulrich and Jan Fairchild continues at White Branch Church of the Brethren, our sister church. Dan, a professor at Bethany Seminary, is leading the study, which begins each Sunday night at **7:00 p.m.**

Results of the Church Council Meeting Election January 25



Dave Reneau has been selected as our new Board Chair. Beverly Nicholson will take on the responsibility of the Christian Education Chair. Dave was the Christian Education Team Chair prior to his being voted in as Board Chair. Brad Bowman is our new Worship Chair. Council gave approval for the Carpet Committee to purchase carpet for the sanctuary. The purchase will be made with invested funds.

Women’s Study

A new Women’s Study began January 22 at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Ruth Stout. Pastor Carol is leading the study. *Soul Feast* by Marjorie J.Thompson is the book of study. The study is an invitation to the Christian spiritual life. Several from Nettle Creek heard the author speak at *Caregiving 2003* in Bridgewater, Virginia this past summer. Topics include: “Hunger and Thirst for the Spirit: The Spiritual Yearning of Our Time,” “Chewing the Bread and the Word: The Nature and Practice of Spiritual Reading,” Communication and Communion with God: Approaches to Prayer, “Gathered in the Spirit: Our Common Worship,” The Practice of Self-Emptying: Rediscovering the Fast,” “Of Conscience and Consciousness: Self-Examination, Confession, and Awareness, “Companions on the Journey: The Gift of Spiritual Direction,” “Entertaining Angels Unaware: The Spirit of Hospitality,” and “Putting it All Together: Developing a Rule of Life.” **All women are welcome to join us.** Contact Pastor Carol for further information.

Can Sunday School Be Exciting? Yes It Can!!

The **Faith Seekers Sunday School Class** will be doing a study of Rick Warren’s *The Purpose Driven Life* beginning **March 7** during the S.S. hour. Subjects of the study include: *What on earth am I here for? What is the purpose of my life? Why did God make me? and What am I supposed to be doing with my life?* Jodi Johnson will be leading the study, and we invite anyone who is interested to participate in this exciting study. **See Jodi Johnson or Dee Reneau by February 15 so materials can be ordered.**

Junior High and Senior High Sunday School Class

The classes have been combined with Julie Potter as the teacher. Come join in the class and learn as a group.

Lenten Lunches Begin February 25

At noon starting February 25 we will begin our Lenten lunches. There will be a light meal of soup and bread followed by a short meditation. It will last from 45 minutes to one hour. If you would like to volunteer to make the soup and/or provide the bread for a Wednesday lunch, please sign up in the East S.S. classroom. Invite a friend and come prepare your heart for Lent.

Engagement Congratulations!

Julie Wieseke and Alfredo Espinoza Tobias have announced their engagement to be married. A tentative date has been set for October 2004. Julie intends to go to Graduate school next year, as does Alfredo. We extend our congratulations to Julie and Alfredo.



Continuing to Pray for...

- ***Ted Hobbs** Janine Stout Dumitru Jane Briar Bob Klein
- Fred Dilling Shirley Root Carl & Phyllis DeVinney
- Care Centers: Estella Hilbert, LuFreda Bowman
- Homebound: Ruth Crull, Viola Nicholson



Giving For January

Average Weekly Offering needed to meet budget.....	\$1,513.56
Average Offering for December was.....	\$1,010.68
Jan. 4.....	\$ 1,959.48
Jan. 11.....	\$ 1,010.75
Jan. 18.....	\$ 789.50
Jan. 25.....	\$ 1,183.00
Average Weekly Offering for January.....	\$ 1,235.68
Global food Crisis--\$32.00, Women’s Fellowship--\$100.00	
Average Attendance for January.....	50



February Birthdays

- 1 Jane Flyback, Willis Murray
- 2 Cookie Stout
- 3 Mark Hilbert, Marvin Hilbert
- 5 Judy Heaton
- 7 Mark Wright
- 9 Kent Briar
- 11 Connie McMillan
- 13 Ward Stout
- 17 Daniel Stout
- 19 Jay Burroughs, Janet Conner
- 20 Perry Schmittler
- 21 Mary Werking
- 22 Jane Stone
- 23 Lucy Reed
- 25 Marilyn Petty
- 26 Ashlee Brandenbrug
- 27 Katherine Reneau



Looking For Another Way of Living?



Check out Brethren Volunteer Service. Share God's love through acts of service. Put your faith into action. There will be a **Special Unit for Older Adults**. Attend the **Older Adult Orientation April 26-May 7, 2004** at the Brethren Service Center, New Windsor, Maryland. The application **deadline is March 15**. Older adults need not commit to a term of service to attend the orientation. Check it out! www.brethrenvolunteerservice.org, a program of the Church of the Brethren General Board.

What Might It Mean to be a Living Peace Church?

This year's Annual Conference adopted a "Call for a Living Peace Church," brought to the conference by On Earth Peace and the General Board. In so doing, the church has challenged itself to go beyond being a historic peace church. It—we (On Earth Peace)—have challenged ourselves to build on our rich heritage and enliven our witness of nonresistance and reconciliation. What will that mean? **The gospel call to peace is personal and also corporate, spiritual and also political. The gospel call stands over and against economic violence as well as physical violence. It expects that we will overcome evil with good in our personal relationships as well as our global relationships. What will this mean for a 'living peace church'?**

Might it mean that in our congregations, we will consistently practice the Matthew 18 admonitions to speak directly to the one who has fallen short or offended us, and to be ready always to forgive? Might it mean that our children and youth will grow up knowing, because it is clear in their homes and congregations, that they are part of a community of faith that follows the Prince of Peace and does not live by the sword? What do you think it will mean?

Three simple beliefs:

The mission and program of On Earth Peace are based on three simple beliefs:

1. We believe that Jesus has a message for our world today, and that a part of that message is a call to refrain from violence and overcome evil with good.
2. We believe that the Church of the Brethren is called to live out that message, and to proclaim it in the world.
3. We believe that On Earth Peace has been given the responsibility of helping the church carry out the Gospel message.



In response to these fundamental beliefs that we brought the Call for a Living Peace Church to Annual Conference. Now that it has been adopted, what will this mean for the church?

- Taken from *On Earth Peace*, Fall 2003, Bob Gross

A Matter of Conscience: Draft Legislation in 2003 & 2004

We, as the Church of the Brethren, are known as an historic Peace Church. To help us understand and be informed about legislation, I have reprinted an excerpt from the *Witness to Washington*, January/February, 2004.



The threat of a military draft looms like a specter on the horizon. As members of an historic Peace Church, many Brethren remain concerned about forced conscription. Sadly, such fears are not unfounded, and the past year has seen an increased focus on this frightening subject. In January of 2003 – before the most recent invasion of Iraq – Representative Charles Rangel (D-NY, 15th) introduced a bill into Congress that would effectively reinstitute the military draft in the United States. Although Rep. Rangel made it clear that he did not necessarily support forced conscription per se, his motivation behind this effort was to show that the military – and specifically those fighting on the front lines – consisted of a disproportionate and unfair percentage of minorities. Rangel intended this new draft bill (**HR 163**) to be a sort of “wake-up call,” the theory behind it being that Congress would be less likely to commit the US to a costly war if THEIR sons and daughters faced the threat of conscription. Backed by Senator Ernest Hollings (D-SC) through a companion bill in the Senate (**S 89**), the potential for a military draft quickly reappeared as a point of serious concern in the public mind.

In recent weeks, concern over a potential draft has returned to the national conscience. Stating that the war in Iraq has unfairly affected those individuals voluntarily serving in the National Guard and Reserves, Rep. Rangel is again pushing for a military draft. Moreover, both **HR 163** and **S 89** – the two bills supporting a draft – are still viable and are currently being considered in committee. Specifically, they call for the induction of both male and female citizens, age 18 to 26, without exemption to those in college. With the US military stretched to capacity in both Afghanistan and Iraq, the threat of a draft is indeed a serious matter, and one that requires immediate attention.

With a profound and historic belief in peace, the Church of the Brethren takes the prospect of a draft with the utmost seriousness. It is a dangerous misconception to believe that forced conscription can be either a deterrent to war or a tool to increase diversity in the armed forces. A steady supply of troops would NOT be an obstacle to war, and past drafts have proven ineffective at creating a diverse military. In addition, neither bill allows adequate provisions for conscientious objectors, those individuals who cannot – through faith and/or good conscience – fight in the military. Currently, these bills only allow non-combatant status for CO's, meaning they would still have to actively serve in the armed forces. Civilian service would only be allowed through the direct action of the President, an especially difficult requirement. As a result, it is important to take action regarding this dangerous legislation. The draft is NOT unstoppable. We encourage you to consider YOUR conscience in this matter. Make your voice heard! Take action!

What does YOUR conscience say about war? Visit the Brethren Witness/Washington Office web page at www.brethren.org to learn more about being a conscientious objector. Consider the steps on the next page and make YOUR conscience known to the world!

Sign up to receive **ACTION-MAIL** by joining our **ACTION ALERT** List! Receive information about pressing issues and legislation needing your urgent response. **Sign Up** by **emailing us** at washington_office_gb@brethren.org (Subject: “Action Alert”) or by **calling us** at 1-800-785-3246! *Witness to Washington page 2*

www.brethren.org/genbd/WitnessWashOffice.html January/February 2004 **Save a tree! Receive the e-mail version of *Witness to Washington*.** The Brethren Witness/Washington Office is a program of the Church of the Brethren General Board. Work and positions are based on Church of the Brethren Annual Conference and General Board Statements and Resolutions. *Witness to Washington* is

Three Ways YOU Can Speak Out Against the Draft:

• **Contact your members of Congress!** Tell them that forced conscription WILL NOT prevent the US from going to war, nor will it foster equality in the ranks of the military. Ask them to **OPPOSE HR 163 and S 89**. Call the Capitol Switchboard at **1-800-839-5276** and ask to be connected to your member of Congress. If you do not know the name of your Senators or Representative, or would like their fax numbers, contact the Brethren Witness/Washington Office toll free at **1-800-785-3246**.



• **Get involved on your local draft board!** Service on draft boards lasts 20 years, and positions are currently becoming open. Many believe that the cause of the conscientious objector would be greatly aided by having like-minded individuals on local draft boards to help with reclassification. If you believe that it is vital for an individual to follow his or her conscience in terms of military service AND you would be willing to serve on a draft board, consider applying today. Go to **www.sss.gov/fslocal.htm** for more information.

• **Document your conscience!** Write down your pacifist beliefs and explain why you could NEVER take a life. Include dates and a detailed description of your convictions. Keeping records like this will be helpful in securing your status as a CO in case of a draft. And parents, talk to your children! You're never too young to consider what your conscience says about war. Our office has developed a packet of resources for those interested in exploring their development as a conscientious objector. Ask us to send you a free **Conscientious Objector Church Leader's Packet**.

According to the **1970 Annual Conference Statement on War**, "The Church of the Brethren feels constrained by Christ's teachings to lead its people to develop convictions against war. The church cannot concede to the state the authority to conscript citizens for military training or military service against their conscience. The church will seek to fulfill its prophetic role in this matter in two ways: by seeking to change political structures and by influencing individual members. The church will seek to use its influence to abolish or radically restructure the system which conscripts persons for military purposes. The church pledges its support and continuing fellowship to all of our draft age members who face conscription. We recognize that some feel obligated to render full or noncombative military service and we respect all who make such a decision. We commend to all of draft age, their parents, counselors, and fellow members, the alternative positions of (1) Alternative Service as conscientious objectors engaging in constructive civilian work, or (2) open, nonviolent noncooperation with the system of conscription."

-Bryan Hissong *Witness to Washington page 3* www.brethren.org/genbd/WitnessWashOffice.html
January/February 2004

A Little Humor



My grandmother started walking 5 miles a day when she was 60. She's 95 now and we don't know where she is! - unknown

You are getting old when you go duck hunting just to please the dogs. - unknown

Tact is keeping silent while two friends argue, all the while knowing they are both wrong.

- *Pulpit Helps*