

# IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY

*Fall 2008*



# THE VIEW FROM HERE

Religion.  
Politics.  
Money.  
Your child's (many) achievements.  
Grotesque medical maladies.

Probably the top five subjects not to discuss at a dinner party.

And if you ask me, it's no wonder that civics has been scored from the list of appropriate topics for polite public conversation. Only a few months ago, I was talking on the phone to a dear friend from childhood. She has a few family members and friends currently serving in the armed forces, so it didn't take long for the U.S.-led wars in Iraq and Afghanistan to come up . . . nor did it take long for feelings to get hurt. Apparently, we hold quite opposite perspectives on the issue, and I'm ashamed to say that by the end of the conversation, we were both so frustrated by the other's "ignorance" that it took a while for us to be able to talk to each other again.

It's unfortunate that we allow politics to turn our friends into enemies. Since that telephone conversation, I've given a lot of thought to why this happens, and I've come to conclude that the controversial political issues of today's world—immigration, fiscal policy, war, abortion, gun control, euthanasia, trade agreements—are not just political. They also speak to some of our most fundamental beliefs about human nature—and about faith. When we differ on issues so elemental to our worldviews, sparks can fly!

So why tackle the themes of faith and politics in this issue of *In Part*, especially when the potential for disagreement—and even offense—is so high?

Well, first, we refuse to head for the hills every time we face a complex or controversial matter. As brothers and sisters, let's face it: We don't agree on everything. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't listen to each other with humility and respect (a lesson I'm continually learning).

Secondly, the purpose of discussing civics in this issue is not to sermonize or woo you into sympathizing with a particular political party. Rather, as we face a deeply crucial time in the history of our nations, we want to examine the conflict that exists between the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God while also exploring how some in our family are responding to the call to live in both.

And as is often the case, it helps to look at where we Brethren in Christ have been in order to understand where we are, as well as to imagine where we should go next.

*Kristine*

Kristine N. Frey  
*Editor*

P.S. You can relax because we don't talk about money, the third most controversial conversation topic, in this issue. After all, we had to save something for the winter edition.

P.P.S. We on the BIC Communications team would love to hear your thoughts on *In Part* magazine. Please feel free to share your perspectives with us:

**EMAIL:** [inpart@bic-church.org](mailto:inpart@bic-church.org)

**MAIL:** 431 Grantham Road  
PO Box A  
Grantham PA 17027

## BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

**Moderator:** Warren L. Hoffman

**General Secretary:** Don McNiven

**Director of Congregational Relations:**  
Rebekah Burch Basinger

**Editorial Advisor:**  
Rebecca Ebersole Kasperek

**Editor:** Kristine N. Frey

**Art Director:** David Kasperek

**Graphic Designer:** Nate Bridi

431 Grantham Road, PO Box A  
Grantham, PA 17027-0901  
Telephone: (717) 697-2634  
Fax: (717) 697-7714

INPART.ORG (ISSN 1940-2945)

IN PART (ISSN 1940-2937) is published four times a year by the Brethren in Christ Church of North America. *In Part* invites readers into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ within the context of the shared life and ministry of the BIC Church. Printed by Evangel Press, Nappanee, Ind.

Send feedback, address changes, or subscription questions to [inpart@bic-church.org](mailto:inpart@bic-church.org).

**Postmaster:** Send changes of address to:

### IN PART

431 Grantham Road, PO Box A  
Grantham, PA 17027-0901

Periodical Postage Paid at Nappanee, IN  
46550-0166.

Printed in U.S.A.

Member of the Evangelical Press Association.

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *New International Version*.

Copyright © 2008. All rights reserved.

Printed on FSC-certified Domart Opaque-Plainfield paper. At least 25% of the paper fiber comes from well-managed forests independently certified according to the rules of the Forest Stewardship Council; 10% is recycled from post-consumer waste paper.

## FEATURES

### 6 Torn between two kingdoms

→ *Political involvement as followers of Christ*

BY DARRELL S. WINGER

### 10 Everyday politics, everyday faith

BY REBEKAH BASINGER AND KRISTINE FREY

## DEPARTMENTS

### 2 IN MOTION

→ *Not alone in Zimbabwe · Where faith and politics meet · Preaching from a paper pulpit*

### 4 PART OF THE WHOLE

→ *Practicing compassion*  
BY LOIS A. SAYLOR

### 5 TO OUR CORE

→ *A higher commitment*  
BY RONALD J. SIDER

### 14 VIBES

→ *Philanthrotainment*  
BY DEVIN THOMAS  
→ *Movie Review: Prince Caspian*  
BY TOM GROSH

### 16 TO THE POINT

→ *Reflecting on church & state*  
BY DANIEL LONGAMORE,  
FRED MILLER, & KEITH A. TYSON

### EVER WONDERED . . .

→ *What is a conscientious objector?*

### 17 PARTING WORDS

→ *"God bless America—and everyone else, for that matter"*  
BY PERRY ENGLE



## STAY CONNECTED THROUGH "FAMILY NEWS,"

a quarterly publication that chronicles the births, weddings, anniversaries, and deaths within the BIC family. Visit [BIC-CHURCH.ORG/FAMILY](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG/FAMILY) or call 717.697.2634 to subscribe or to submit news items.

## IN MOTION

STORIES OF THE BIC IN ACTION

## NOT ALONE IN ZIMBABWE

For months, news of Zimbabwe's floundering economy and rampant government-sponsored violence has flooded the major media outlets. Despite these reports, the country's Brethren in Christ Church—a thriving, 33,000-member Conference—has remained resolute, facing the challenges of daily life without “one iota of bitterness or hatred,” according to Steve Newcomer, a BICWM missionary.

Steve and his wife, Chris, recently returned to Zimbabwe—having served at Matopo Mission in Bulawayo throughout the 1980s and '90s—at the invitation of the Zimbabwean BIC Church. And as Steve notes, their arrival has been marked by much horror and heartbreak. “It is impossible to imagine that this country can continue under the present conditions,” Steve remarks. Electricity outages are frequent and extended, lasting up to two or three days at a time. Cell phone networks are so oversubscribed that calls are impossible to make. Basic necessities have disappeared from store shelves, leaving only unaffordable luxury items. Exponential inflation has denigrated the value of the Zimbabwean dollar, driving prices through the roof. Reacting to the devastation, Steve comments, “I thought that I had experienced everything Africa had to offer, until now.”

↓ Steve and Chris Newcomer



PHOTO: COURTESY OF BICWM

And yet, glimmers of hope peek through the heavy pall. “Wonderful people” from the local community have inspired Steve and Chris with their selflessness and grace: sacrificing meals so that their children can eat; working tirelessly despite exhaustion and lack of nutrients to repair the water pump used by the staff and students at the Ekupileni Bible Institute. “My faith insists that God remains in control,” Steve says. Speaking for his Zimbabwean sisters and brothers, he declares, “We know that we are not alone.”



**“The Quran and the Bible: On the Question of Peace” now on DVD!**

Listen, learn, and then be part of sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with one of the world's least-reached faith groups by watching the Christian-Muslim dialogue from General Conference 2008 on DVD!

To reserve your copy, visit [BIC-CHURCH.ORG](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG) or contact BIC Communications: [BICCOMM@BIC-CHURCH.ORG](mailto:BICCOMM@BIC-CHURCH.ORG) 717.697.2634, ext. 5436

## WHERE FAITH AND POLITICS MEET

“I don't see the Church as a place for political activism,” says Steve Smith, senior pastor of the Upland (Calif.) BIC Church. A lifelong member of the Brethren in Christ, Steve views the Church as operating outside the realm of government, “standing on biblical principle and yet communicating love and acceptance” in the face of complicated moral and political concerns.

But in January, Steve received a vision that stirred in him a sudden, deep concern for local government officials and the larger community of Upland. “God put in my mind a picture of this region as being broken-down,” he says. “The enemy could enter in at any time and wreak havoc.” Wanting to respond, Steve put out a call to the pastors of local Christian churches, encouraging them to “join together in unity—for the Church and for the city.” Now meeting on a monthly basis, this council—which bridges denominational and ethnic

↓ Steve Smith



boundaries (it's not uncommon for members to speak or pray in Spanish or another native tongue)—is working for spiritual renewal in Upland's congregations and in its city hall.

The formation of this group, Steve reports, has led to many blessings: to fellowship with area pastors and to relationships with leaders in local government who have “hearts for the Church.”

“I still don't think government is the answer to society's woes; Jesus is,” Steve affirms. “But I also believe we're called to pray for our leaders—to encourage them, to bless them. It's in that spirit that I join with other faith leaders to restore this city.”

**Walking “enemy” lines**

IN PART ONLINE at [INPART.ORG](http://INPART.ORG)

Joshua Grace, pastor of Circle of Hope (Philadelphia, Pa.), and Tim Hoover, an MCC graphic designer whose work has appeared in *In Part*, have both walked the paths trodden by those often labeled as enemies. Hear Joshua reflect on his peace walk from Amman, Jordan, to Baghdad, Iraq, and browse Tim's photo journal of his Migrant Trail trek along the U.S.–Mexico border at *In Part Online*.

PHOTO: TIM HOOPER (COURTESY OF MCC)

## IN MOTION

## PREACHING FROM A PAPER PULPIT

Within weeks of moving from Illinois to southwest Ohio in December 2007, Ken Abell, a Great Lakes Conference church planter working to open a church in the Beavercreek area, pitched the idea of an op-ed column to the editor of the local newspaper. The editor took him up on the offer. And so, before Ken had even preached a single sermon in his new community, thousands of subscribers to the *Xenia Daily Gazette* and the *Fairborn Daily Herald* were reading his messages.

Once a month, Ken wraps the good news in the form of a human-interest story, praying that God will work through his words. “The fact that the column is not on the religion or church page makes it better as an outreach vehicle. In the seed-planting business of ministry, being faithful is what matters,” he shares. “Only time will tell what God chooses to use for His purposes.”

Not that Ken is sitting still while he waits. There's creating the church's website, working out a promotional deal with the nearby bowling alley, and attending every community event that comes along. In mid-July, a team of Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) students participated in several prayer walks and distributed invitation cards and cold water outside a busy shopping center. Later in the summer, Ken and his team partnered with Child

Ken Abell hands a bottle of water to a Beavercreek community member at the Greene County Fair.



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEN ABELL



PHOTO: COURTESY OF KEN ABELL

↑ Ken and his church-planting team gave away 4,700 bottles of water and 1,001 invitations to the Beavercreek Community Church's opening service while at the week-long fair.

Evangelism to bring five-day clubs to the area. On August 27, a two-hour Prayer Rally was held in anticipation of the November 9 Launch Sunday for Beavercreek Community Church.

And as for the third week of every month, Ken can be found at his computer, tapping out God's message in yet another column.

## PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE MAN'S FAITH

### PRACTICING COMPASSION

by LOIS A. SAYLOR

There was a time when Patrick Cicero, a member of Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC Church, would not have given a profession in law any serious thought. But one semester abroad while a student at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) changed that.

"[My time in Ecuador] was the turning point in how I viewed the world," Patrick relates. "I began seeing clearly how political and corporate structures can be just as evil as individuals. In fact, I saw that it is often structural evil that oppresses the poor more forcefully than the individual."

Returning to the United States, Patrick found the same broken and oppressive systems of inequality taking advantage of the poor in his own country. "By hook or by crook, the poor are dragged into the legal system. They need advocates who know that system and can fight for them. I began to see that as a lawyer, I could make a great impact in the lives of the poor," he says.

After obtaining a law degree from Temple University (Philadelphia) and clerking for a federal judge, Patrick began his work at MidPenn Legal Services, a non-profit law firm serving low-income persons and victims of domestic violence in central Pennsylvania. Today, he serves as a staff attorney and the head of MidPenn's



her thousands more in interest over the life of the loan. "Most importantly," Patrick emphasizes, "my client and her kids were able to stay in their home."

Patrick recognizes that there are many ways within the legal profession to help the disadvantaged, but he

appreciates the "hands on" aspect of his work as a legal-aid attorney. He enjoys working directly with people—people who, he says, remind him of those with whom Jesus associated.

Consumer Unit. In this position, Patrick's cases range from providing advice to folks dealing with debt collectors to navigating complicated predatory-lending foreclosures. Typical of his cases is the story of one client who came into his office facing foreclosure on a mortgage financed by a subprime lender. Patrick reports that her mortgage was "laden with excessive fees" unjustified by her credit, including almost \$2,000 in kickbacks to the mortgage broker. These payments, he asserted in his defense case, violated federal and consumer protection laws.

After a protracted negotiation process, Patrick was successful in helping his client reach a new settlement with the lender, one that cancelled the junk fees and expenses and reduced the interest rate by almost three percentage points, saving



Lois A. Saylor attends Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC with her family and serves as assistant chair for the BIC Council for Women in Ministry and Leadership. She is also on the advisory committee for *Shalom!*, a quarterly BIC journal for the practice of reconciliation, and worked with Patrick to write a collection of vignettes for its Summer 2008 issue describing three different cases he's taken on and their outcomes. [BIC-CHURCH.ORG/CONNECT/PUBLICATIONS/SHALOM](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG/CONNECT/PUBLICATIONS/SHALOM)

## TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

### A HIGHER COMMITMENT

by RONALD J. SIDER

→ We value all human life and promote forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and nonviolent resolution of conflict.



Politics is dangerous. It certainly tempts us to all kinds of wrong things: to dishonesty, to corruption, to sacrificing our principles for immediate gain. For the Brethren in Christ Church, there's an enormous risk that our increasing political engagement will lead to a fundamental sell-out, a slow (or even rapid) abandonment of our central beliefs—perhaps especially our historic peace commitment. For hundreds of years, members of the Brethren in Christ Church have held to the belief that killing is not the way to resolve disputes in our world. As we become more engaged in politics, will we continue to hold to this and other distinct core values? Or will we exchange these beliefs for the sake of short-term political success?

At the center of Christian faith is the belief that the carpenter from Nazareth, the author of the Sermon on the Mount, is in fact true God as

well as true man. The Scriptures say that He is now King of Kings and Lord of Lords—that all authority on heaven and earth has been given to Him. That means that He must be Lord of every part of our lives—not just Lord of our family lives or our sexual lives, but also Lord of our economics, Lord of our wallet, and Lord of our politics. Of course, accepting Christ as the Lord of our politics raises a number of practical questions, the central and most important of which is this: How would Jesus want me to vote?

If we're going to be Christians in politics, Jesus must be Lord—not instant effectiveness, not what the world thinks is right. Such a decision requires a firm declaration: I will only be engaged in politics in ways that let me be faithful to what I believe Jesus taught His followers to do and say. For the Brethren in Christ,

such a declaration must include an allegiance to the core values of the denomination, including our peace position. If we truly value all human life and promote forgiveness, understanding, reconciliation, and nonviolent resolution of conflict, our commitment to the state cannot and must not overshadow our higher commitment to Christ.



Dr. Ronald J. Sider is professor of Theology, Holistic Ministry, and Public Policy and director of the Sider Center on Ministry and Public Policy at Palmer Theological Seminary (Wynnewood, Pa.) and President of Evangelicals for Social Action. Author of some of the most influential books and articles written about faith in the U.S., Ron holds dual membership in the BIC Church and Mennonite Church USA. He lives with his wife, Arbutus, in Philadelphia.

# Torn Between Two Kingdoms

*Political involvement as followers of Christ*

\*\*\*\*\*

BY DARRELL S. WINGER

As delegates to the 1990 General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church addressed a proposed statement on militarism, the heat of the debate very quickly rivaled the sweltering summer humidity outside the building. Opinions were lobbed across the conference floor on topics from military chaplaincy to the display of flags in church sanctuaries—all propelled by the deeper, more challenging question: What is the appropriate relationship between church and state?

“Displaying the flag in church is a form of idolatry,” one delegate asserted, adding: “Such action unequally yokes one kingdom to another. To whom do we give our allegiance?” Other delegates declared that it would take more than a ruling by the General Conference to remove this national symbol from their buildings.

A few weeks later, an Oklahoman member voiced her opinion in an impassioned letter to *The Evangelical Visitor*, arguing that “any negative mention of the flag in our statement on militarism is an affront to the country which guarantees our freedom to worship and practice our stand on non-resistance.”

It’s never been easy to live as citizens of two kingdoms, one of this earth and the other of God. Individual Christians, congregations, and denominations must struggle to find the “right” connection between the two, and the Brethren in Christ are no exception. In fact, for many years, our churchly ancestors dealt with the tension by simply avoiding almost all forms of civic engagement. However, we don’t have to look far these days to notice that when it comes to faith and political involvement, we Brethren in Christ are not the church of our spiritual great-grandparents.

## **Not of this world**

The classic Anabaptist “two kingdom” theology prevailed across the Brethren in Christ Church for most of our first two centuries in North America. Drawing upon their understanding of the teachings of the New Testament, early BIC leaders taught that followers of Jesus—as citizens of God’s kingdom—should be separate from many aspects of the kingdom of the world.

The 1780 Brethren in Christ Confession of Faith was drafted to reflect this view, stating that “we also learn from the doctrine of the Lord Jesus and His apostles that it is

forbidden to any member or follower of Jesus Christ to occupy authoritative offices, therefore it is and shall be forbidden to us.” So, while members of the church believed in being law-abiding, tax-paying citizens, they drew the line at serving on juries, swearing oaths, joining the military, voting in elections, or running for public office.

But as the world plunged into the First and then the Second World War, many members began to question the more traditional view of political disengagement. Was a staunchly separatist stance really valid in the face of such tyranny and horror? Spurred on by grassroots support, church leaders of the 1930s engaged with public officials to establish methods of alternative service. Their actions modeled how proactive engagement in the political realm could help the Church become a more powerful witness within society.

Two decades later, many members of U.S. congregations participated in a federal election for the first time, viewing the opportunity to vote for Dwight Eisenhower—the grandson of a Brethren in Christ pastor—with much enthusiasm. By 1959, General Conference minutes indicate that with one-third of the membership across the denomination casting the ballot, it was time to make voting a matter of personal conscience. And in 1986, the denomination’s *Articles of Faith and Doctrine* were amended to include the following statement:

“The church recognizes the place God ordains for government in society. As Christians, we pray for the state and those who are in authority. At the same time, we believe loyalty to Christ and the church, which is transnational, takes precedence over loyalty to the state. Selective involvement in the affairs of government [is] appropriate for believers if loyalty to Christ and the principles of His kingdom are carefully guarded, and if such participation will enhance one’s Christian witness and service. . . . We follow our Lord in being people of peace and reconciliation, called to suffer and not to fight.”

## **Navigating the boundary lines**

The trend toward engagement in the political process has accelerated in the 21st century. In fact, the 2006 “Church Member Profile” showed that Brethren in Christ members

actually exercise their voting rights in higher percentages than the general population, with 88 percent of U.S. and 86 percent of Canadian respondents reporting that they had voted in the most recent federal election.

In addition, individuals as well as congregations are involved in their communities—often in partnership with governmental or nonprofit organizations—to address issues such as poverty, affordable housing, and education. Some within our churches are comfortable participating in political events or protests, lobbying officials, signing petitions, officially joining political parties, or holding public office at various levels of government. Others prefer to work behind the scenes, exerting influence as government employees or community volunteers. And within their congregations, church leaders initiate opportunities to pray for our government officials and provide guidance on issues about which the government and church do not always agree, such as gambling, abortion, and same-sex marriage.

With increased involvement in local and national platforms have come new tensions as Brethren in Christ churches and individuals seek to navigate the boundary lines between kingdoms. Although as a denomination we don't prescribe how people ought to relate to the state, there are principles in Scripture that can give us direction as we journey through these borderlands.

*Stewards of a fallen world.* In the first three chapters of Genesis, we read of our calling to steward a good, but fallen, creation. We need to understand how this “fallen” reality plays out in all aspects of life—including politics, culture, power, government, and political processes—while also working faithfully to carry out our role as

stewards of this wonderful gift from God.

*Advocates of compassion.* As Christ's body on earth, the Church is called to pursue and model justice and righteousness. Passages like Isaiah 10:1–2, Amos 5, Zechariah 7:8–10, and James 1:27 show us that God's people are to tirelessly serve and seek justice for the poor and marginalized in our communities and world. We are to view the alien (refugees and immigrants) with compassion rather than fear (Leviticus 19:33–34). We are to both proclaim and actively live out the good news with our lives (Luke 4:18–21, James 2:14–26).

*Followers of a higher law.* With the coming of Jesus, the kingdom of God broke into the kingdom of the world in a new and dramatic way as Christ proclaimed that His kingdom had come (Matthew 4:17), that it would grow (Matthew 13:31–33), and that it was not from or of this world (John 18:36). Jesus' life demonstrated that the worldview, values, and ethics of God's kingdom are very different from those of this world (Matthew 5–7).

So, as followers of Christ and His kingdom, we are called to live differently from the norms set by the culture around us. We show our allegiance to God through the integrity of our word (Matthew 5:33–37), our responses to aggression and violence (Matthew 5:38–48; John 18:36), how we exercise power and authority (Matthew 20:22–28), and how we love our neighbors (Romans 13:10). Clearly, our main goal should not be the preservation of our own self-interests, but to be other-centered.

### Members of a faith community

We are to live as citizens of the kingdom of God while being, at the same time, citizens of particular

countries. We need the help of the Spirit, within the community of brothers and sisters, to discern what it means to owe our primary allegiance to Jesus while also accepting the rights and responsibilities of national citizenship (Acts 22), living an ethic of love and peace, and submitting to the role of government (Romans 12–13). We do all this affirming the function that the state has to play within society. Yet we live with the tension that, since our ultimate allegiance is to Christ, we are not first identified as citizens of any one nation. Our nation spans the globe, and there will be times, places, and situations in which we will not be able to engage nor even obey what authorities might be demanding (Acts 4:19, 5:29).

### Two kingdoms, one king

The Church dare not be just one more strident voice barking instructions on how “good Christians” should vote on a particular issue or which party to join; our communities don't need more examples of anger, pride, and polarization. Rather, as Christ's followers, we should model humility and a willingness to study, talk, and pray together as we seek to make a difference in the kingdom of this world. We must be compassionate and loving bridge-builders. As people with dual citizenship, we realize that we live and work in two different kingdoms. We also know that there is but One who is Lord and Ruler over all, and this should help ease the tension.



**Darrell Winger** is the community development pastor at The Meeting House (Oakville, ON). He has also served denominationally as bishop of the Canadian Conference and as general secretary of the BIC General Church in North America. Darrell and his wife, Anna, have three children, Sam, Abbie, and Jesse.

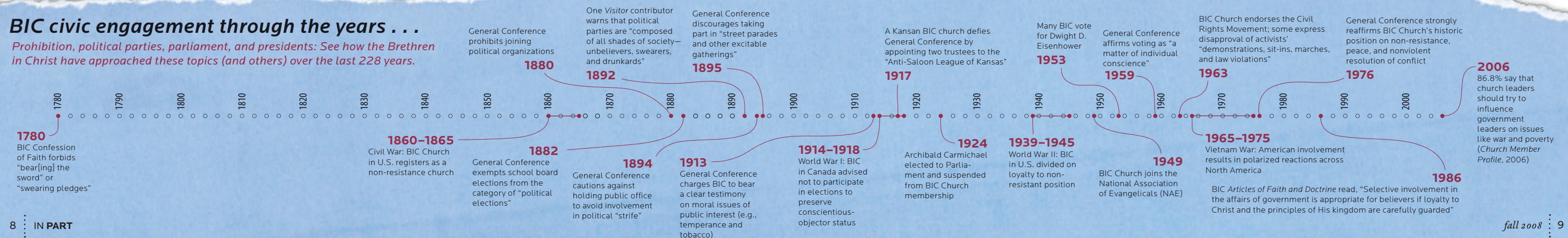
## Civil civics

Balancing grace and tenacity in a discussion about politics can be tricky. As we consider civic engagement with our hearts and minds focused on Christ, we must choose compassion and humility over stubbornness and callous egotism. Here are a few suggestions to help us on our way.

- Engage as a follower of Jesus.** There is danger in simply following the crowd (even the mainstream evangelical one). We must be prepared to dissent when any government's demands oppose Christ's commands.
- Approach political engagement objectively and humbly.** Admit that most issues are complicated and colored in shades of gray. Confess that no one party has the corner on truth. Seek out different sources of information. Listen with love to those who see things differently.
- Ask how civic engagement furthers God's redemptive and loving purposes for our world.** The motivating factors should not be “my self-interests” or “my fears,” but honoring God, loving our neighbor, and caring for those in need.
- Embrace the role of the Church as the community of Christ to influence society.** The ability of the Church to speak truth to those in power and change the world is tremendous!
- Pray for those in authority over you, regardless of the political party represented.**

## BIC civic engagement through the years . . .

Prohibition, political parties, parliament, and presidents: See how the Brethren in Christ have approached these topics (and others) over the last 228 years.



# EVERYDAY POLITICS,

by Rebekah Basinger  
and Kristine Frey

When people of faith ask God to expand their horizons—as did Jabez, an otherwise obscure Old Testament Israelite—the request can be answered in many different ways. For some, growth arises in the form of material assets, such as property or finances. For others, professional advancements, travel experiences, or special giftings mark God’s provision in their lives. But for Harold Gleason and his family at Bethany BIC Church (Thomas, Okla.), God’s blessings and opportunities for expansion have come from living out their faith through community service and civic engagement.

## ***Jabez cried out to the God of Israel***

Participation in community life came about naturally enough for Harold. “Being involved in your hometown is like being part of a church,” he explains. “You get involved in the things you’re passionate about.”

So it made sense for Harold—a business administration and journalism double-major—to accept the position of president and CEO of The Thomas Publishing Company and its subsidiary, *The Thomas Tribune*, right out of college in 1972. Shortly thereafter, he was introduced to the power of the press, especially as it played out in Thomas’ small-town setting, as political candidates from the region sought out the publication’s endorsement. Knowing that voters looked to the paper for help in sorting through the issues, Harold began carefully researching and profiling politicians in *The Tribune*. Through this process, he got to know the candidates, and they, him.

## ***Bless me and enlarge my territory***

In 1986, a late-night call from Bob Kerr, who was in the middle of his first campaign for a seat in the Oklahoma State Senate, opened a new door to Harold. “Kerr was always a gentleman, soft-spoken and reverent in his mannerisms, and respected by his colleagues,” says Harold. “He represented what I believe God wants public officials to be, so I agreed to help him in his campaign, thinking that I would be one in a group of advisors.”

However, Harold soon discovered that Kerr was inviting him to serve as his sole campaign manager with responsibility for deciding how the campaign would respond to issues, gear its advertising program, and reach out to constituents. Although flattered by the invitation, Harold had serious reservations—not about the rightness of aiding Kerr, but about his own abilities.

“This was a new experience,” he recalls. “Sure, I had been involved in politics previously, but in most instances, my contribution had been limited to endorsements of candidates or prospective legislation. The ‘buck’ had never stopped with me. This was a true test of faith for me. Like Jabez, I had asked for God to grow me, and now that the opportunity had come, I needed to exercise the faith and courage to follow Him through it.”

There were times in that first campaign when a win seemed unlikely and Harold’s organizational skills were

*Jabez cried out to the God of Israel, “Oh, that you would bless me and enlarge my territory! Let your hand be with me, and keep me from harm so that I will be free from pain.” And God granted his request. 1 CHRONICLES 4:10*

# EVERYDAY FAITH

PHOTO: Horizon Studios (Thomas, Okla.)

stretched beyond what he thought was possible. But as Harold prayed for the wisdom to know God's will and the strength to carry it through, he saw God do "miraculous things."

"The issues that were most important and the way to address them became easy to discern. Despite some desperation tactics by the opponent, we ran our campaign with honesty and respect, standing above the fray," he reports.

Bob Kerr won the race and became Senator Kerr, a man known for putting integrity before politics. Throughout his 20 years in office, he looked to Harold for guidance and assistance in all his campaigns.



Harold (right) and the late Senator Bob Kerr celebrate the successful completion of a community project in 2001.

**And keep me from harm**

Harold's political skills were put to the test once more in 1996 when some newly imposed federal regulations resulted in the closing of the local hospital. Not only was access to healthcare lost, but over 80 good jobs were snatched away—a devastating blow for the community of only 1,500.

Nominated to serve as chairman of the Thomas Economic Development Authority, Harold was assigned a daunting task: replace the lost jobs and establish stability for the future of the community. Again, Harold felt inadequate for the task, but as he began working with local officials, allowing God to shepherd his efforts, he found

the way to put together three different deals to create more than 200 new jobs for the community.

A few years later, Harold accepted an appointment on a three-person board charged with overseeing finances for the county government. Shortly after he took office, voters used the "No" vote on the ballot to strip away 50 percent of the income needed to fund the local government. But through his work as board chair, he led the campaign efforts that helped convince 80 percent of the voters to reinstate the funding.

"I could tell many stories of unexpected challenges that surfaced and how my faith was tested by them," Harold says.

He also acknowledges that such faith-stretching experiences within the civic realm often come with potential dangers. "Politics is people—both the good and the bad," he relates. "Even as we ask God to bless and open new territories up to us, we must not lose sight of Jabez's request to be protected from evil."

---

***"Like Jabez, I had asked for God to grow me, and now that the opportunity had come, I needed to exercise the faith and courage to follow Him through it."***

---

Because many politicians earn a reputation for corruption and greed, Harold has always made it a priority to align himself with people of faith and honesty. "Politics can get a bad image because of a few who abuse the opportunities God creates for them," he says. "There can be a negative element in politics, but if you align yourself with people who are morally and ethically upstanding, you won't get into that position."

And although wise choices have protected Harold from having to compromise his beliefs in his work, he does not hesitate to talk about times when he's needed the support of Bethany BIC in order to discern what to do in a situation. "You can get to a point when, as a human, you have no answers," he admits. "It's amazing, though, how God works those things out through prayers from the church for the community. I know I've asked my church for

prayer when a big decision was coming up, and I've just watched as God worked everything out!"

***So that I will be free from pain***

For all his achievements, Harold names "finding a wife who would tolerate all my involvements" as the greatest gift in his life. And with the birth of three daughters, each of whom are now grown and have followed their father's example of making service to the community a life priority, the blessings have continued to roll in.

The eldest, Rhonda, recently won her first term on the local school board, despite competition from



Harold reads a recent issue of The Thomas Tribune with his family. From left: Harold; Kendra; his wife, Donna; Misti; Rhonda

a formidable opponent. "Christians need to involve themselves in politics, as often this is the only voice they have in their communities," the mother of three explains. "I make sure that we always open our school board meetings with prayer, asking God for guidance in the decisions we make. I watched Dad work tirelessly and saw what good can come from hard work and effort which is blessed by the Lord." She adds, "My father is a great example of someone who earned the respect of his community by making decisions based on his faith."

Misti, the youngest, has also invested heavily into the local school district, leading an effort to rally community support behind a bond issue for a new middle

school building—a measure that had already been rejected twice.

"After watching how my father had improved the community by bringing in jobs for its members, I wanted to do the same," she shares. "So I helped come up with a plan to bring the middle school building, which was on a separate campus nine miles away, to the main campus where all the other public education facilities in our community were. Our efforts will help enrich the education of the students, who won't need to commute between the two campuses, and the new basketball gym will also help bring more money to the school."

For middle daughter Kendra, who served as a high school teacher and women's basketball coach for eight years, community participation has meant committing herself to the growth and development of *The Thomas Tribune*. "Being involved with my hometown is just a part of me," she says. "Now that I work with the newspaper, I use it to help give credit to the achievements of our youth. I hope to always be involved in some way!"

***And God granted his request***

When Harold stepped into his role with The Thomas Publishing Company, he would never have imagined that the territory entrusted to him would stretch so wide over the years as to include starting up a family-owned insurance agency, serving as president and CEO of W W Capital Corp (a farming equipment company), and beginning a ranching operation that raises, shows, and markets registered Hereford cattle on a national basis. But by making himself available to God and his community, Harold has been blessed . . . and has blessed others. And with each of his daughters continuing his legacy of helping to enrich the community, the boundaries continue to expand.

"God made each of us with a special talent," Harold often says. "He wants to take us to new levels in our faith. All we need to do is ask Him for the strength to act on that faith and then give Him the glory for any positives that result, remembering that we didn't accomplish anything on our own. As one of my favorite songs goes, 'If I gain anything, let it go to Calvary.'"



## PHILANTHROTAINMENT: THE BRANDING OF COMPASSION

*Does celebrity activism motivate the masses—or merely glamorize giving?*

by DEVIN THOMAS

**Bono wants to save the world—** and he wants you to help him. All you have to do is buy a (Product) Red Motorola cell phone. When you do, a portion of your money will go to the Global Fund, an account established in 2002 to increase resources for fighting AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. In fact, the musician and U2 frontman—working with a growing list of corporate partners-in-arms such as The Gap, American Express, Hallmark, and Emporio Armani—wants you to help save the world *so much* that over \$100 million dollars have been spent advertising the (Product) Red campaign. But since its launch, the initiative has netted a meager \$38 million in sales—much less than half of its advertising overhead—while encouraging a giving philosophy that promotes individual consumerism rather than collective compassion.

Of course, Bono is charitably active in other ways; he co-founded DATA (Debt, AIDS, Trade, Africa), a group focused on raising awareness about issues facing Africa. And he’s certainly not the first celebrity to wear an advocacy sandwich board and ring a fundraising bell: from George Clooney to Mia Farrow and Paris Hilton to Oprah, celebrity philanthropy has stepped into the mainstream spotlight. But can all this attention actually benefit non-profits, not to mention those in need?

Some instances show it can. Celebrities who endorse a cause or campaign bring to non-profits not only attention, but, in some cases, financial donations from eager fans. In 2005, for instance, actor Brad Pitt convinced television news reporter Diane Sawyer to cover his work in Africa with the ONE Campaign, an international crusade to end global AIDS and poverty. As a result, the group logged a 560% increase in online donations.<sup>1</sup> And after actress Natalie Portman mentioned her

activism on behalf of microfinance—an economic strategy that

provides low-income clients with access to credit—in a *Vogue* cover story, the United Nations’ Year of Microcredit program reported a flood of interest from “young influentials” wanting to support the cause.<sup>2</sup>

In much the same way, Christian charities rely on famous faces to promote their work. World Vision, a Christian humanitarian organization, employs a manager of “corporate partnerships and celebrity engagements,” and musician Steven Curtis Chapman serves as its spokesperson. Compassion International, a Christian child advocacy ministry, solicits musicians to join its “Independent Artist Network,” a group of Christian performers—including Rebecca

St. James, Amy Grant, and Michael W. Smith—who visibly support the organization’s work.

In the face of all this philanthrotainment, it’s easy to become jaded and cynical. Watching *People* magazine’s “Sexiest Man Alive” walk hand-in-hand with starving children may blind us to the true brutality and mercilessness of poverty. And hearing about how a pop star generously contributed millions to a cause—while still driving her top-of-the-line Mercedes and jet-setting from Milan to L.A.—can leave us with the false perception that giving is a glamorous endeavor requiring little to no sacrifice on our part. So how should we—as Christians called to “look after orphans and widows in their distress” (James 1:27)—respond?

The Bible reminds us that God often uses ordinary people to accomplish great deeds. David confronted Goliath while the “celebrity” warriors of his day cowered in their tents; Gideon and his tiny, under-resourced army overcame the might

of the Midianites; Elijah challenged the king’s prophets; a child offered his lunch to feed 5,000; a widow offered her mite when it was all she had to live on. The dominant narrative in both the Old and New Testament recounts faithful but lowly people who made a difference for God, and culminates in the greatest representation of modest servanthood: an almighty Savior who took on human flesh, who lived among the poor and the downtrodden, who dined with tax collectors and prostitutes. Reflecting on these acts of selfless giving strips away the glitz and glamour, laying bare the suffering of the world and calling all of us—celebrity or otherwise—to respond with humility, compassion, and love.

1. <http://tinyurl.com/5q8yqx>
2. <http://tinyurl.com/5kg3z4>



**Devin Thomas** returned as the Communications intern to the BIC General Church offices this summer after living in north Philadelphia for nine months.



**Reuben Graham** graduated from Messiah College in 2008 with a B.A. in studio art and concentrations in graphics and technology. REUBENGRAHAM.COM



**Tom Grosh** is a member of Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship’s Faculty Ministry. He, his wife, Theresa, and their four girls attend Elizabethtown (Pa.) BIC. WWW.GROSHLINK.NET.



**As *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, the second installment of movies based upon C. S. Lewis’ classic book series, heads to homes on DVD, here’s one viewer’s take on the film:**

In an effort to produce a financially successful franchise film, makers of *Prince Caspian* chose to depart from C. S. Lewis’ original storyline—yet some of the novel’s original magic remains.

The book begins and ends in “an empty, sleepy, country station”—a far cry from the film’s crowded, urban subway locale, where a coming-of-age Susan (Anna Popplewell) and an angry Peter (William Moseley) face “real world” issues. This altered beginning takes away the Pevensie children’s quiet drift into fantasy.

Similarly, violence through military conflict thrusts the film into territory better explored by films like *Lord of the Rings*. Why all the crossbows and catapults? Why the slaughter in the Telmarine courtyard? Is this still children’s fantasy?

Despite these disappointments, *Prince Caspian* possesses a wonder-filled core: Lucy (Georgie Henley) expresses genuine awe for and faith in the Christ-figure Aslan; splendid footage arouses a sense of wonder; and the violence often critiques itself. Yet those eager for a taste of true Narnia should consult Lewis’ original tale—an exploration of courage, the battle between good and evil, and the faith journey.

# TO THE POINT

## REFLECTING ON CHURCH & STATE

*What are appropriate expressions of patriotism in the Church? How does your church navigate the issues of displaying flags, recognizing national holidays, and praying for political leaders?*

**Keith A. Tyson**  
ASHLAND (Ohio) BIC

At Ashland (Ohio) BIC, we regularly pray for our national leaders and urge our people to be good citizens by participating in elections. We are very thankful to be part of the country in which we live and will make mention of that on national holidays (like Memorial Day and Independence Day), but that is the extent of it. Most of the leadership feels that overt expressions of patriotism are not appropriate for a place where God and God alone should be worshipped. The only time we allow flags in the sanctuary is during sermons or other messages on the need for worldwide evangelism. As pastor, I will not have a flag in the sanctuary for regular display as I feel it is idol worship.

→ TO TAKE PART IN THE CONVERSATION ON CIVIC ENGAGEMENT, GO TO [IN PART ONLINE AT INPART.ORG](http://INPART.ONLINE.ATINPART.ORG).

**Fred Miller**  
CUMBERLAND VALLEY BIC  
Dillsburg, Pa.

Above all, we must live as citizens of the kingdom of God. Jesus calls us to a righteousness that is clearly more love-based than justice-based, more global than nationalistic. So though we are grateful for our country, we must also critique and stand against its self-oriented values. We must be willing to be humble and face our nation's faults. And our "allegiance" must be to Jesus only—all other powers must ultimately bow to Him. We must promote love for all nations and stand as citizens of another world, even if that means imprisonment or death.

**Daniel Longamore**  
MARSH CREEK BIC  
Howard, Pa.

I agree that many churches go to extremes in the area of patriotism; our allegiance must always be first to the Lord, and we must avoid, at all costs, becoming nationalistic or politicking from the pulpit. However, an appropriate response for the Church includes recognizing those who have chosen to sacrificially give their time, careers, and maybe even their lives for our nation and the values for which it stands. Displaying a flag or celebrating a national holiday is very appropriate because it allows us to "render to Caesar" (Matthew 22:21) the recognition that a country deserves from those who call it home. Anabaptists tend to error by failing to recognize the benefits that a nation and its people have brought to the world as a whole—especially for Americans, who would not have the freedom to express who we are as Anabaptists if people had not served and died to ensure that freedom.

## EVER WONDERED . . .

*What is a conscientious objector?*

Since 1899, the term "conscientious objector" (CO) has referred to a person who—on moral, ethical, or religious grounds—refuses either to participate as a combatant in war or to support a combatant organization in any way. The Anabaptist peace position has led many members of the BIC Church to claim CO status during times of war.<sup>1</sup>

**2,000**

The number of male COs in the U.S. imprisoned during WWI for refusing to cooperate with the military

**1948**

The year BIC leader C. N. Hostetter, Jr., traveled to Washington, D.C., to advocate for alternative service options for COs during conscription

**\$2,222,802.70**

The wages donated to the Red Cross by Canadian COs during WWII<sup>2</sup>

**152**

The number of Civilian Public Service camps in the U.S. and Puerto Rico during WWII

1. wikipedia.org  
2. A. Toews, *Alternative Service in Canada during World War II*, p. 109.

# PARTING WORDS

## GOD BLESS AMERICA—AND EVERYONE ELSE, FOR THAT MATTER

by PERRY ENGLE

The pastor, it seemed, could hardly contain his excitement. "We have 'God Bless America' bumper stickers for each of you this morning! I was going to hand them out on Patriotism Sunday the weekend of July Fourth, but I forgot. There is a huge stack in the back, so make sure you pick some up after the worship service!"

I was on vacation in a church I'd never before attended and wasn't expecting to be given a "God Bless America" sticker after the closing benediction.

The phrase "God Bless America" has become so ubiquitous in American life, especially in evangelical circles, that I wasn't too surprised by what the stickers said. As the preferred closing line to almost every presidential speech I can remember, the phrase seems to have come to represent all that we would hope for America as a nation.

(As an aside, I found it curious that during my recent time in Canada, I didn't see one "God Bless Canada" sticker.

The only thing I could figure was that they might all be in French and I just couldn't read them.)

At first glance, "God Bless America" seems to be a prayer along the lines of: "Lord, we petition you to bless America so that it might be a blessing to others." It's similar to what

God speaks to Abram in Genesis 12:2 and 22:18 when He declares, "I will bless

you . . . and you will be a blessing . . . through your offspring, all nations on the earth will be blessed." I like the idea of praying for our nation to be blessed so that it might truly be a blessing to others—especially at election time.

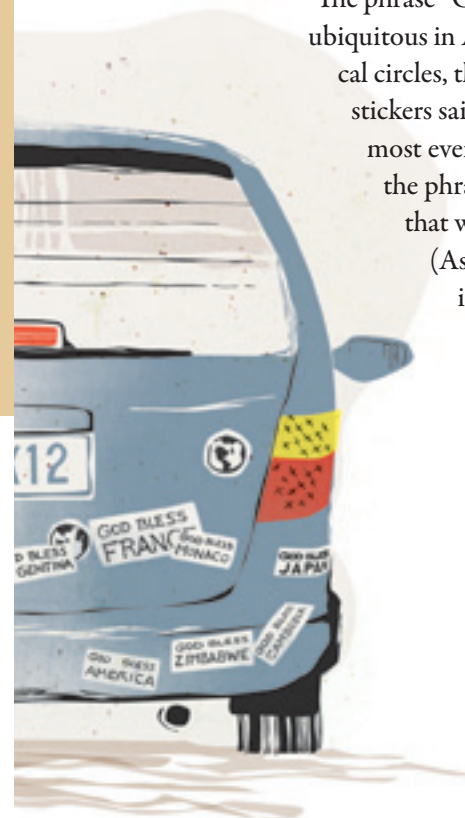
But there seem to be other meanings that have crept into the phrase as well, and these tend to make me more uneasy. In some circles, "God Bless America" seems to have come to mean "God Bless Our Way of Life." It also seems to hint at "God Bless Our Military"—and sometimes, "God Bless Our War Effort." I would feel much more comfortable with "God Bless Our Troops By Bringing Them All Home Safely Just As Soon As Possible," but I'm not sure all of that would fit on to one bumper sticker.

If "God Bless America" truly is a prayer for a needy nation, I'm wondering why we couldn't come up with a series of bumper stickers for other needy nations as well. One might read "God Bless Mexico" and another "God Bless Iraq." Actually, the phrase that might summarize it best is on a sticker that I still display in my office. It reads, "God Bless the Whole World—No Exceptions."

I thought about making up some "God Bless Zimbabwe" stickers. Of any nation I know, this embattled south-African country surely needs the Lord's blessing right now. I'm wondering if I FedEx-ed a stack to that church I attended on vacation, would the pastor hand some of them out after his next service.



If **Perry Engle's** car had a bumper sticker, it would read: "FORGET WORLD PEACE; VISUALIZE USING YOUR TURN SIGNAL." Perry is bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church. He and his wife, Marta, and three daughters, live in Ontario, Calif.



**For three decades**, thousands of high school students—from California to Pennsylvania and from Florida to Alberta—have deepened their relationships with Christ (and had massive amounts of fun!) at YouthQuest, the Brethren in Christ Youth Conference.

This year, the biennial event will take its theme “Unleashed: Live, Move, Speak” to the Hyatt Regency Crystal City Hotel in Washington, D.C., from December 27–30.

**Features . . .**

- Challenging messages brought by guest speakers Jay Smith, Bruxy Cavey, and Melri Wright
- Spirit-filled music from Freddie Colloca, Lost and Found, Manafest, Jeff Goring, and others
- Interactive seminars with BIC leaders from across North America
- Off-site trips into the city
- Late-night coffee houses and variety shows

*YQ2008 will be an unforgettable experience you won't want to miss!*

For more information on YQ08, visit [WWW.YQBIC.ORG](http://WWW.YQBIC.ORG).

**YOUTHQUEST** 08



**IN PART™**

431 Grantham Road  
PO Box A  
Grantham PA 17027