

IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

Fall 2009

Altogether



THE VIEW FROM HERE

A little over a year ago, my husband and I moved into our first house: a 19th-century row home with high ceilings, custom molding, wood floors, and, as our realtor put it, lots of character. (“Character,” we’ve since discovered, is just a euphemism for cracked plaster walls, a creepy unfinished basement, and uneven floors that make every chair a rocking chair.)

Despite these quirks, we’ve come to adore our house, and over the past months, we’ve filled it with a whole mishmash of odds and ends. No matter what we do, however, it seems like there is always *one more* lamp shade, shovel, or tea towel to purchase.

Thus, I was at the store buying bed linens for the guest room the other day. But as I whipped out my debit card to swipe for my purchase, it struck me: I don’t think twice when asked to put out \$50 for a new set of sheets, but I balk when I think about spending a mere \$1 a day on a starving child in Senegal or \$75 for a month’s worth of food for a family in Zimbabwe.

What does this say about how I value others? I found myself asking as I drove home.

Now, I know that when we Brethren in Christ say that we are committed to valuing all human life, we’re not just talking in terms of dollars and cents; we’re talking about the invaluable and miraculous gift of life in

others and in ourselves. This motivates us to reject physical acts that despoil the sanctity of life—such as war—and work against emotional, psychological, and spiritual violence in our daily lives.

But do we really think that the lives of unborn fetuses, convicted felons, starving orphans, crooked politicians, and terminally ill patients are equally “precious” and worth protecting as those of honest citizens, community volunteers, and healthy individuals? According to the BIC Core Value on pursuing peace, we should.

Affirming the value of *each and every* human life compels us to move beyond a one-dimensional definition of the concept to a richer, fuller, and more far-reaching understanding. As the articles in this issue illustrate, total fidelity to our commitment to peace calls us—all together—to be altogether pro-life.

Kristine
Kristine Frey
Editor

NEXT ISSUE:

Our Core Values say that we’re committed to “serving others at their point of need, following the example of Christ Jesus.” But what exactly was the example set by Jesus, and how can we follow it today without depriving others of their dignity and autonomy? *In Part* uncovers the truth about compassionate service in its winter 2009 issue.

Also, visit *INPARTOnline* at *INPART.org* to submit your questions for Warren Hoffman, moderator of the BIC Church in North America, and our next subject for “Part of the Whole.” We’ll be talking to Warren about his life, his work, and the direction of the church. This is your chance to probe the mind of a key church leader!



Now I know in part, then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. I Corinthians 13:12

BRETHERN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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STAY CONNECTED THROUGH “FAMILY NEWS,”

a quarterly publication that chronicles the births, weddings, anniversaries, and deaths within the BIC family in North America. Visit BIC-CHURCH.ORG/FAMILY or call 717.697.2634 to subscribe or to submit news items.



IN MOTION

A LABOR OF LOVE

Midwife opens birthing center, offers alternative atmosphere for delivery

by KIRSTEN GRUBB



While U.S. legislators debate over the best way to reform the nation's health-care system, Lori Luyten, of Gateway Community (Chino, Calif.), is making a difference, one baby at a time.

A licensed midwife, Lori had always dreamed of opening a birthing center that offered an affordable option for families looking to deliver in a personalized, less institutional setting than that provided by the local hospitals. "God planted this vision in my heart [when I was a child]," she says.

So, when her church's parsonage fell vacant, Lori approached her pastor, Lynn Thrush, and the church board with her idea. "Pastors and church leaders are often afraid to broach the subject of midwifery," she explains.

But such was not the case with the Gateway congregation, which worked with Lori to transform the old parsonage into The Oaks House, the community's first birthing center. "Pastor Thrush has a passion to use the talents within our church to reach out to the community," she says. "Without his support, this center wouldn't have come to reality."

Although open to the general public, The Oaks House focuses especially on seminary students, pastors, and missionaries. As the landlord, Gateway Community keeps the rent low, which allows Lori to keep costs at a minimum; a birth at The Oaks House is \$2,000 to \$3,000 less than other similar centers in southern California.

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- MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ZIMBABWE WITH "FAMILY TO FAMILY, VILLAGE TO VILLAGE"

The center opened in June 2007, and in that first year of operation, Lori delivered two to three babies a month. In 2008, the number had increased to five to six each month. To date, over 80 babies have been delivered at The Oaks House.

Recently, Lori and her staff have broadened their services to include nutrition classes for expectant mothers, postpartum support groups, Bible studies, mother-daughter courses about adolescence, and classes on natural family planning. As a result, the center has become a vital fixture in the neighborhood.

"The Oaks House is more than just a birth center," Lori notes. "It's a part of the community."

IN MOTION

FOOD FOR THE SOUL

2009 Bible Quiz Finals offer competition, growth

If "man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord," then the 62 quizzers who competed in the 2009 Bible Quizzing Finals are some of the best-fed people in the BIC Church. Tested on their knowledge of the Gospel of Luke, the eight qualifying teams gathered for the championship at Fairview Avenue BIC (Waynesboro, Pa.), June 26–28.

Though the competition was stiff, solid teamwork and exceptional mastery of the text enabled the quiz team from the Nappanee (Ind.) BIC Church to secure its second consecutive win, and its sixth overall victory, in the Finals. Nappanee team captain, Nathan Rosentrater, also received the Quizzers' Choice Award for his display of Christian character, excellence in quizzing, and leadership.

Following Nappanee were (in order of rank) the teams from Cross Roads BIC (Mount Joy, Pa.), Elizabethtown (Pa.) BIC, Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC, Fairview Ave. BIC (Waynesboro, Pa.), New Vision BIC (Pewaukee, Wis.), Grantham (Pa.) BIC, and Carlisle (Pa.) BIC.

"These quizzers contribute greatly to the life of the Church," affirms Warren Hoffman, moderator of the BIC Church in North America. "I look forward to seeing many of them take on leadership roles within the Church in the years to come."



↑ Members of the Mennonite World Conference (MWC) executive committee gather in prayer around incoming president Danisa Ndlovu, bishop of the BIC Church in Zimbabwe, and his wife, Treziah, at his installation service on July 14 at MWC's 2009 Global Assembly in Asunción, Paraguay. Following the prayer, Danisa addressed the 5,838 conference attendees—who represented Anabaptist communities from 60 different countries—saying, "I know the future is in God's hands. I pray we will continue to see God's will for the work of MWC." He later joined national leaders from other BIC Conferences—including Moderator Warren Hoffman and General Secretary Don McNiven, of the BIC Church in North America—in a meeting of the International Brethren in Christ Association (IBICA).

News Flash: A look at the numbers that make up the BIC Church

26 » Number of books in the BIC Historical Library and Archives (Grantham, Pa.) written about peace by BIC authors (Find the complete list at In Part Online at inpart.org.)

3,336 » Total miles (~5369 km) traversed by the eight teams competing in the 2009 Bible quizzing finals at Fairview Avenue BIC (Waynesboro, Pa.)

1935 » Year that the first Roxbury (Pa.) Holiness Camp Meeting was held (in an old dance hall)

\$165,604 » Total offering received for BIC World Missions at the 2009 Roxbury Holiness Camp Meeting

697 » Months of meals provided to Zimbabwean families through the BIC Family to Family, Village to Village initiative so far (To add your gifts to this fund, visit www.bic-church.org.)

Members in the Facebook group: 3 of 3 groups

- 258** I've attended Roxbury Holiness Camp
- 481** I heart Camp Kahquah
- 374** The Brethren in Christ Church is good times

PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE WOMAN'S FAITH

SOMETHING THE WORLD DOESN'T UNDERSTAND

One mother's commitment to life went beyond exceptions

by MEADOW PIEPHO

Denise Conway, of Revolution BIC Church (Salina, Kans.), used to believe that a pregnancy due to rape was the one exception to her pro-life stance on abortion. But when she found herself in that exact situation 11 years ago, she knew it wasn't the right decision for her.

Denise was 19 years old and living in Colorado when she was raped by a co-worker. After police arrested the man—who was found to be a carrier of HIV—Denise was relieved to find that she had not contracted the disease. However, she had become pregnant as a result of the attack.

"A lot of people, including my family and the chaplain where I worked, told me that they would understand if I had an abortion," she says. "At that point, my belief was that abortion was wrong, but I had thought that rape would be the one circumstance where it would be okay. But, when it came down to it, I never even considered it."

Many factors contributed to Denise's decision at that time, including a near-death experience she'd had only months before the incident and the fact that she had been told previously that pregnancy would be almost impossible for her to achieve.

Although abortion wasn't an option for Denise, she did seriously contemplate adoption.

"I really considered giving [my baby] up for adoption in the beginning because I didn't know if I could raise a

child that was conceived that way," she states. "However, by the time I was five months pregnant, I knew I loved the baby. I had this bond, and I knew that it was meant to be."

But Denise's choice didn't receive support from her family and friends. "Everyone else was telling me something different than what my heart was telling me," she recalls.

Nor did it help her in court. "The rest of the world doesn't understand how someone can keep a child conceived in a rape. For instance, it really hurt the legal proceedings that I kept the child," says Denise, adding that the perpetrator's lawyers used her decision to keep the baby as a major part of their defense in court.

In the end, the man was convicted of Denise's rape, as well as that of two other women, both of whom had tragically contracted HIV from their attacker.

Denise, who now lives and works at the Navajo BIC Mission (Farmington, N.M.), admits that she wasn't living for God at the time of the rape, but she gives Him the credit for who her daughter, MaHalee, is today.

"Looking back on it now and seeing how far God has brought us has made



↑ Despite the painful circumstances of her pregnancy, Denise Conway elected to keep her baby, a decision that her daughter, MaHalee, is grateful for today.

me realize that there was a plan in all of it and that God is in control," Denise shares. "I appreciate MaHalee more now than I ever have, and I see how much she has impacted people for Christ."

And what does MaHalee think of her mother's decision?

"I'm glad she didn't have an abortion because if she did, I wouldn't be able to spread the word of Christ today," she says.



Meadow Piepho spends her days as secretary of Revolution BIC (Salina, Kans.), where her husband, Jeff, is the head pastor. She also runs the church's HeBrews coffee bar, serves as a graphic designer, and leads the junior high youth group.

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

CALLED TO SUFFER AND NOT TO FIGHT

by HARRIET BICKSLER

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



I suspect that most people prefer peace over conflict. Although North Americans generally don't view violence and war as ideal, the majority see them as acceptable solutions. And the majority of the Christian Church basically agrees.

However, the Brethren in Christ belief in pursuing peace rather than war is more than 200 years old, with our current confession of faith reading, "Christ loved His enemies and He calls us as His disciples to love our enemies. We follow our Lord in being a people of peace and reconciliation, called to suffer and not to fight. . . [W]e reject all acts of violence which devalue human life."

This commitment to peace is rooted in our reading of the Bible. Although the Old Testament contains many stories of the Israelites going to battle under God's orders, it also includes His admonitions that they were not to trust in their own strength or in military might for their deliverance: "A king is not saved by the size of his army. . . But

the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him" (Ps. 33:16–18). Proverbs 25:21–22 promotes mercy toward enemies: "If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink." And the prophets foretold how Jesus, the "suffering servant," would absorb violence. They offered visions of a future in which nations would "beat their swords into plowshares" (Isa. 53, 2:3–4; Micah 4:1–4).

Because we Brethren in Christ place more emphasis on the life and teachings of Jesus as the culmination of God's revelation to His people, the example of Christ is central to our belief in pursuing peace. Before Jesus' birth, Zechariah talked about the one who would "guide our feet into the way of peace" (Luke 1:79). The angels, on the night of Jesus' birth, declared peace on earth and goodwill to all (Luke 2:14). Christ's most famous sermon blessed peacemakers, calling them God's children, and described a new way to respond to enemies (Matt. 5).

At the time of his arrest, Jesus didn't fight back and told Pilate that His disciples wouldn't either (John 18:36). The early Church continued this teaching, with Paul and Peter, in their letters, instructing their readers to "live at peace with everyone," to "overcome evil with good," and to "seek peace and pursue it" (Rom 12:17–21; 1 Pet. 2:21–23, 3:10–11).

Recognizing that God created each person in His image, we reject violence in all its forms. But we also reject the conclusion that peacemaking is passive. For us Brethren in Christ, peacemaking is active, as we take part in reconciliation and sacrificial service, pursue nonviolent responses to conflict, and work for justice for the poor and oppressed.

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Harriet Bickler is a communications consultant for the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services. A member of Grantham (Pa.) BIC Church, she has been the editor of *Shalom!* A Journal for the Practice of Reconciliation for 28 years.

Submit your questions for Warren Hoffman, moderator of the North American BIC Church and our next "Part of the Whole" subject, at inpart.org.



Altogether **PRO-LIFE:**

FROM FIRST STEPS TO FINAL BREATH

BY RONALD J. SIDER

The Brethren in Christ have believed from the very beginning of our history that Jesus our Lord taught His disciples not to kill. Therefore, in obedience to the one we confess to be true God as well as true man, we have understood the biblical call to be peacemakers to mean that we oppose all killing of human beings. This has motivated Brethren in Christ to say “no” to war, as well as to abortion. But in order to be consistently pro-life, we must recognize that there is a whole host of other issues in today’s world that pose an equal threat to human existence.

Due to space limitations, a thorough examination of each of these issues is not possible, so this article will consider four topics representative of the many others we should consider if we are to fully defend the sanctity of human life: poverty and starvation, capital punishment, smoking, and abortion.

WHEN THE CUPBOARD IS BARE

According to UNICEF ChildInfo, in 2007, 9.2 million children born alive across the world died before their fifth birthday. An overwhelming majority of these children lived in developing countries and died of diseases that could easily have been treated. Malnutrition, for instance, contributed to over one-third of the deaths. In that same year, UNAIDS reported that over 5,700 people die of AIDS every day, mostly because they cannot afford the effective, relatively inexpensive drugs now available that could preserve their lives. These deaths are directly related to the fact that about 1.4 billion people in the world are so poor they must struggle to survive on \$1.25 a day, according to a 2005 report from The World Bank. Millions of people die unnecessarily every year.

Are not these starving children in developing nations and these suffering AIDS victims created in the image of God? How can we, as Christians, turn a blind eye to the tragedy of these deaths? If we start with the biblical principle that every human being possesses inestimable worth and dignity, then we must vigorously work to reduce and end death by starvation and diseases that we now know how to prevent. By supporting effective private programs and wise government activities to reduce global starvation, malnutrition, and preventable disease, we can live out our respect for the sanctity of human life.

EYE FOR AN EYE?

Is it really wise and moral to kill people to show that killing people is immoral?

Many Christians think the Bible has a clear answer. After all, Genesis 9:6 says: “Whoever sheds human blood, by human beings shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made humankind”; and a number of Old Testament laws call for death for certain evil acts (Deut. 17:2–7; 19:15–21). There is no question that the Old Testament prescribed capital punishment.

Before we quickly assume that Christians today should support capital punishment, however, we need to consider several things.

First, it is most intriguing that in the case of the first murder, God Himself punished the murderer—but did not execute him. In fact, God placed a special mark on Cain, precisely so that other people would not kill Cain (Gen. 4:9–16).

Second, we have a clear case in the New Testament of Jesus rejecting capital punishment in a situation where the Old Testament law explicitly called for it. John 8:3–11 tells the story of a woman caught in adultery. The religious leaders bring her to Jesus and remind Him that the Old Testament ordered execution for such a sin (cf. Lev. 20:10; Deut 22:22).

“Now what do you say?” they ask Jesus. But instead of calling for her death, as the law prescribed, Jesus says, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” After the guilty accusers slink away one after another, Jesus tells the woman that He does not condemn her and gently instructs her to sin no more.

Most strikingly, Jesus again set the law aside in the case of the central principle of Old Testament jurisprudence: “You have heard that it was said, ‘Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth’ [cf. Deut. 19:21]. But I tell you do not resist an evil person” (Matt. 5:38–39). In fact, Jesus taught that His followers must love their enemies (Matt. 5:43–44).

For the first three centuries, every Christian writer who discussed killing said that Jesus intended to prohibit all killing. But whether or not the Early Church understood Jesus properly, it is perfectly clear that in the one case in which Jesus was explicitly called upon to affirm the Old Testament’s call for capital punishment, He refused.

Human experience presents one other set of problems with capital punishment: The legal system has sometimes made mistakes and executed innocent people. Further, poor people and minorities who cannot afford to hire their own legal defense face the death penalty in far higher percentages relative to population than others. According to the 2009 Death Row USA report from the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, minorities in the U.S. have accounted for a “disproportionate” 43 percent of total executions since 1976, and 55.22 percent of death row inmates today are minorities.

There are some people who have done evil things and pose such an ongoing danger to society that we rightly imprison them for the rest of their lives. But biblical faith tells us that God continues to love even the worst sinners, for they continue to bear the divine image as long as they live.

NO IFS, ANDS, OR BUTTS

Smoking kills an estimated 438,000 U.S. Americans and 45,000 Canadians every year. Around the world, the death toll from smoking rises to 5 million each year—that’s one in every 10 adult deaths, according to the World Health Organization. If current trends continue, by 2030, that number will increase to 8 million a year, with 80 percent of those deaths occurring in the developing world.

Additionally, the social costs of smoking are enormous. Lung cancer snatches fathers and mothers away prematurely. Children exposed to second-hand smoke are at an increased risk for a whole host of health conditions and diseases. The American Lung Association estimated that in 2004, smoking cost the nation \$97 billion in lost productivity and \$96 billion in direct healthcare expenditures. In Canada, about 7 percent of the national healthcare bill in 2007 was attributable to smoking. Given the devastation

caused by smoking tobacco, Christians must insist that the sanctity of human life applies to everyone, including those seduced by clever cigarette advertising. Christians must work for effective laws that prevent tobacco advertisements, forbid smoking in most public buildings and facilities, educate the public on the dangers of smoking, and limit tobacco exports to other countries.

CRADLE, AND ALL

Although abortion isn’t the only pro-life issue, the topic has gotten a lot of press, especially in Christian circles. And rightly so. Abortion destroys millions of unborn babies each year. Statistics Canada reported in 2005 that since 1969, more than 3 million babies had been aborted in Canada. That same year, the National Right to Life Campaign noted that about 50 million babies in the U.S. had lost their lives to abortion since 1973.

Perhaps this disregard for unborn life stems from the rapidly spreading view that humans are in no way unique from other creatures. In his article “Sanctity of Life or Quality of Life?” Princeton philosopher Peter Singer makes this claim: “We can no longer base our ethics on the idea that human beings are a special form of creation, singled out from all other animals, and alone possessing an immortal soul.” As a result, Singer concludes that not just abortion and euthanasia but also infanticide are morally acceptable.

But historic Christian faith offers a radically different vision. Nothing affirms the special dignity and inestimable worth of each human being as strongly as the

Bible. Genesis makes the breathtaking claim that all human beings—and only human beings—bear the very image of the Creator. The New Testament describes how God became a human being—an embryo, a baby, a young man, a carpenter. It tells us that God Incarnate suffered crucifixion so that His followers could have eternal life (John 3:16).

God is glad to die for every person, no matter how poor, how weak, how marginalized and neglected, and He invites every person to an intimate, personal relationship with Him. That is how precious every person is.

Jurgen Moltmann, author of *God for a Secular Society*, is right when he says, “God has a relationship to every embryo, every severely handicapped person, and every person suffering from one of the diseases of old age, and He is honoured and glorified in them when their dignity is respected. [. . .] there is no life that is worthless and unfit to live.”

Unfortunately, the Bible does not provide an explicit answer to one crucial question: When does the unborn developing fetus become a person?

Nothing in the Bible suggests, however, that the fetus is not a human being. In fact, the Bible often uses words for the fetus that are normally used for persons who are already born (e.g., Gen. 25:22; 38:27–30).

Further, the ever-clearer scientific evidence is indisputable: From the moment of conception, a fetus is a genetically distinct being that grows without any biological break to become the baby, who, at birth, is accepted by almost everyone as a human being to be protected.

To be sure, there is no explicit biblical teaching that unambiguously asserts such a view. Yet even if we remain agnostic—uncertain about when the developing fetus becomes truly human—we have no choice but to adopt the working assumption that if there is any serious possibility that we are dealing with human beings, we must reject abortion. As we seek to save the lives of unborn children, we in the Church need to be proactive, pressing for laws that restrict abortion, participating in civil and legislative actions that make abortion less attractive, and, most importantly, graciously lending our support to women with unwanted pregnancies. We can also invest in adoption and other positive alternatives to abortion.

AMENDING THE PRO-LIFE AGENDA

Biblical teaching on the sanctity of human life calls Christians to a consistently pro-life agenda. Abortion, euthanasia, pollution, smoking, starvation in a world of abundance, war, and capital punishment all destroy persons created in the image of God.

That is not to say that each of these issues has identical moral weight. The direct, intended taking of innocent human life has a moral seriousness that differs from indirect, unintended taking of human life.

Failing to protest when tobacco companies use seductive advertising to promote smoking is not morally equivalent to plotting to murder an innocent neighbor. But both violate the sanctity of human life and are therefore morally wrong, even though they are not morally identical.

Contemporary North American society urgently needs to recover a deep respect for the full sanctity of human life. For us Brethren in Christ, this means we must wholly commit ourselves to being pro-poor and pro-family, pro-peace and pro-creation care, pro-compassion and pro-forgiveness. When we live out a completely pro-life vision in every area of life, not only will our neighbors hear our words much more clearly, but we will more faithfully honor God’s gift of life in all its forms.

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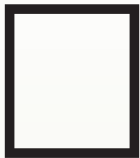
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Ronald J. Sider is professor of theology, holistic ministry, and public policy at Palmer Seminary at Eastern University (Wynnewood, Pa.). President of Evangelicals for Social Action, Ron has authored some of the most influential books and articles written about faith in the U.S. He and his wife, Arbutus, live in Philadelphia and hold dual membership in the BIC Church and the Mennonite Church USA.

Altogether **PRO-LIFE:**
 Making peace
with a
 broken world



When debates about the value of human life arise in our courtrooms, our lecture halls, and even our Sunday school classrooms, the rhetoric is often loud and divisive. If, as Christians, we take seriously Christ's call to love our neighbor as ourselves and overcome evil with good, then we must move beyond disruptive dispute and take an active role in living what we profess. As the following stories illustrate, making peace with a broken world is an everyday act, one that calls us to exhibit compassion, forgiveness, and self-sacrificing love.

by Devin Thomas

“With 143 million orphans in the world today, I think the Church is probably the only organization that has enough reach, resources, and people to connect with every one of them,” says Kelly Harnish, a member of Manheim (Pa.) BIC Church. “As Christians, we just really need to step up to the plate.”

It was this conviction that brought Kelly and her husband, Dale, along with several other members of the Manheim congregation, together in early 2007 to form Blessing Innocent Children.

Initially conceived, says Kelly, as an informal way of “supporting one another through the adoption process,” the ministry quickly expanded its vision to include fellowship meet-

ings, mentoring initiatives, respite care (including meals and babysitting) for families that recently adopted, service trips to orphanages around the world, and a no-interest loan and grant program to help families offset adoption costs.

“Unfortunately, we live in a world that does not unconditionally value or care for all human life,” says Kelly. “Children are abused, neglected, and dying. Many are born into poverty and sickness, only to have their parents taken from them. There are children in the U.S. and throughout the world that need our help.”

Kelly and Dale first answered this call in 2001, after the birth of their first son, Avery. Diagnosed with secondary infertility, they “were filled with grief and many questions.”

Their struggle eventually led them to adoption.

“The answer was under our noses the whole time,” says Kelly, whose three younger siblings were adopted from Korea. “We just didn’t see it until we approached God with our questions.”

After years of prayer, paperwork, and patient waiting, the couple adopted Olivia (now 8) in 2001 and Benjamin (now 4) in 2005. Then, two years later, they set their sights on supporting other families wanting to reach out to orphans and started Blessing Innocent Children.

“The most important thing is to keep this issue at the forefront,” Kelly stresses. “All too often, it’s ‘out of sight, out of mind.’ We get wrapped up in our own routines, our own lives.”

“A ministry like Blessing Innocent Children really gives people the opportunity to contemplate their lives and their resources,” she adds. “From providing respite care for adoptive families to helping with some adoption-related fees, I think there’s a way for everyone to fit into this kind of Kingdom work.”

“With 143 million orphans in the world today, the Church is probably the only organization able to connect with each one of them.”



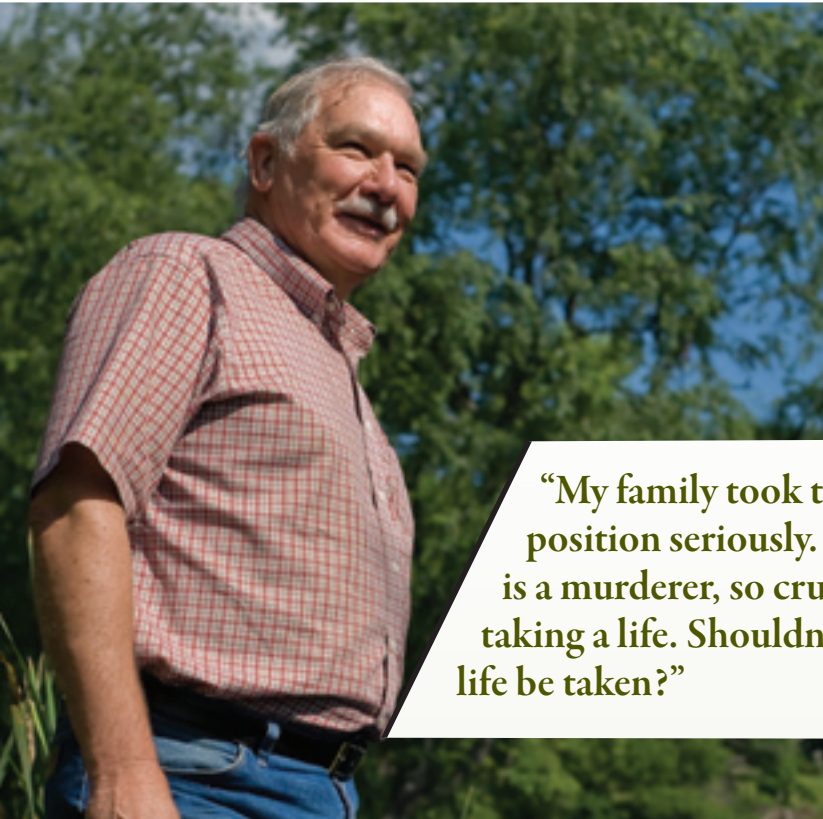
A compassionate approach to valuing all human life—like that of the Harnishes and others involved in Blessing Innocent Children—illustrates our call to serve those who suffer unjustly. But what happens when our commitment to life means offering forgiveness to those who have wronged us deeply?

On December 20, 1994, Carl Ginder returned to his home in San Juan, Texas, to find his wife, Eleanor, missing. Concerned, he alerted the police. Five days later, on Christmas morning, two Texas state troopers knocked on Carl’s door with news. Eleanor had been murdered;

↑ Dale and Kelly Harnish, of Manheim (Pa.) BIC, were inspired to take action on behalf of orphans around the world by their own children, (l to r) Benjamin, Olivia, and Avery. PHOTO: Matthew Lester (matthewlester.net)

authorities had discovered her body in the backseat of the couple's van about 45 miles west of the Ginders' home.

"I was just simply in shock," shares Carl, a BIC pastor and former missionary. "For days, I functioned pretty much without feeling, without thought."



"My family took the peace position seriously. Yet here is a murderer, so cruelly taking a life. Shouldn't his life be taken?"

↑ A tragic family death challenged Carl Ginder, pastor of Bethel BIC (Hillsville, Va.), to contemplate his commitment to nonviolence. PHOTO: Laura Swift (stepintoviewphotography.com)

Another shock came shortly thereafter, when police arrested two suspects—one of whom was the nineteen-year-old son of the family next door.

"I knew him quite well," Carl states. "His mother was Eleanor's very best friend."

After the funeral, Carl recounts, "I was very angry. I had obeyed the Lord, followed the Lord in every way I knew. We both had. It didn't make any sense to me that this kind of thing would happen to us, that God would allow it."

Two weeks later, Carl's anger reached a breaking point. "I said to myself, 'I can't live like this. I can't live with this anger.' Harboring that felt horrible. I felt contaminated."

Prohibited by law from speaking directly to the accused, Carl reached out to the couple next door.

"I went over to my neighbors' house and sat down with them, talked with them," says Carl. "I let them know that I forgave them, that I was not holding them responsible, even though in some ways they were."

Although this act of forgiveness brought some relief, it wasn't until later, during a church service, that the Holy Spirit fully freed him of his bitterness.

"It was a real miracle of God that I had deliverance from that," he admits.

By the time his wife's killers went to trial, Carl had overcome his anger, but was faced by a new conflict.

"Prior to Eleanor's murder, I believed the State had a right to impose the death penalty," Carl says. "But in my heart, I had to struggle with whether or not I should feel that way.

"My family always took the peace position very seriously," he recounts. "And yet, here is a murderer, so cruelly taking a life. Shouldn't his life be taken?"

In 1997, the two perpetrators were tried for murder and convicted to life in prison, a decision, Carl says, that helped him work through his own internal conflict. "I've always believed that taking revenge into your own hands is wrong," he says. "And I've always felt that the State has the right to impose the death penalty. I still believe that. It's probably not the way the Church would like me to come out, but it's where I'm at."

Carl now lives in Hillsville, Va., and serves as the pastor of Bethel BIC. He shares that he's learned to use the tragedy in his life to nurture others enduring pain similar to the kind he experienced.

"In my ministry now, I've found it important to have gone through all of that grief and anger," he says. "I can relate to others dealing with those things in a way that some other people can't. That has been a meaningful aspect of my ministry."

Carl Ginder's journey toward forgiveness speaks to the self-sacrificing spirit necessary to maintain a holistic pro-life stance even in the midst of agonizing tragedy. But not all tragedy is sudden; often, the greatest struggles in life are incremental. How can we continue to value life even as it slowly slips away?

"I have always been very, very close to my family," says Lynne Cosby, a member of the Grantham (Pa.) BIC Church. So it seemed natural for her to make the trip down to her parents' home in Florida to help look after her ailing father during his last days on earth.

"It was a tough situation," Lynne recalls. "My father did not suffer from one particular terminal illness. My sisters



"When the end of my father's life came, it was just as valuable as the middle."

↑ Through the pain of watching a loved one age, Lynne Cosby, of Grantham (Pa.) BIC, learned that every chapter in a person's life is precious. PHOTO: Nate Bridi

and mother and I diagnosed him as having 'the dwindles.' He just began to lose himself little by little, physically and mentally. It was a very long, slow process."

Lynne's mother was committed to keeping him at home for as long as possible, but when she could no longer care for him without putting her own health at risk, she called on her local hospice organization for assistance. Near the end, Lynne, a self-employed writer/editor, knew she would be able to make the trip and be with her father as well.

Several days after her arrival, Lynne remembers her father asking her why she was there. "At that point I decided, I'm

going to tell him why I'm here," she says. "So I looked him in the eye and said, 'Daddy, you're pretty sick right now. I think it's not going to be long before you go home to be with Jesus.'"

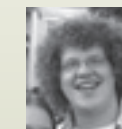
Lynne says that her father looked back at her and responded solemnly that he understood. "That was a pretty direct talk," she says. "I was glad that I didn't shy away from it, and he didn't shy away from it either."

Lynne's father died at home, and Lynne was at his side, holding his hand as he passed from this world to the next.

Returning home after her father's funeral, Lynne reflected on her experience by writing a short essay entitled "Death is a Family Affair" for the "This I Believe" segment of her local National Public Radio affiliate. In it, Lynne writes, "Sometimes in our society, we purposefully avoid witnessing death because we don't know what to do, what to say, how to conduct ourselves. I didn't know ahead of time how I would respond. But when the time came, I simply needed to be with Daddy. I knew how to do that. How to look deeply into those dark brown eyes and not look away. How to tell him he had been the best father I could imagine having. That I was really glad God had given us to each other."

"I value the lives of my parents," says Lynne. "So when the end of my father's life came, it was just as valuable as the middle of his life. It was a different chapter in the story of our relationship, but it was still our relationship. And being able to be a part of his final hours was one of the most poignant and important experiences of my life."

As these stories remind us, making peace with a broken world is an everyday act—one that begins in our own families, our own homes, and our own communities, and radiates beyond. When we value all human life through intimate gestures of compassion, forgiveness, and self-sacrificing love, we not only live out our church's historic peace position, but we follow the example of Christ, who "guide[s] our feet into the path of peace" (Luke 1:79).



Devin Thomas graduated from Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) this spring, acquiring a degree in English. He currently serves as an associate in the BIC General Church Office of Congregational Relations. Devin and his fiancée, Katie, are a part of the Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC Church.

TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE?

To help you decide, three BIC movie-watchers share their thoughts on films that they found to have positive messages about valuing human life.



When aging changes its tune

by EMERSON LESHER

What to do with old people? Often, our response has been to simply avoid, protect, isolate, or placate them. We have been slow to encourage older adults to engage, emerge, enrich, and empower. The stories we tell in our culture about aging tend to be negative, focusing primarily on the limitations and restrictions it brings. Yet our current demographic context, which reveals an aging world population, and God's idea of abundance across all stages of life call for new and positive stories of what the third age of life might be!

Young@Heart, a 2008 documentary about a community chorus of persons whose average age is 81, offers one such story. Challenging fundamental stereotypes about older adults and aging, this Northampton, Mass.-based group has toured the U.S. and Europe and performs songs by such rock legends as Bob Dylan, James Brown, The Rolling Stones, and Coldplay.

As the members prepare new repertoire for an upcoming local concert, the film highlights several members, revealing the good, the bad, the ugly, and the beauty of their past and present. As the weeks of practice before the concert pass, *Young@Heart* members laugh, love, give, mourn, overcome challenges, and—perhaps most importantly—create community and purpose together.

But most of all, they capture the fun, hilarity, energy, and drama that comes when grandparents bring the music of their children and grandchildren's generation to life. Suddenly, the songs written to describe the challenges and triumphs of youth are reinterpreted to describe the challenges and triumphs of old age!

Young@Heart is rated PG and is great for persons age 12 to 112. But don't let the word "documentary" scare you; this fun flick will make you laugh and cry, appreciate rock in a new way, and may even challenge you to write a new story about aging.



Emerson Lesher was first introduced to *Young@Heart* by his teenage daughter. He now uses it as a training experience with employees at Messiah Village (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), where he serves as president. Emerson is a member of the Grantham (Pa.) BIC congregation.

The duet of service

by RACHEL PETERSEN

Walking alongside individuals with mental illness is not for the faint of heart. Though worthwhile, the journey can be at times downright painful and dissatisfying. In his most recent film, *The Soloist*, director Joe Wright portrays the often agonizing struggles faced by those who cast their lots with persons in this particularly marginalized sector of society.

The film depicts the real-life story of an unlikely friendship between *Los Angeles Times* reporter Steve Lopez and Nathaniel Ayers, a Julliard-trained musician whose schizophrenia leaves him homeless, playing a two-stringed violin on the streets of L.A. Lopez initially uses Ayers as a subject for his newspaper column, but he eventually develops a genuine desire to help his eccentric friend, as well as the wider homeless population in Los Angeles. Even once the protagonist's interests turn altruistic, however, his interactions with Ayers remain deeply frustrating; attempts to improve his friend's well-being prove misguided and at times backfire entirely. Far from bringing Lopez the satisfaction of helping someone less fortunate than himself, this lopsided relationship proves emotionally devastating for both parties.

As the film progresses, Lopez begins to relate to Ayers on more equal footing, a shift brilliantly underscored by parallel



scenes in which both men rapidly and repeatedly spell Ayers' full name to indifferent listeners. Relinquishing his efforts to improve Ayers' welfare, Lopez resigns himself to "merely" being his friend. In doing so, he learns to value Ayers for who he is, rather than who he has the potential to be. In this way, it is Lopez, not Ayers, who is transformed by the friendship.

Valuing all human life requires that we, like Lopez, set aside the standards by which society evaluates an individual's worth. More importantly, it requires us to relinquish our illusion of separateness from those we consider "broken." Only as we overcome these imagined barriers can we truly participate in the kind of loving relationships to which Jesus calls His followers.

The Soloist is rated PG-13 for thematic elements, some drug use, and language. Aside from the director's unfortunate attempts to simulate Ayers' visual hallucinations, the film offers a compelling exploration of the relationship between mental illness and homelessness.



Rachel Petersen lives and works at Paxton Ministries, a home for mentally and emotionally challenged individuals in Harrisburg, Pa. She is a member of the Grantham (Pa.) BIC Church.

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The visitor and the host

by RACHEL DIAZ

The 2008 movie *The Visitor* follows the life of Walter Vale (Richard Jenkins), a college professor bored with his job and detached from any meaningful human contact. It's on a work-related trip to New York City that Walter encounters Tarek (Haaz Sleiman), an undocumented Syrian immigrant who has been living in Walter's vacant city apartment. Quickly thereafter, this reserved professor of economics and this animated Syrian drum player become friends. As the character of Walter unfolds, Tarek encounters immigration troubles and faces imminent deportation from the United States. Throughout the ordeal, Walter is there for him; his friendship is sincere and true. Most striking is the unassuming way Walter helps Tarek, exhibiting compassion without a chest-pounding scene of "look at me, I'm a good person."

Interestingly enough, *The Visitor* does not consciously seek to make a political comment on the current immigration situation in the United States; the movie is about personal change, not immigration. However, the catalyst for Walter's metamorphosis is the life of an immigrant. Thus, *The Visitor* is about the transformation that can occur when a person connects with someone else and extends a hand of friendship, acknowledging the worth of another's life, regardless of his or her status—in this case, immigration status. It's also about reaching out not only for the sake of others, but also with the desire that doing so will change you for the better.

I thoroughly recommend this movie. It's rated PG-13, and although there are brief instances of course language toward the beginning, I believe these are outweighed by the film's message, which challenges us to think about the "visitors" around us and—more importantly—about how we might open ourselves up to change as we welcome them into our lives.



Rachel Diaz is an immigration attorney in South Florida and the daughter of Cuban immigrants. She and her husband, Hamlet, who was born and raised in Cuba, attend La Roca Firme (Hialeah, Fla.). They are the proud parents of Olivia, a lil' Cuban-American princess. Rachel is involved in MCC East's Peace and Justice Immigration program and has served on the BIC General Conference Board since 2005.



TO THE POINT

“Come as you are” has become a slogan for many churches wanting to assure seekers that they are welcome and will not be judged. But when we realize what people look like—inside and out—this isn’t always what we practice. How do we overcome our flawed human nature in order to truly value those who come as they are?

Lawrence Olson
LIGHT OF CHRIST FELLOWSHIP
Des Moines, Iowa

Dan Houck
THE TABLE COMMUNITY CHURCH
Lancaster, Pa.

Todd Hammond
HIGHLAND BIC
West Milton, Ohio

“We have ‘come as you are’ as part of a slogan for our church, which is for the most part true. The sad fact, however, is that, in reality, many of our churches have statements regarding divorce and remarriage in their documents that virtually preclude someone ‘coming as they are.’ To be sure, divorce is messy and we are told that God hates it, but having statements which limit the involvement or ministry of a divorced person is crazy when divorce (now endemic), affects virtually every family.”

“Of course our flawed human nature gets in the way at times, but we must force ourselves to move beyond these self-imposed limitations.”

“I notice that many Christians have a difficult time knowing how to relate to people suffering with mental or emotional illnesses. My father and two sisters struggled with depression and bi-polar disorder. What they needed was a strong network of support; but as they grew weaker, so did their support network. With depression and mental illness on the rise, the Church needs to become better equipped to love and accept these dear people.”

“‘Come as you are’ has a definite appeal to congregations that want to be ‘seeker sensitive,’ but I question whether this might be false advertising sometimes. Before I came to the BIC Church, I served a congregation in southern California that worked hard at hospitality. I was disheartened, however, after Marion, an African-American woman, shared that an older woman in the congregation had given her directions to another church. She had told Marion that she was glad that she could visit, but thought that she might be more comfortable at this other congregation, which was predominately African American and 30 miles away!”

“The issue runs deeper than skin, too. I have served congregations that have put out the welcome mat, but then have taken it upon themselves to freeze out people who are divorced, living together but not married, or even in mixed-race marriages, not to mention what happens to people who are perceived to be gay or lesbian.”

→ **What about you?** Share your thoughts and read others’ at **IN PART ONLINE** at INPART.ORG.

EVER WONDERED...

What we BIC say about sanctity of human life issues? According to a 2006 survey of BIC church members:

71.1%
said abortion is always wrong

67.2%
believed that smoking tobacco is always wrong (72.9% said so in 1989)

60.9%
thought the death penalty should be used to punish convicted murderers (compared to 52.9% in 1989)

24.9%
said it’s wrong for Christians to fight in any war (35.2% in 1989)

72.7%
didn’t think a person with an incurable disease has the right to take his or her own life

Source: Church Member Profile 2006—a study of members in three denominations, conducted by the Young Center of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and coordinated by Donald B. Kraybill.

PARTING WORDS

FROM PRO-LIFE TO ALL-LIFE

by PERRY ENGLE

Not too long ago, a local crisis pregnancy center invited area ministers to a conversation with a well-known pro-life advocate. Always interested in discussing life issues, I showed up for the meeting at a nearby restaurant.

I was surprised that only two of us had accepted the invitation, but thought it just as well since a more in-depth discussion of the issues was more what I was looking for. I listened intently to the presenter’s passionate, well-researched presentation, replete with sobering statistics on the number of pregnancies terminated in California over the course of the past year.

When it came time for Q & A, I asked my question as gently as I could. “Have you ever considered that the cause of the pro-life movement and the witness of Christians in general might be helped by broadening the definition of what it means to be pro-life? I mean, if God is the author of all life, then wouldn’t it make sense to think of being pro-life as being opposed to anything that devalues human life, including abortion, poverty, and war?”

He was polite but direct in telling me that a pro-life movement focused on more than just abortion would “dilute the pro-life movement,” and that opposing abortion was far too important for it to be coupled with other issues.

I listened carefully and didn’t venture any follow-up questions. I agreed with part of what he was say-

ing, that the million-plus abortions performed in the U.S. and Canada every year are nothing short of a catastrophe. But what I didn’t agree with was his inference that there is no connection between issues that devalue human life.

The conversation confirmed what I’d been feeling for years, and that is, the term “pro-life” no longer adequately describes me as a follower of Jesus Christ. If labels mean anything, then I would feel much more comfortable being considered a member of an all-life movement.

The all-life movement would center its ethic on the life and teaching of Jesus, and would consider His call for love of God, neighbors, fellow Christians, enemies, and the “least of these” as expanding our concept of what it means to be more consistently “pro-life” as followers of Christ.

The all-life movement would admit and address the credibility gap that exists when Christians narrow their focus to advocating for life on one level and not another. It would press the Church to reconsider how it can be outraged by abortion and not be equally concerned with other evils that similarly threaten human life.

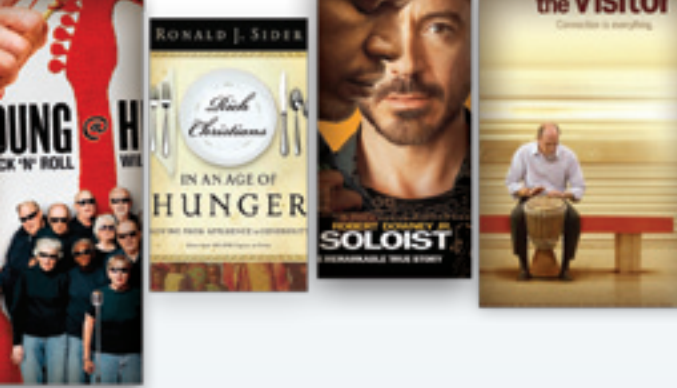
After all, abortion, poverty, and war all kill children.



Later on, a few weeks following the “conversation” at the restaurant, I returned to the pregnancy center’s website and was struck by a quote they had posted by French genetics professor Dr. Jerome Lejeune, the discoverer of the Down Syndrome chromosome. Said Dr. Lejeune, “I have learned from my earliest medical education that human life begins at the time of conception. I submit that human life is present throughout this entire sequence from conception to adulthood and any interruption at any point constitutes a termination of a human life.”

Strange, but after rereading Dr. Lejeune’s statement, it sure sounds like an all-life perspective to me.

Perry Engle is the bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church. He and his wife, Marta, and two daughters live in Ontario, Calif. Their oldest daughter, Madeleine, now attends Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.).



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