



# IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

*Summer 2010*

## Worship wars in church

PLUS: BIC Quizmaster  
bids farewell

— AND —

Finding identity  
through worship

## TOP 5 READER CRITIQUES

Since *In Part's* inception three years ago, we on the BIC Communications team have received lots of reader feedback—and we've noticed that a few issues just keep popping up. And so, we've compiled this Top 5 List of Reader Critiques in hopes of laying some of those concerns to rest.

### 1 *The paper is too thick, heavy, stiff, and expensive—and it smells. Why not use a thin, glossy paper?*

After considering many different options, we've concluded that the current paper selection remains the best choice for *In Part* at this time. A thin, glossy paper would make the magazine—at its current length—too flimsy to mail, yet lengthening the publication to increase its durability would add considerable cost. Also, glossy paper is not recyclable in all areas of North America.

Conversely, the present stock is durable, distinct, recyclable, and made from a blend of recycled and FSC-certified paper. It is also comparably priced. Plus, a number of readers have even said that they like it!

Any scents issuing from the magazine are from the ink, which would be the same regardless of the paper.

### 2 *The magazine has too much white space and art.*

Even as *In Part* makes sharing important stories and information a top priority, we affirm the role that the visual arts play in the spiritual life of the Church, and we feel privileged to feature thought-provoking creations by the skilled artists among us. We also recognize the need for white space, which provides pauses for reflection in the reading and helps keep the design clean and simple. We may not always strike the ideal balance between these three elements, so we welcome your continued input.

### 3 *Why doesn't In Part share birth, wedding, and death announcements like its predecessor, The Visitor, did?*

The foremost reason is that the North American BIC Church has grown into a family of 300 churches and 25,000 households, and *In Part* does not have the space to print nor the personnel to collect information from each of these locations.



As our work with *In Part* continues, we hope that the magazine will be a source of encouragement to you, as well as a resource for your church. To this end, we ask for your continued feedback on our work. And we extend our great thanks to you, for without your invaluable support and inspiration, *In Part* would not be what it is today.

With gratitude,

*Kristine*

Kristine N. Frey

P.S. For more common reader remarks and our responses to them, visit [INPART.ORG](http://INPART.ORG).

Nevertheless, to better serve our readers, we've created "Family News," a quarterly newsletter chronicling these events in the BIC family. To learn more, go to [BIC-CHURCH.ORG/FAMILY](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG/FAMILY) or call 717.697.2634, x5436.

### 4 *Only positive or complimentary letters to the editor are reprinted in the magazine.*

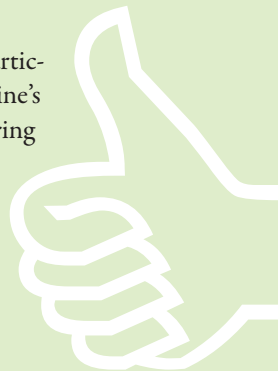
Most of the feedback we receive is positive; however, we've never hesitated to share a letter articulating a thoughtful disagreement with the magazine's content. (See the Winter 2009, Summer 2008, Spring 2009, and Spring 2010 issues.)

That said, many of those who write in with critiques or complaints request that we not publish their words, and in the spirit of community, we don't print anonymous or unsigned communications.

### 5 *The stories are too Pa.- or U.S.-centric.*

The North American BIC Church family is widespread and diverse—and growing more so all the time—so covering all corners of our community must be a priority. We intentionally seek to feature an equitable number of stories from each Conference, if not in each individual issue, then over the span of a year. Because three Regional Conferences encompass areas in Pa., and seven out of the eight Conferences reside in the U.S., it makes representative sense that we would share more stories from those areas.

That said, we realize that we don't always succeed in giving equal coverage to each Conference, so we offer an enthusiastic invitation to share your story ideas with us at [BIC-CHURCH.ORG/INPART/PROPOSE.ASP](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG/INPART/PROPOSE.ASP).



# IN PART™

Summer 2010 VOLUME 123 NUMBER 3

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST  
COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

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

## BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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BY REBECCA SPURRIER



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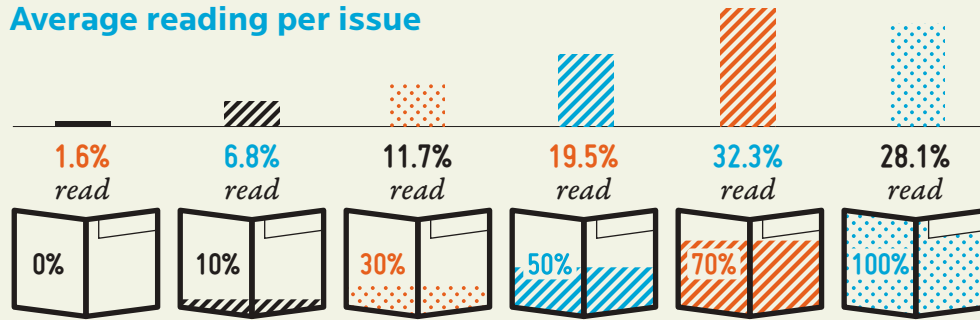
→ *A worship explosion*  
BY PERRY ENGLE

# IN MOTION

## SURVEY SNIPPETS

This spring, over 400 *In Part* readers participated in an online poll about the magazine. Here are some of the results and comments we received:

### Average reading per issue



## THE COMFORT MAKERS

*Each year, 12 women from a BIC church in Saskatchewan encourage nearly 100 people through the gift of handmade blankets*

If, on a Wednesday night, you stand outside the door of the room in which the Comfort Makers meet each week, you'll probably be asked to help carry in a few bagfuls of colorful fabric, sheets, and freshly washed clothing that they've collected for that evening's quilts. Often, a member of the group will even show up with a piece they've worked on and completed at home, just to give away.

Started as an outreach initiative of Massey Place Community Church (Saskatoon, SK), Comfort Makers has quickly grown into a close-knit group of women—five from the church and seven from outside of it—dedicated to extending love and care to others in the form of blankets.

If you ask these ladies why they're there, they'll tell you, "Just to have fun, learn to quilt, and help some people keep warm." But the group's impact goes far beyond that.

In addition to creating enough quilts for nearly 100 people each year, the women have chosen to make their items entirely from recycled materials (except the fill and thread). They reuse, repair, or repurpose all kinds of fabrics—most recently, a discarded wedding gown.

Over the years, these ladies have lived up to their name, mending used clothes to give away



PHOTO: Courtesy of Curtis Zoerb

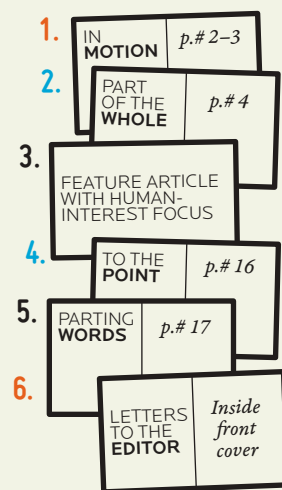
and making everything from full-size quilts and crib blankets to sheets and pillows. When a new "batch" of items is ready, the community at Massey Place dedicates a part of its service to pray over the offerings.

It's nearly impossible to describe the experience of bringing four bags full of desperately needed sheets and blankets to a family of 12 living in a two-bedroom house. Or the joy of one couple who, upon receiving a quilt they'd been admiring, ran outside, waving it in the air and telling every passerby about the gift. But as the Comfort Makers will tell you, these are just the kinds of miracles that even small gestures of comfort can make possible.

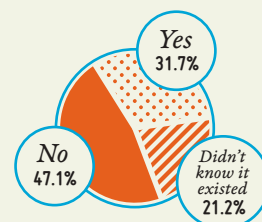
—CURTIS ZOERB

Massey Place Community Church (Saskatoon, SK)

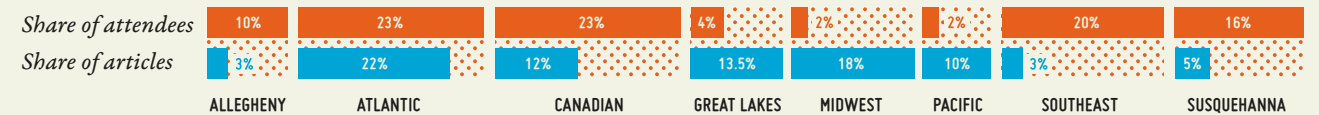
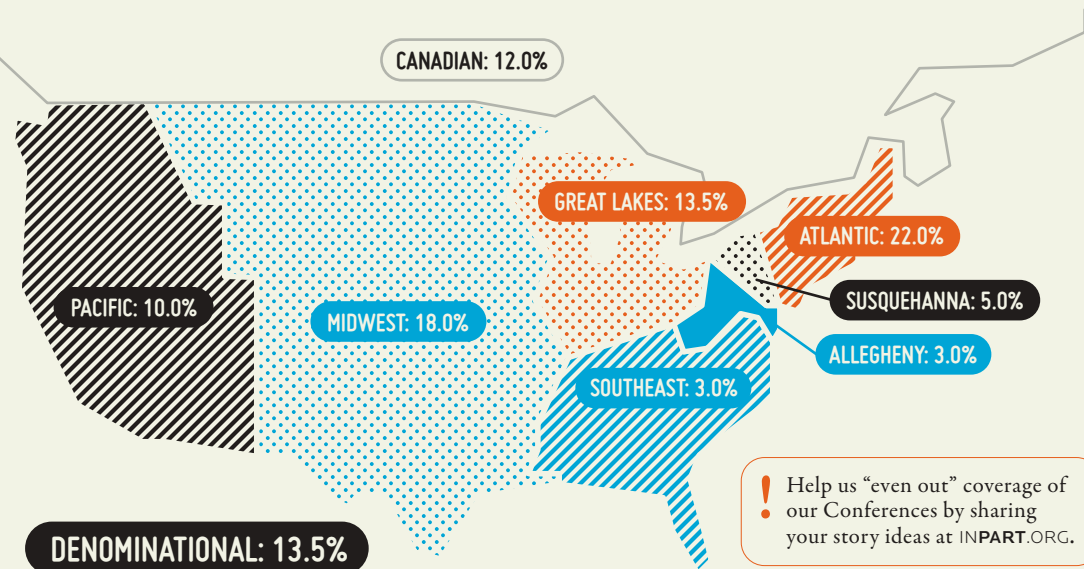
## Readers' Top 6 favorite sections of *In Part*



## Have you ever visited *In Part* Online?

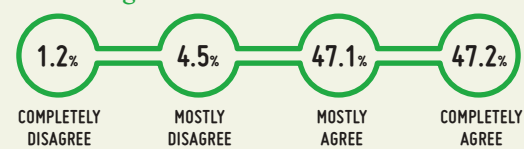


Out of all the *In Part* articles written from the Winter 2007 issue through Spring 2010, each Conference was highlighted in this proportion:

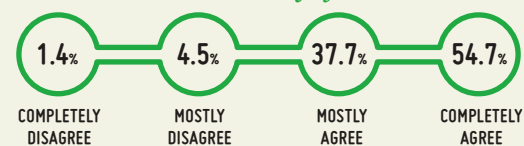


## WHAT WE SAY ABOUT WORSHIP\*

*Worship services in my congregation inspire and strengthen me.*



*Worship in my congregation helps me feel connected to a community of believers.*

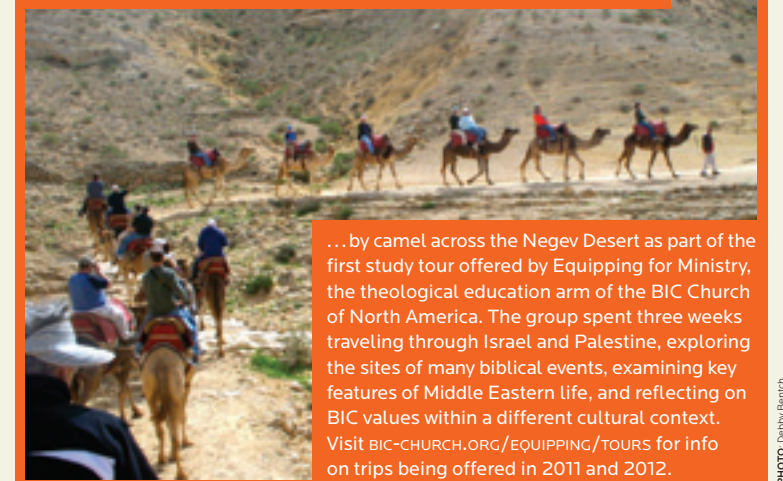


## THANK YOU!

The BIC Communications team wants to thank all *In Part* readers and contributors for enabling our denominational magazine to be recognized in these ways by the Evangelical Press Association (EPA):



## Twenty-one BIC pastors and leaders journey . . .



... by camel across the Negev Desert as part of the first study tour offered by Equipping for Ministry, the theological education arm of the BIC Church of North America. The group spent three weeks traveling through Israel and Palestine, exploring the sites of many biblical events, examining key features of Middle Eastern life, and reflecting on BIC values within a different cultural context. Visit [BIC-CHURCH.ORG/EQUIPPING/TOURS](http://BIC-CHURCH.ORG/EQUIPPING/TOURS) for info on trips being offered in 2011 and 2012.

PHOTO: Debby Benich

# PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE MAN'S FAITH

## JOHN WEAVER

*After eight years, John is wrapping up his time as director of BIC Quizzing\*. But first, it's this Quizmaster's turn to be in the hot seat. John Weaver is ready for your questions.*



PHOTO: Karen Uhler

BEST SUMMER VACATION	9,000-mile family road trip to California for General Conference
FAVORITE BIBLE VERSE	2 Tim. 2:15
LEAST FAVORITE FOOD	Cauliflower
DAY JOB	Pastor of Pleasant Hill (Ohio) BIC

\*Bible quizzing has been a BIC tradition for over half a century. A competitive team sport, it tests young people (ages 11 to 20) on their knowledge of Scripture, their fast reflexes, and their ability to work together.

### Were you ever a quizzzer yourself?

No, I didn't grow up with it... I married into it! My wife, Margaret, had been a quizzzer for Nappanee (Ind.) BIC. When we moved back to Nappanee in 1978, I decided to write some questions for my wife to help her study for the yearly adult vs. youth quiz at the church. I learned the material so well that she suggested I participate. As [radio commentator] Paul Harvey would say, "And now you know the rest of the story."

### What does a denominational quiz director do?

The director serves as the point-person, selecting memory verses, writing questions, establishing a schedule, planning the denominational finals, and quiz-mastering—or judging—at various meets and tournaments throughout the year.

### What do you see as the greatest benefits of participation in quizzing?

—Ken Hoke, Carlisle (Pa.) BIC, former Quizmaster (1977–79)

Obviously, the greatest benefit is hiding God's word in the hearts of young people. But there are other important aspects, like learning to win and lose and developing relationships with youth from across the denomination.

### What do you like most about quizzing?

That's easy: I love being with the quizzers. The young people that I've had the privilege to work with over all these years are the absolute best. They are what I will remember.

### How many quiz questions have you written?

—Karen Uhler, Elizabethtown (Pa.) BIC, former quizzzer, current quiz director for Atlantic Conference

Over the last 23 years, I've probably formulated over 50,000 questions total. I was greatly relieved when I completed the questions for this year back in January. I must admit, I probably won't miss writing all those questions!

### Do you know the answers to the all questions you ask?

No! Obviously, I learn a lot of the answers by writing the questions, from quiz-mastering, and from previous study. But I certainly don't know all the answers.

### What about your role as Quizmaster will stick with you?

There have been challenges in this position, but they have already faded in my memory; the wonderful friendships, relationships, and working together are what remain. Thanks to all of you for this blessing you have given me!

### more at INPART.ORG

- Catch live streaming of the 2010 Quiz Finals on July 11 at 6:15 EST.
- Learn more about the BIC quiz program.
- Browse through photos and reflections from quizzers over the last 50 years.

# TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

## WHEN LIFE BECOMES HOLY

*By honoring God with our actions and attitudes, we participate in the life-encompassing cycle of worship*

by DON MCNIVEN

As followers of Christ, we are called to commit everything we do and everything we are to worship (Col. 3:17, 1 Cor. 10:31). In doing, we engage in actions that demonstrate our love and respect for our Creator and Sustainer. In being, we dedicate ourselves to a life-encompassing attitude of worship. Directing these aspects of existence, worship should be as innate and essential as breathing.

Yet somehow, we've managed to make worship into something that seems difficult, contentious, or mysterious. As Brother Lawrence, a 17th-century Carmelite monk, observed in *The Practice and Presence of God*, "Men invent means and methods of coming at God's love, they learn rules and set up devices to remind them of that love, and it seems like a world of trouble to bring oneself into the consciousness of God's presence. Yet it might be so simple. Is it not quicker and easier just to do our common business wholly for the love of Him?"

Over the years, we Brethren in Christ have identified four key concepts to help describe the worship we'd like to offer God in our daily actions and attitudes:

**Heartfelt** focuses on the integrity of our response to God's character, words, and acts. We are called to "Love the Lord your God with all your passion and prayer and muscle and intelligence" (Luke 10:27, *The Message*). Our worship can't be half-

→ We value heartfelt worship that is God-honoring, Spirit-directed, and life-changing.

hearted or merely intellectual. Rather, as our Pietistic heritage teaches, it should flow from a warm, personal relationship with Christ.

**Spirit-directed** refers to how, in the same way a conductor directs an orchestra or a guide provides direction, the Holy Spirit leads our worship,

**Lifting your hands in worship is no more holy than helping your neighbor rake his yard. Offered to God, life becomes holy.**

transforming our best-intentioned but ultimately futile actions into acceptable and pleasing gifts of worship to God.

**God-honoring** conveys that our demonstrations of love and respect are appropriate responses to who God is (worship) and what God does (praise). We honor God by putting Him first, by not limiting Him to our own understanding or culture, and by pausing to reflect on our relationship and His handiwork.

**Life-changing** points to the transformational power of true worship. It should have such a significant impact in our lives that we can never be the same again.



In our Transformation 2020 vision plan, we acknowledge as a Church that we can't ever live out the mission we are called to unless we ourselves have been changed first. And so, we invite the Spirit to take our fallen actions and attitudes and translate them into offerings of worship, recognizing that, in the words of singer/songwriter Michael Gungo, "There's no part of life that escapes the potential for the sacred. Lifting your hands in worship is no more holy than helping your neighbor rake his yard. Offered to God, life becomes holy."

### more at INPART.ORG

- Check out the Transformation 2020 vision plan



**Don McNiven**, currently serving as general secretary of the BIC Church in North America, has spent much of his time in local church ministry providing leadership in the area of Worship Arts. He and his wife, Sue, transplanted Canadians, live and worship at Fairview BIC (Mechanicsburg, Pa.).



# A RETURN TO PRAISE

*One congregation dares to explore  
a broader vision for worship*

BY SUSAN K. GETTY

People in the Church today often seem to have very specific ideas about what qualifies as worship (and what does not). For many, it is the time in a church service when people sing hymns and participate in prepared responsive readings. Others would identify it as joining together in contemporary choruses and spontaneous prayers. Yet as the body at Antrim Brethren in Christ Church (Chambersburg, Pa.) discovered, worship outshines personal preference, musical styles, and even deep-rooted conflict. And in learning this, the Antrim family is coming to more fully understand what it means to praise.

## Finding a heart of worship

Kristina Kane loves music, and she has always appreciated the contemporary style of worship at the church-

es she's attended. But there was something lacking. She says, "I was in that mode where if I wasn't having that happy feeling, I wasn't worshipping." For Kristina, as for many believers today, worship meant that time on a Sunday morning when singing the "right" songs would enable her to sense God's presence or blessing, and if she didn't feel a connection with the music, she didn't feel a connection with God.

Six years ago, Kristina and her family started attending Antrim BIC. For the past five years, she has sung with one of the worship teams there that led the congregation's contemporary second service. In recent years, she says, "God took me through certain steps—from knowing about Him to having a relationship with Him. And that has made all the difference." She began to understand what it means to live in humility before

God and others. Repentance was no longer just feeling sorry—it was a change of behavior. And she began striving for faithful obedience in all areas of her life. As she saw God anew, Kristina was no longer trapped by a definition of worship that had often failed her. But she still found herself feeling lonely at church.

## Remembering that everything changes

Donna Martin also calls Antrim Brethren in Christ Church her home. She was born into the church family and has attended there her whole life. As a teenager in the 1960s, Donna vividly remembers the varied reactions of church members when the organ was first introduced. Some welcomed it; others were opposed to using it. At age 13, she was the first organist Antrim had. Even as a young girl, Donna was sensitive to the need to "build bridges" between those who disagreed. And so, she says, "I tried to play the organ quietly."

Today, Donna still plays the organ for the first service on Sundays, a traditional service that incorporates hymns, and she has remained sensitive to the feelings of others. She desires to show respect for everyone as changes in style and new instruments continue to be introduced.

Through the decades, Donna has advocated for bringing keyboards, guitars, and drums into the church, although her personal preference is for more traditional instrumentation. She holds a deep respect for the believers who have gone before her, and she says that as changes have come "I had to think about the older generations. Just because they did it differently, does that mean they didn't worship?"

## When a church is out of tune

Even as Kristina and Donna grappled with issues of worship in their own hearts, their church family at Antrim BIC was in crisis. Members were stepping down from ministry roles, while others simply left the church entirely. Attendance, which had been in the 700s, was down to less than 450. Issues that ran so deep they were hard to identify—and harder yet to talk about—threatened to tear apart the multi-generational congregation that had been together for close to 100 years.

In the midst of this turmoil, members of the church board had read and discussed the widely respected book *Firestorm: Preventing and Overcoming Church Conflict* (Baker Books, 1997). And then they took a most courageous step: They invited the book’s author, church conflict expert Dr. Ron Susek, to step into their situation. Ron came to Antrim in June 2009 and conducted a month-long holistic study of the church’s congregational life.

Ron’s report back to the Antrim church board identified numerous underlying issues that needed to be addressed, one of which was a serious culture clash regarding worship styles. Because people are naturally deeply attached to their views on worship, relationships were suffering from misunderstanding and judgment. “Estrangement set in between leadership, a number of musicians, and the congregation,” says Ron. “Everyone had their reasons—be they right or wrong—for feeling hurt.”

Ephesians 5:19 tells believers to “speak to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord.” But for many churches across the nation, culture clashes are creating barriers and tensions that harden people’s hearts and make it difficult to offer authentic communal worship to God. When there is no shared repertoire of songs and hymns, no tolerance for the use of different instrumentation, a church family struggles to worship together. And that’s a sign that something has to change.

### Steps toward healing

Ron was invited to serve for a year as Antrim’s lead pastor to help facilitate the healing process. The church’s first step was to convene 11 commissions, designed to function for a limited length of time and to address particular areas of concern. In addition to a worship commission, the church established a hermeneutics commission to work at resolving doctrinal clashes, a polity commission to address organizational confusion, and a welcome and assimilation commission to help open the way for congregational growth, among others.

Because Antrim desired congregation-wide reconciliation, it was vital to make sure that each commission included individuals representing every “generation” of the church family. In total, the commissions involved more than 60 individuals from the congregation, about one out of every seven attendees.

### Meeting around the table

One of Ron’s goals for the worship commission was to help expand the church’s understanding of what worship means. People needed to realize that what they were disagreeing about—music—is only a small part of what worship is. “The idea that worship is a lifestyle that governs us every day would not have been in many minds,” he says.

Kristina Kane and Donna Martin were two of those on the worship commission that met regularly for nine months. To begin, Kristina says, “Our homework was to research the Bible and come back with ideas about what worship is and what our own experiences with worship have been.” She learned that the first step toward authentic worship has to be “becoming a friend of God. We can say what worship is—it’s this and it’s this and it’s this—but unless you have that real relationship with God, you’re not going to be able to do all those things.”

With a hefty concordance next to her Bible, Donna dove in to her studies, too. She looked up every verse “from Genesis to Revelation” that mentions worship and found that it is much more than Sunday morning music. It involves serving, teaching, sacrificing. As individuals came back to the next meeting, they found new common ground for ongoing discussions. She says, “I think we were all enlightened.”

### Wrestling with diversity

After exploring the nature of true worship, the group needed to tackle the other goals set before it: to make a plan for educating the church and its praise leaders on worship and their roles in it; to help determine what music best helps all people of the church to worship; to determine what music would be a distraction to corporate worship; and to prepare the congregation to move back to one service in the next three to five years.

“We have a responsibility to worship within various contexts,” says Ron, “to train our hearts to be pleased with God and reverence God no matter what is or is not going on around us. . . . My desire for the people of Antrim is for them to grow from tolerance to respect, and from respect to love.”

As Donna puts it, the church has a vision to “construct a worship style that builds bridges of honor.”

Ron is hopeful for the Antrim congregation as the people there embrace reconciliation and wholeness and experience the transforming power of worship that honors God rather than personal preferences. “This is not leadership from the top down. This is the congregation healing itself,” he states.

### Singing a new song

When the process of healing began at Antrim, “the gridlock of collision was very serious,” says Ron, who sees a change in the church at large. “Today, they’re laughing, they’re trusting. They’re excited. We took the negative conflictive energy, showed them a pathway out, and put them in charge of getting us out.

“A bigger view of worship enables people to release their position on small points,” Ron observes. “Worship is expressed through obedience, through service. It’s in a saint who is doing something menial as unto the Lord. The act is transformed.” He believes that this understanding is the beginning of change. “Worship is life, and life is relationship with the living God.”

What people experience today at Antrim BIC Church is not the same as it was a year ago. Kristina says that despite having sung on a worship team for five years, she had few personal connections in the church. Serving on the commission, she says, “put me in a position to get to know people, to interact with people. Now I can talk to these people. Now I’m involved. This process changed the way I perceive this church—it’s become more like home.”

Donna agrees. “Attitudes have changed around this table. Just hearing each other express and talk about worship, the

walls broke down. We appreciate each other. We have a different love and understanding.”

Now, the members of the worship commission at Antrim BIC desire to share their new understanding with the rest of their congregation. Their vision for worship has been renewed, as reflected in this statement on worship crafted by the commission: “We worship God in the everyday activities of our lives. Worship is a way of life. Not contingent on a place, a time, or a circumstance. It is a heart condition. It is a choice. Worship shows how much we value God by the way we live.”

Saundra Wingert, another member of the commission on worship, describes how her life has changed: “I begin most days by praying out of Romans 12:1–2, presenting my body to God as a living and holy sacrifice, so that whether I am singing songs of praise with the Antrim BIC congregation or cooking a meal for my family or helping the exchange student who is living with us this school year with homework, it can be a spiritual service of worship.”

Worship is expressed through obedience, through service. It’s in a saint who is doing something menial as unto the Lord. The act is transformed.

**UPDATE:** *Ron recently accepted a longterm pastoral position at Antrim BIC and continues to help the congregational family heal and grow.*



**Susan Getty** is a freelance writer and artist who lives with her husband in Dillsburg, Pa., and looks forward to the times her two sons come home from college. She works in the admissions office at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) and attends the Grantham Brethren in Christ Church.



artwork by Andy Rash

# The divine narrative

THROUGH WORSHIP, WE ENTER INTO THE STORY OF GOD'S RELATIONSHIP WITH US AND WITH OUR WORLD—A STORY SO DEEP AND SO WIDE THAT WE NEED EVERY VOICE TO TELL IT FULLY

BY *Rebecca Spurrier*

When I was a child and learning my own life story, I went to my parents to fill in the details. Like most children, I wanted to know where I had come from and who I was beyond my own memories and perceptions. I wanted to learn about my parents and grandparents, to understand how deeply our lives were connected, and to imagine my future through them. What might their stories reveal to me about their identities and my own?

When we, as children of God, gather together in worship, we come to know our own life story in relation to the One who created us and continues to love us into being. As we sing in gratitude and cry out in lament, as we read Scripture together aloud and listen to one of us proclaim it, as we share in a meal of Holy Communion, we bring our individual stories into a common story and bless God for it. We expect that in the



telling of this story, in this praise and prayer for our world, God will take pleasure in us and reveal God-self to us. We also expect that as this happens, God will reveal to us the meaning of our own lives.

## God's gift to us

As Christians, we participate in God's story through the mystery of the Trinity, a God who chooses to exist as three persons in one. An ancient word the Church used for this was *perichoresis*, a divine dance of interconnection, by which God moves within God's being, giving and receiving of God's triune self. God enters our world's story through the body of Christ and receives our story back into God-self through the gifts the Spirit gives us and Christ's presence among us.

We believe this story has been given to us through the community that listens with and speaks to us, and through the Scriptures handed down to us. God, we remind each

other, loved us and our whole world into being, and God refuses to abandon us to sin and suffering. Rather, God is actively at work, healing and moving through the Spirit to bring peace to us and to the earth. This is the salvation story the Church has told throughout the centuries.

### Our gifts for God and one another

Because God chooses a way of being that involves both giving and receiving, we as a Church are drawn into this divine life of reciprocity. We receive our story from God so that we might offer it back to God and to one another in word and action.

In our public worship, we remember who we are, so that we might be sent out to bear witness to that identity as we live out our vocations in the world around us.

In our congregational worship, we speak out our story to one another by reading aloud from the Bible, singing hymns and speaking testimonies, sharing with each other the bread and cup in communion, and breathing and moving together as one body. We enter into our story with our whole beings—our words and gestures, hearts and minds, eyes and ears, mouths and feet. We see this story in the images around us, both as God reveals God-self through our sisters and brothers and in the spaces and symbols of the places where we worship.

In our public worship, we remember who we are, so that we might be sent out to bear witness to that identity

as we live out our vocations in the world around us. Thus, our worship of God, our participation in this story, is not limited to the gathering of our communities on Sunday mornings but is embodied through lives of service. We receive from God and offer these gifts of praise back to God as we relate to others around us each day. As we worship God, we bring all of our creativity and our desires into the movements of God's Spirit in the world around us.

Our worship should not isolate us from others but lead us into care for the world around us. Our reading, singing, serving, standing, kneeling, praising, lamenting ought to turn minds and bodies not only toward God but also to God's beloved creation and the Spirit's movement in the world. If our congregational worship fails to remind us of those beyond our church walls and of the gifts we give and receive every day through our life in God, then we miss out on the full story of our own lives. We fail to understand the lives of deep compassion God intends for us and the ways God is praised through our daily interactions with friends and strangers and in the careful tending of God's good creation.

### Every life, every voice

As Brethren in Christ, we emphasize that we give and receive through a priesthood of all believers. This means that we recognize our inability as individuals to tell the story alone. When God redeems us, God gives us a way to join the common story we create together through Christ's presence and through the movement of the Spirit among us.

We exist through and with a communion of Christ's body across time and around the world, and we need all of our diverse stories in order to hear the saving words that God speaks to us. Without the gifts of the entire priesthood, we deprive ourselves of access to the whole story God's Spirit wants to offer us. Without language, images, gestures, and spaces that invite all of God's beloved people—the young and old, the women and men, the differently abled—into the center of our worship, we deprive ourselves of all the voices needed for the Church's praise of God.

Similarly, we need each part of the story if we are to honor the whole range of our human lives and the whole world that God loves. As theologian Don Saliers writes, in worship "to meet God is to meet our own human lives in unexpected form, and to 'pray without ceasing' is the stretch of a whole lifetime—in season and out of season,

in joy and in pain, in great gratitude and in sorrow, in cries for justice and healing, and in sheer ecstatic delight in the beauty of God."

When we reach for the holy texts through which God speaks to us, we remember both Paul's words of hope to the churches and the laments of the Psalms, the doubts of Job and the wilderness stories of the exiled Israelites. We enter into the story of Christ's incarnation, the wonder of human life, the anguish of death, the hope of resurrection, and the coming of the Spirit to comfort and guide us into a reality that is yet unfolding. If in our gatherings for worship we tell only one part of the story, then we are deprived of knowing that all of our experiences can be brought to the God who loves us.

### This is our story

Through our worship of God, we claim a distinction between the way the world imagines our common story and the way the Church

Without language, images, gestures, and spaces that invite all of God's beloved people into the center of our worship, we deprive ourselves of all the voices needed for the Church's praise of God.

does. We hold up our lives to the mystery of a God who promises more than we can currently see or imagine.

When we bless God and cry out for mercy, we learn to see ourselves and others differently. God's word to us challenges any place where certain people are valued and given voice more than others, where communities are divided by race or class or country of origin, where some have and others do not, where some are seen as gifted and others as needy. Rather, we enter into a story where all have been gifted by God and where all must also receive from others in order to live into the story God has given them.

To do so, we need all the diversity of gifts and voices of Christians around the world. We need to learn the riches of our own tradition and the gifts of traditions that are not our own. Worship is not about one kind of music or one way of praising God together. It is not about a particular feeling aroused within us. It may even be tedious and uncomfortable at times. Worship is the way we continually enter a story so deep and wide, that we work our whole lives to know what it means.

We live, as a teacher of mine once wrote, in a world of great beauty and terror. In worship, we bring this beauty and this brokenness to God. This invitation is God's gift in love to us, and it is through it that we may know God, recognize our neighbor, and come to understand ourselves.

## What is this place?

from Mennonite songbook *Hymnal: A Worship Book*

What is this place where we are meeting?

Only a house, the earth its floor,  
walls and a roof sheltering people,  
windows for light, an open door.  
Yet it becomes a body that lives  
when we are gathered here,  
and know our God is near.

Words from afar, stars that are falling,  
sparks that are sown in us like seed.  
Names for our God, dreams, signs, and wonders  
sent from the past are all we need.  
We in this place remember and speak  
again what we have heard: God's free, redeeming Word.

And we accept bread at His table,  
broken and shared, a living sign.  
Here in this world, dying and living,  
we are each other's bread and wine.  
This is the place where we can receive  
what we need to increase: God's justice and God's peace.

—Words by Hubertun Oosterhuis (1968)

Translated by David Smith (ca. 1970)



**Rebecca Spurrier** is a member of both Grantham (Pa.) BIC and Atlanta Mennonite Fellowship. She grew up in Zambia, where her parents worked as medical missionaries with BIC World Missions. After graduating from Calvin College (Grand Rapids, Mich.), she worked for six years with Mennonite Central Committee in Ukraine, teaching English and facilitating a community development project. A recent graduate of Candler School of Theology (Atlanta), she will begin a doctoral program through Emory University's Graduate Division of Religion in fall 2010.



**Andy Rash**, of Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC, is a mixed-media found-object artist whose work frequently uses a wide array of recycled materials. For the past three years, Andy has focused on commissioned pieces. His works can be seen at Messiah College's Harrisburg Institute, Harrisburg University, and the Grantham Church. He lives in Harrisburg with his wife, Jennifer; stepson, Noah; and dog, Jake. [ANDYRASH.COM](http://ANDYRASH.COM)

## PRAISE THE LORD AND PASS THE CAFFEINE

*Because coffee is so essential to churchgoing, a non-java-drinking believer satirically ponders what his spiritual life has been missing all these years*

by JOHN FEA

I have never been much of a coffee drinker. Growing up, this posed few problems. Yet my surreptitious life as an abstainer became more difficult to maintain in adulthood, when I discovered that my aversion to the holy bean was putting my spiritual life in jeopardy.

I first became aware of my plight during Sunday morning coffee hour, that sacred time when believers come together for fellowship and Folgers. More than once had I been forced to drink a cup of non-dairy creamer in order to commune with my Christian friends. When it came to the integration of faith and caffeine, I was failing miserably.

Things got worse about five years ago when my family and I began attending the local mega-church, which has become our present church home. In all of the previous churches I attended, coffee was prohibited in the sanctuary. (I think it had something to do with taking a break from our own wants and desires to spend quality time with the Holy One.)

But after watching dozens of people saunter into the service every Sunday with Starbucks in one hand and the Scriptures in the other, I realized that my education in this area of church etiquette had been deficient. After all, how could so many caffeine-glazed evangelicals belting out “Shine, Jesus, Shine” at the top of their lungs be wrong?

Lately, I’ve been spending time pondering the advantages of drinking



coffee during the church service and am open to new possibilities. I have been entertaining the idea, for example, that caffeine triggers a more profound sense of the Spirit’s power and as a result enhances the worship experience. It may also be conducive to clearer thinking. Coffee not only keeps people awake during the sermon, but it also gives them clarity of mind so that they can understand the message and apply it to their lives. This makes perfect sense, especially after thinking back to college all-nighters when my intellectual life was fueled by liters of Mountain Dew.

Of course, there are problems that still need to be addressed. What if a per-

son is so moved during singing that she or he wants to raise both hands in praise to God? Does the raising of only one hand (so not to spill the coffee) somehow limit one’s full capacity to worship? What about spillage? Is the church responsible for the dry cleaning bills?

At a recent Sunday morning service, I glanced down my row and saw a young woman sipping coffee, munching on a piece of cake, and trying to mouth the words to the first song. If we really want to make things comfortable for worshippers like this, I thought, we should provide a sanctuary environment conducive to both drinking and eating during worship.

The church could install tray tables similar to the ones found on the back of every seat on commercial airlines. Just before the closing prayer, an announcement could ring forth over the speaker system: “The benediction will be pronounced shortly. Please make sure your tray tables are secured in an upright and locked position, and that your thermoses are safely stored under the seat in front of you.”

When it comes to accepting caffeine in my life, I have yet to be saved. I do, however, continue to seek help in getting control of this area of my spiritual life. I am doing my best to fit in at church, and I pray without ceasing to one day experience the spiritual high that only a hymn laced with an extra shot of espresso can provide. In fact, the other night I had a dream that at Holy Communion they were passing out Mocha Java and croissants instead of the wine and wafers. I think this might be a sign that my salvation may soon be at hand, don’t you?



**John Fea** is associate professor of American History at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.) and author of *The Way of Improvement Leads Home: Philip Vickers Fithian and the Rural Enlightenment in Early America*. He and his wife, Joy, and their two daughters live in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and attend West Shore Evangelical Free Church. When John is not teaching, working on his newest book, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation: A Primer for Christians*; thinking about his next trip to the Jersey Shore; or coaching girls basketball, he is blogging at PHILIPVICKERSFITHIAN.COM.

Enlightenment in Early America. He and his wife, Joy, and their two daughters live in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and attend West Shore Evangelical Free Church. When John is not teaching, working on his newest book, *Was America Founded as a Christian Nation: A Primer for Christians*; thinking about his next trip to the Jersey Shore; or coaching girls basketball, he is blogging at PHILIPVICKERSFITHIAN.COM.

## Consumer code on coffee certifications

Many growers use these terms to describe their product, but it’s not always a piece of (coffee) cake to know what they mean. Here’s the lowdown:

### Organic

Coffee grown without artificial fertilizers, pesticides, or herbicides; products from farms that observe ecologically sensitive practices (e.g., recycling, composting, soil health, etc.).

### Shade-grown

Traditional practice of farming coffee in the shade of larger trees (rather than in full sun, as is the modern technique). Some farmers have returned to the more sustainable shade-grown method to decrease the need for deforestation, habitat destruction, and fertilizers/pesticides.

### Fair Trade

Coffee purchased directly from the growers, often for a higher price to promote healthier working conditions and the use of eco-friendly growing practices.

## A shot of trivia



Over **900** species of insects have been identified as pests of coffee crops.



**Dark roast**  
Smooth, less fiber, more sugary flavor



**Light roast**  
More caffeine, stronger flavor

The concept of the **“COFFEE BREAK”** was first promoted in 1952.

Coffee farmed by the world’s top five producers in 2009 (in tons):

BRAZIL	2,249,010
VIETNAM	964,200
COLOMBIA	697,377
INDONESIA	676,475
ETHIOPIA	325,800

It takes **140 LITERS** (37 gallons) of water to grow one brewed cup’s worth of coffee beans.\*

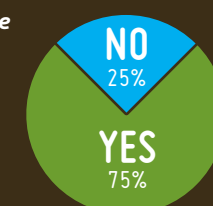


The ideal serving temperature for coffee is **70°C** (165°F).

Coffee grounds can be used as composting or mulch.

## Brethren in Christ & the bean (an unscientific survey)

Does your church offer coffee to attendees of at least one of its services?



\* According to *New Scientist*, a weekly international science magazine and website. [newscientist.com](http://newscientist.com)

# TO THE POINT

DESCRIBE A MEANINGFUL WORSHIP EXPERIENCE THAT YOU'VE HAD OUTSIDE OF A CHURCH BUILDING OR SERVICE.

Loine Bert—Manheim (Pa.) BIC

“A number of years ago, I went to hear a concert given by a high school group of auditioned voices in which a neighbor girl participated. Although I cannot recall the title or composer of the first selection, I vividly remember the magnitude of the voices and the straightforward explosive-ness of the sound that just blew me away as the choir sang a text similar to “Shout to the Lord with joy.” In my spirit, I felt “to God be the glory.”

David E. Climenhaga—Messiah Village BIC (Mechanicsburg, Pa.)

“On October 10, 1969, my father received his final summons and was translated to heaven. As soon as my wife and I received word, we drove to the Messiah Home in Harrisburg, Pa., where he and my stepmother had been living. We’d been there about 20 minutes when it suddenly occurred to me that I had not paid any respects to Father’s body. So I walked over to the side of the bed and looked down at the lifeless body of my father.

*In all of life’s solemn moments, the appropriate response from deep within me is to pray.* I had begun to pray silently for my father when I felt a stirring inside me—a voiceless, inaudible shout that said, *This is not your father. He’s with me.* I accepted the rebuke and prayed instead a prayer of thanksgiving for godly parents who had served their generation to the best of their abilities. And I prayed that God would help me to serve my generation as faithfully. It was one of the deepest of spiritual experiences I have had, ranking along with my call to missionary service and to an experience I had soon after the loss of my own beloved wife years later.

→ **What about you?** Share your thoughts and read others’ at [INPART.ORG](http://INPART.ORG).

Earl Herr—Martinsburg (Pa.) BIC

It was the summer of 1988 on a family trip to General Conference, and we had just entered Idaho. Ahead of us were dark clouds from the storms that had just come ahead of us, leaving the world rain-washed, shimmering, and sparkling. *To our south, there was a double rainbow, complete end to end.* The first arc was the most beautiful I had ever seen, and the second was clear and bright and about as good as most other rainbows I’ve ever seen. We followed those rainbows for more than a half hour.

Rebekah Basinger—Grantham (Pa.) BIC

Maybe it’s because I grew up in the western United States that the out-of-doors and worship are firmly merged in my memories, many of which go back to the American Sunday School Union camp of my early teen years. Located an hour or so north of Missoula, Mont., Camp Utmost was situated on a dusty stretch of land flanked on either side by mountain ranges. When we campers gathered for morning and evening worship in the open-air chapel, the songs we raised—always in full voice—reverberated off the mountainsides, extending our praise for several seconds beyond our singing. To my young ears, this was the sound of heaven, and God could not have been more real or close.

# PARTING WORDS

A WORSHIP EXPLOSION

by PERRY ENGLE

**I wasn’t planning** on learning anything new about worship when the communion tray was passed to me that Sunday morning. I had already taken the bread, and now it was time for the cup—the glorious symbol of the new covenant of Christ’s blood. With the organ playing softly in the background, I was dutifully reverent as I reached for one of the little plastic tumblers filled with Welch’s grape juice.

Let me pause here to mention one major design flaw I’ve discovered in the traditional church communion sets—the kind made of polished aluminum, a lid with a handle in the shape of a cross, and all those holes that the plastic cups fit into like a glove. The problem is that those little plastic cups, if not placed oh-so-gently into their little aluminum holes, can become stuck for people wanting to partake of the cup of blessing.

Looking back, I realize now that I should have passed on the first cup when I found it wouldn’t budge from its hole. The deacon smiled patiently as I worshipfully tried to pry it loose. A little sanctified twist, I reasoned, and I could enjoy the blessing of the Lord. Well, wouldn’t you know it—my twist got twisted, the cup gave way, and, like the old hymn says, Mr. Deacon was “plunged beneath the flood” as I sent a scarlet fountain of Welch’s down the front of his nice white shirt.

“Sorry!” I whispered sheepishly as I fumbled for a cup that wasn’t jammed.

His smile now pained, he moved on to less clumsy communicants, looking as if he’d just taken one in the gut for Jesus.

Now, I know that worship isn’t supposed to be messy, and communion in particular is usually experienced as a solemn reflection on our Savior’s sacrificial love. But with all due respect to Mr. Deacon’s shirt, I won’t ever be able to participate in the Lord’s Supper

**Worship should be where real and broken people come into the Lord’s awe-inspiring presence and, in unexpectedly untidy moments, are splattered with God’s grace.**

without thinking about the bloodbath that occurred that Sunday morning.

While it seems we’re forever arguing about worship styles, my blunder taught me that more important than anything else is that we bring to our gatherings an overwhelming desire to experience a dynamic encounter with the Living God. Worship should be where real and broken people come into the Lord’s awe-inspiring presence and, in unexpectedly untidy moments,



are splattered with God’s grace and overwhelmed by God’s glory.

This God-encounter might happen during singing or prayer, during the message, while listening to the story of a changed life, or even during communion. It could happen when we are quiet and reserved or when the Spirit lets loose and the grape juice flies, and we remember once again that, “We have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus” (Hebrews 10:19).

The same passage in Hebrews goes on to say that we are not to give up meeting together. Instead, we are to gather and encourage one another in assemblies large and small, where the occasional exploding communion cup reminds us that we all need a good drenching of God’s grace from time to time.



**Perry Engle** considers himself the Ralph Nader of the BIC and is currently lobbying for warning labels on all communion sets and protective gear for all servers. He and his wife, Marta, and their family, live in Ontario, Calif.



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