

# IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

Winter 2010

## CROSSING BORDERS

How one couple dares  
to share Christ on  
both sides of the Israeli-  
Palestinian conflict

### PLUS

Breaking down age  
barriers in the Church

*and*

Should Christianity be cool?



# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I have a question regarding the “Vibes” sidebar on page 15 of the Fall 2010 issue. It says that 43.9 percent of Canadian women are obese and 59.2 percent of the men are obese, but only a total of 17.9 percent of the total population are obese. That doesn’t add up. I guess our statistics need to go on a diet also!

Eldon Byer (Camp Hill, Pa.)

Good question! Here’s an explanation of the numbers:

These statistics were showing two different figures: The 17.9 percent indicates the proportion of Canada’s total population who are obese. The two other numbers reveal the proportion of women (43.9 percent of all women) and men (59.2 percent of all men) who are either obese or overweight. So, these three numbers are each reporting separate pieces of information.

Usually, I enjoy reading *In Part*. However, today, as I read “Paperwork, patience, and pride” in the Fall issue, I was astounded that one fact that was/is missing in the entire story: People who come into the U.S. illegally are not immigrants! An immigrant is an individual who has received permission to enter and permanently reside in the United States of America. Whereas, an illegal alien is anyone in the United States who knowingly came here illegally in violation of the law.

Elizabeth A. Allerton (Etiwanda, Calif.)

In this article, we followed the language employed by Mennonite Central Committee, which has determined to use the word “immigrant” to refer to all foreign-born individuals who are in the U.S., whether or not they have proper documentation. MCC’s approach reflects its understanding of Scripture’s call to treat all people with love and respect, and its view that the term “alien” might have negative or derogatory connotations.

In addition to being the language of MCC, the practice of applying the term “immigrant” to individuals of both legal and illegal statuses is followed by other organizations, including the U.S. government and major news outlets.

For more on the BIC position on immigration, please visit [bic-church.org](http://bic-church.org).

The latest issue of *In Part* arrived this week and we—along with a number of other residents of Upland Manor—were very disappointed because a well-prepared and thought-out article about Upland Manor was not included. A lot of time and effort was put into that article with the idea of giving Upland Manor information to a large number of readers who have never heard of the Manor.

Speaking personally, I am impressed with the appearance of the magazine. However, although the article “But why?” by David M. Csinos [from the Fall issue] made quite a statement, the small print and contrasting colors on pages 6–8 made it too hard to read.

Bob and Eleanor (Heisey) Lehman (Upland, Calif.)

Thank you for your feedback! We share in your regret about not being able to include “In the image of God,” the article about Upland Manor, in the printed edition of *In Part*. With each issue of the magazine, we face the difficult task of deciding what to include in its limited space, and unfortunately, that sometimes means that we must choose to leave out some pieces in order to incorporate others. That said, we were honored to feature the article at *In Part Online*, where it was the most-read story of the issue, and we will continue to work with Upland Manor to share the exciting stories taking place there.

Regarding the legibility of “But why?” we offer our sincerest apologies for any difficulties you may have experienced. While we do our utmost to ensure that *In Part*’s content is clearly legible for the full range of our readership, we recognize that we may make mistakes, and we will use your feedback to be more aware and sensitive in the future.



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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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## MEETING SPECIAL NEEDS

### *How one woman's availability to a child with special needs transformed the whole family*

**As first-time parents,** Tracey and Lindy Fackler were unsure as to why their son, Joshua, seemed to be so different than his peers. Without any answers, they coped by withdrawing. “We just stopped taking him anywhere,” Lindy recalls. “There was a long period of time when I did not go to church. It was a very isolating, sad time.”

But as Joshua neared his third birthday, they followed through on a suggestion from a family member and had him evaluated for autism. When Joshua tested positive, the Facklers were relieved to have an explanation for the challenges that had been affecting their family for years, and they became determined to find ways to help him grow.

The family returned to their church, Palmyra (Pa.) BIC, but since Joshua needed one-on-one help in Sunday School, Lindy became his constant shadow. After failing to see any progress in Joshua, and having not sat in church with Tracey for almost five years, Lindy realized her son needed someone other than herself to

help him on Sunday mornings. In the summer of 2009, before Joshua's transition into Kindergarten Sunday School, Lindy and Tracey wrote a letter to select church members asking for help.

A couple months later, the Facklers received an enthusiastic response from Melody Vanderveer, who, as the mother of a son with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), has a heart for children with special needs. Melody offered to be Joshua's Sunday morning one-on-one support, or "partner," as the children affectionately call her.

What started as a one-month arrangement is now beginning its second year. Since Melody began working with Joshua in September 2009, he has shown significant growth. Melody calls Joshua “the encourager” and rejoices in his spiritual development. Lindy adds, “He prays now. My 6-year-old has a spiritual life. . . . It’s a huge step.”

As Melody and the Facklers  
celebrate Joshua's successes together,



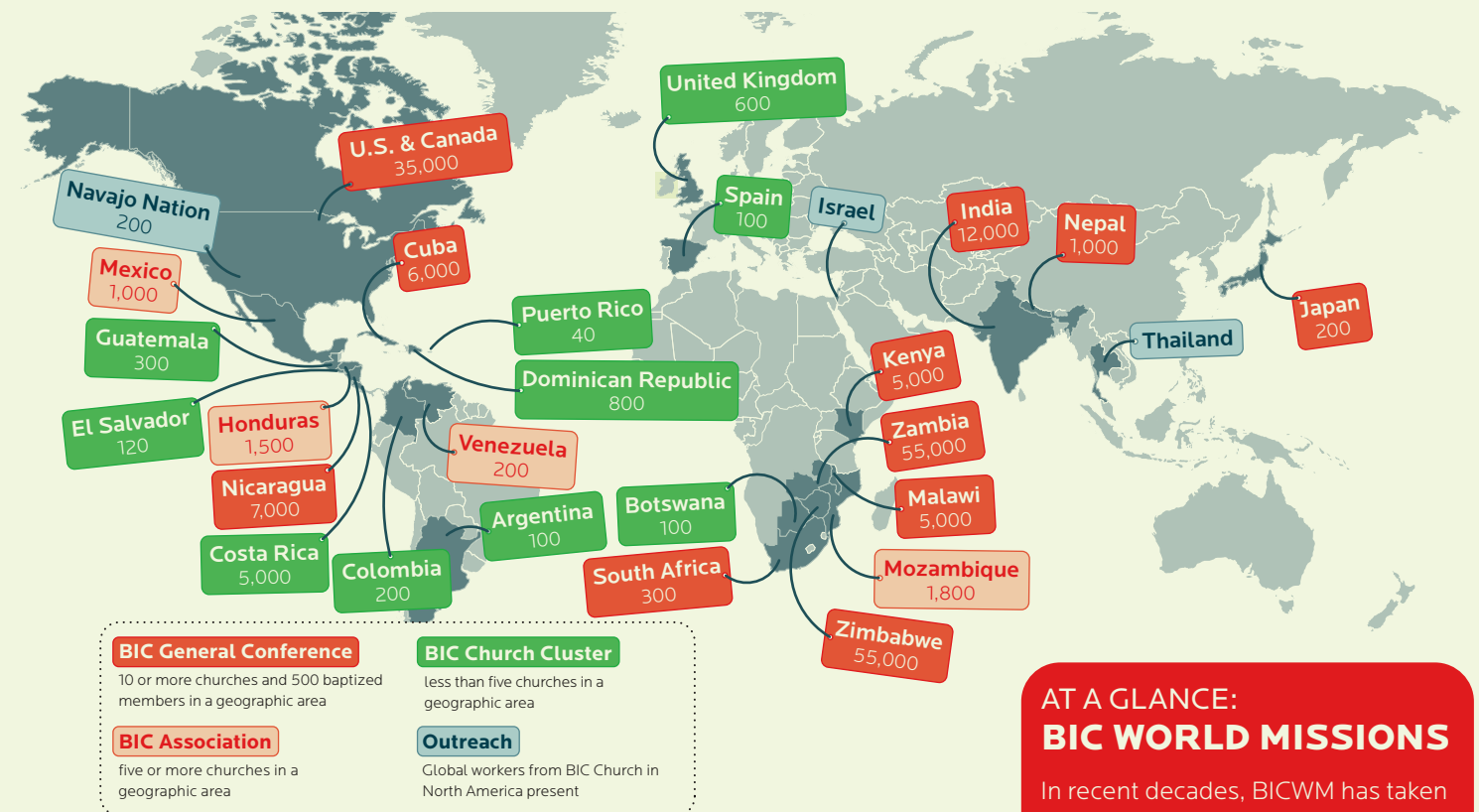
↑ Tracey, Joshua, Ava, and Lindy Fackler (clockwise, from top) thank Melody Vanderveer for helping Joshua, who has autism, each week at their church, Pamyra (Pa.) BIC.

they hope to see more churches adopt the ministry of matching those with special needs with willing volunteers. "Sometimes asking for help is the hardest part . . . but what Melody says is no big thing has had a huge impact on our family," Lindy affirms. "It has absolutely changed the course of our family's life."

→ KELLY FUNK  
*Palmyra (Pa.) BIC*

# MOSAIC

The BIC Church began in Lancaster, Pa., in the 18th century...but it hasn't stayed there. Here's a map of the global BIC Church today, along with attendance estimates.




## AT A GLANCE: BIC WORLD MISSIONS

In recent decades, BICWM has taken some exciting new steps...

 **20** New countries BIC missionaries have entered since 1943

**182** BIC churches  
planted in Cuba  
over the last 55 years

**1989–2009** Years during which the worldwide BIC family more than quadrupled

 **75%** Percentage of BIC churches outside North America

**140** BIC churches among  
23 people groups in  
Orissa, India

## LOVE FEASTS MAKE A COMEBACK



Conversation among attendees of the November 2010 Sider Institute at Grantham (Pa.) BIC brought to light the revival of love feasts, services emphasizing forgiveness and community. Here, two photos—one of women at the 1911 General Conference in Highland, Ohio, preparing a meal for delegates using the setup of a love feast (on left) and the other from a 2009 love feast held by Circle of Hope in Philadelphia (on right)—illustrate how the tradition has been practiced in the past and is being embraced again today.

## What do Brethren in Christ say about witnessing to the world?

How often do you...	...speak about your faith to persons outside your church and family?	...try to convert others to faith in Christ?	...invite non-Christians to attend services or activities at your church?
U.S.	Never 5.0%	Never 24.3%	Never 20.8%
	Yearly 31.8%	Yearly 46.1%	Yearly 56.1%
	Monthly 32.1%	Monthly 14.7%	Monthly 16.3%
	Weekly 26.2%	Weekly 8.8%	Weekly 4.7%
	Daily 4.8%	Daily 6.1%	Daily 2.1%
Canada	Never 3.1%	Never 23.0%	Never 12.9%
	Yearly 31.7%	Yearly 48.2%	Yearly 58.3%
	Monthly 31.4%	Monthly 15.5%	Monthly 18.7%
	Weekly 30.5%	Weekly 7.8%	Weekly 7.4%
	Daily 4.9%	Daily 5.5%	Daily 2.8%



# PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE MAN'S FAITH

## ANDRÉS CARRODEGUAS

*As a young man, he joined a brotherhood and took the vow of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Today, he and his wife of 33 years have three children and eight grandchildren. What prompted the change from monk to married man? Andrés Carrodegua is ready for your questions.*

### How did you come to Christ?

Growing up in Cuba, I attended private Catholic schools taught by members of a worldwide brotherhood. After joining this brotherhood, myself, I studied at the University of Barcelona and was appointed as the Superior of a community in Guatemala City. There, the Holy Spirit helped me understand that the Bible is the only book that is the word of God—not the notes included by the Church or even the Commentaries. Just the Word. And that's how the Superior of the community came to his knees in the privacy of his "cell" and gave his life to Jesus as his only Savior and Lord.

### How did the brotherhood respond to your conversion?

Things changed very rapidly from then on. I was sent to Madrid for a five-month stay in El Escorial. The whole idea was to help me come back to my senses, but what happened was that I had the chance to spread my "madness." I finally left the brotherhood, and three years later I met the woman of my life, Aida.

### Could you talk about your call to ministry?

I felt a very distinct calling from God when I was 9 years old, and I started discipling younger kids when I was only 15. To this day, I take a special interest in teaching and befriending

others, especially younger people, who sometimes feel isolated in churches and meetings. I do believe it's a gift, because it is very easy for me to connect with a kid, or even a teenager, believe it or not.

### How did you come to be a part of Vida Abundante, a BIC church?

After years as missionaries, Aida and I decided to live in Miami. We met Bishop Llanes, and it was mainly his meekness and love, plus what we saw in other members of the BIC Church, that brought us to Vida Abundante.

### Now that you've entered into retirement, what are you up to?

I am 70 years old, praise His name, and the Bible Institute at Vida Abundante is using me as one of its professors. I have also been working in translations since 1980. I've made it my purpose to produce translations that will be pleasant to read and able to make Spanish speakers become Spanish thinkers too.

### What has reaching this new life stage been like for you?

All of our life is a continuous process of change. Our children are not at our home anymore. We have had to adjust to a smaller living place. We love to take care of our grandchildren, but not for *too* long, please! Declining health, not feeling as useful as before—these things make you think of something that becomes more and more real: It is all by His grace, and not by my works.



<b>BIRTHPLACE:</b>	Remedios, Cuba
<b>FAVORITE CAROL:</b>	"Tamborilero" ("The little drummer boy")
<b>IDEAL MEAL:</b>	Meatloaf, with Cuban flan and coffee for dessert
<b>BIBLE VERSE:</b>	John 8:32

### What is one thing you've learned during your lifetime?

There is nobody on this planet Earth you cannot learn from. I have learnt never to despise someone because he or she is less educated, or looks poorer, or belongs to another ethnic group. I always live with the expectation of the Lord teaching me the next lesson—maybe through a young child, or through a bedridden person, or through a peddler in the streets. There's nobody higher or lower than myself, because we were all created in His image.

# TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

## THE POWER TO SHARE

*A visit to a local mosque brings new insight into outreach*

by LYNN THRUSH

### The week was shrouded by drama:

National conversations and passions had been aroused about the propriety of building an Islamic Center two blocks from Ground Zero and by a pastor in Florida who had threatened to burn copies of the Koran. Just the day before, Ramadan had concluded and the U.S. had observed the ninth anniversary of the 9–11 attacks. Nevertheless, on Sunday, September 12, 20 of us from Gateway Community Church made our way over to the local mosque in Chino, Calif.

This was a return visit, as several years before, a group from the mosque had come to our Sunday School class to talk about their faith with us. This time, after enjoying a meal together, I would be sharing about Jesus with them. As I prepared for the time, I found myself grappling with complex questions. What did our groups have in common? How would listeners respond to my message? How could I speak with love, while also speaking clearly about who Jesus is?

One of the Core Values of the Brethren in Christ Church is witnessing to the world. This value is anchored in the twin statements of Acts 1:8: "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

Rather than commands, both of these phrases are statements of fact. We have received the power of the

→ **WITNESSING TO THE WORLD:** We value an active and loving witness for Christ to all people.

Holy Spirit, and we are witnesses to that power as we practice integrity, pursue holiness, cultivate the maturity to be selfless and thus able to serve others, and live with the intellectual confidence that love is the highest ethic in our communities. Strength from the Spirit fosters faith to interact with our neighbors winsomely. With that kind of power, of course we are witnesses!

Yet our outreach to the world is inhibited when we lose the moorings of the biblical message. Especially do we need to be alert for the fear-based theology that gets passed around calling us to be wary of Muslims, to fear them because they are going to take over the world if we do not keep them from doing so. Again, we must remember that Jesus is Lord!

And so, as our group prepared to visit the mosque that Sunday, I chose to take confidence in the Spirit's power in us, looking to build bridges with my message. First, I determined to use the word Allah for God as a way to identify with others, including the millions of Christians who have used and do use this name for God. I also decided to read from the Koran, choosing a beautiful prayer from the first Surah and then referencing Surah 3:46, which talks about Jesus. Next, I emphasized our common history

by mentioning the names shared by Muslims and Christians: Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jonah, and Christ. In my closing, I blessed the group, using a blessing akin to the one Jacob gave Pharaoh in Genesis 47.

After the message, one Muslim man told me, "My esteem for you grows by the minute," and many Gateway folks received warm words of friendship from our hosts. On that September evening, we experienced drama, but not the drama of hate or fear; rather, it was the drama of participating in the great enterprise of God calling all the families of the earth to Himself.



**Lynn Thrush** serves as senior pastor at Gateway Community Church in Chino, Calif. He is also an adjunct professor at Azusa Pacific University and a facilitator for Equipping for Ministry. He is in the midst of writing a book on the theme of hope.



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As North American demographics undergo a dramatic shift, the Church has a unique opportunity to re-imagine its relationship with aging.

BY MICHELLE BRENNEMAN

Beatlemania. John F. Kennedy. Vietnam. Martin Luther King. Apollo 11. Woodstock.

These touchstones of North American culture have shaped the lives and values of one of its most legendary generations: baby boomers. Born just after World War II, between 1946 and 1962, boomers comprise about 20 percent of the population in the U.S. and Canada.

Over the course of their lifetimes, boomers have redefined everything from gender roles and economics to music and politics. Now, the same generation that loudly transitioned to adulthood in the 1960s and early '70s is undergoing another significant life change: In January 2011, the first baby boomers will turn 65.

By 2017, for the first time in our history, older adults will account for a larger share of the population in North America than children aged 0–14. This will impact healthcare, housing, pension plans, social services . . . and the Church.

As Brethren in Christ, we affirm our commitment to providing “an active and loving witness to all people”—this certainly includes everyone from the hour-old infant to the centenarian. In the coming years, as the boomer generation causes a major swing in the makeup of North American society, we have a new opportunity to ask key questions about our ministry: How do we knit together demographics and our commitment to a witness that embraces all ages and stages? What might it look like to reach out to this particular growing group of seekers?

More than a marketing or funding question, we must wrestle with what an aging population will mean for the ministry and mission of the Church.

### The times, they are a-changin’

Since Dave retired six months ago, he has finished those half-done projects around the house, taken that trip he promised his wife, Anne, and brushed up on his golf game. What exactly am I supposed to do now? he wonders sitting at the breakfast table as Anne texts their grandson to find out how his first game of the season went. She often communicated with him this way, grateful for how technology connected her to far-flung family. Who imagined that they could learn more about his life in a single text than during an entire face-to-face visit?

For the 78 million baby boomers in North America, the road ahead is largely uncharted territory. While science has not halted the aging process completely, advances in medicine and technology mean that we are leading longer, healthier lives than previous generations. At the same time, urbanization and increased mobility have resulted in families living farther apart and weakened our expectations of community.

Complicating these shifts in cultural landscape is the reality that late adulthood is the least homogeneous of all age groups. Older adults exhibit great diversity in health, physical and cognitive capacity, financial security, activity levels, social connections, and worldview.

Having watched their own parents navigate old age, baby boomers are looking ahead to their own futures, and many are becoming conscious of a disconnect between the expecta-

tions they hold and the realities they face. While some eagerly anticipate the opportunities retirement will offer, others feel anxious about the limitations it might present. And while some welcome the changes and transitions that come with growing older, others are searching for ways to maintain the status quo. The generation known for pioneering new frontiers is again facing uncharted territory.

**Discrimination against older adults**

At the same time, the general attitude toward aging in North America is informed by our fear of death and dying, our definition of beauty, the value we place on independence and self-sufficiency, and the ways we define success and purpose. These views subtly influence assumptions, even within the Church, and can lead us to draw sweeping conclusions about the abilities, interests, and desires of older adults.

**Older adults long for the hope and assurance faith provides just as much as their younger counterparts.**

Living out these stereotypes may at times lead us to minimize the concerns and losses that occur in this stage of life, make false correlations between physical abilities and intellectual competency, or use our power to do what we “know” is best for an older capable adult, despite their wishes. When negative or misguided assumptions about aging shape our actions, the resulting discrimination is commonly known as ageism.

The Church today is embedded in a culture that devalues and excludes older adults. As a result, our first efforts must be in acknowledging where the Church has lost its distinctiveness and adopted values followed by society.

We can begin by examining the assumptions the Church makes about the spiritual and relational needs of older adults and the purpose and place of older adults in our faith community. Once we become attuned to ways the larger culture has negatively influenced our thinking, we can get down to the work of building relationships, founded on the intentional and generous work of understanding the “other.”

**The role of the Church**

**Laura thinks of Sunday morning and sighs. She’s starting to feel a bit like wallpaper—wallpaper that is supposed to smile and serve quietly in the background. That, and give generously to keep the ministries of the Church going. “Move over and let the young people take charge,” is the message. Not that she doesn’t recognize the need to make space for other generations to dream and do, but where does she fit in?**

Like Laura, some older adults may struggle to reconcile the expectations of the Church with their own needs and desires for meaningful ministry. Humanitarian Jean Vanier speaks into this question when he says, “For me, the message of the Gospel is that each one of us has a gift to give; each one is precious; each one needs to be loved and to belong.”

As is true for people in all age groups, older adults need supportive relationships, space to remain an integral part of church life through an array of ministry contributions, and room to figure out how to live out their faith, even as health and strength may begin to decline.

It might be tempting to assume older adults have fewer spiritual needs than younger generations and that what they need from their faith community is a mix of spiritual maintenance and social activities. An aging population facing the uncertainty of an unknown future longs for the hope and assurance faith provides just as much its younger counterparts.

With this in mind, the Church must discover how to provide opportunities for transformation and discipleship for all ages. In working to treasure those across generations, in creating space for each one to use his or her gifts, and in nurturing an inclusive family in which everyone feels they can belong, the Church bears witness to a more compassionate, scriptural understanding of aging and community.

**Evaluating life, healing wounds**

One way the Church can accomplish this is by creating ways to support people as they name and wrestle with the social and emotional issues of aging.

Life review and repair are both necessary tasks of growing older. We all want to leave a legacy, but as we get closer to the end of life, aspiring turns to assessing, and we take stock of what we will or will not be leaving behind. The process of reflecting, accepting, and releasing what we discover is ground ripe for spiritual growth and transformation.

Moreover, during the busy years of work and family, it is possible to put aside some of the wounds and trauma we experience. But they don’t just disappear, and as we age, our bodies remind us that there are valleys we need to walk through in order to heal. Doing the hard work of forgiving others and ourselves requires support and care, vital roles the Church can fill.

**Finding identity amidst change**

**At this stage in life, it seems everyone assumes he has it all together—that 60+ years of Sunday school and Bible reading mean that his faith has arrived at that elusive place of maturity, that loss is less of a blow, that wisdom and experience prohibit doubt and despair. But the truth is that the ground under his feet feels like it is constantly shifting.**

**Bill used to know who he was: a son, husband, father, employee, friend. Now, after spending a lifetime of investing in these roles, the kids have grown up and moved out, parents have passed away, retirement has come, and marriage roles have shifted and changed. Who am I? Bill wonders. He thought he’d settled that question decades ago. How do people who are supposed to have it all together find a way to talk about this?**

Just as aging causes us to evaluate our past, it also poses new questions for our future. The loss or redefinition of identity markers—mother, father, son, daughter, teacher, carpenter, husband, wife, etc.—forces us to reconsider who we are and, consequently, our purpose and meaning in life. What gifts do we have to share? And how do we share them when our health begins to fail or we don’t live near our family or our friends begin to pass away? What gives meaning to our days?

Holistic spiritual care must acknowledge the losses and support people in this journey of figuring out who we are, especially in our later years as we face potential changes in roles and routine.

**Mutual transformation**

Cultivating close relationships with the older adults in our congregations nurtures a stronger community and shapes everyone’s faith journey. The older adults among us can tell the faith stories of those who have gone before us, helping us to better understand and appreciate who we are as the Church. Similarly, we all learn from the victories and

struggles of others, so as older adults work through their faith questions in community or provide mentorship and support to younger people, they can speak into the ongoing process of faith formation of all.

Older adults also thrive when welcomed as vital members of a community. Even as they share their life experiences and wisdom with others, they gain energy and inspiration from younger people. Members of new generations encourage those of older ones by showing how the previous generation’s efforts laid the foundation of the work being done today.

**A mosaic community**

Intergenerational community is hard to find in our culture, but it shouldn’t be hard to find in our churches. As a family of faith, we affirm our commitment to embrace people of all ages, races, ethnicities, genders, marital statuses, mental and physical abilities, and socioeconomic backgrounds, and we recognize that everyone is equally in need of Christ’s redeeming love and grace. Using this as a starting point, we need to shape our ministries to serve children, teens, college students, young adults, families, middle-age adults, and older adults at their distinct points of need.

Franciscan priest Father Richard Rohr has said, “How I do anything is how I do everything.” From this perspective, the way the Church serves older adults—or any group—is a window into its beliefs about diversity and the possibility of living in peace with others. Being an active and loving witness to an aging population may perhaps seem like a small example of our love for all people, but how we treat each other when differences are small often reveals how we’ll respond when the differences seem great.

As a new generation stands at the threshold of older adulthood, we have the opportunity to engage questions about our role as the Church. Setting aside stereotypes, prejudices, society’s biases, and our own visions of what the Church should look like, we must embrace the body that God has called us to become. May we engage with this opportunity as part of our communal faith formation, exploring what it might mean to be the body of Christ in an aging society.



**Michelle Brenneman** coordinates the restorative justice programming of Mennonite Central Committee Ontario. One of the projects she leads is Circles of Care, an initiative designed to support those who have experienced elder abuse as they move toward community and healing. Michelle and her husband, Brad, live with their three children in Kitchener, ON, and attend Westheights Community Church.





# Disarming witness

How one couple dares to share  
Christ on both sides of the  
Israeli-Palestinian conflict

by  
**Dulcimer  
Hope  
Brubaker**

← From the kitchen window of their office in Bethlehem, Hank and Michele Dannecker look out over one of the most contested parcels of land on the planet: the Israeli neighborhood of Har Homa. Though just one mile apart, Bethlehem and Har Homa couldn't be farther away from each other. Between them lies the West Bank barrier, a system of walls, trenches, and gates that separates Israeli territory from that of the Palestinian Authority. For millennia, war over the land of their ancestors—the Holy Land—has torn Israelis and Palestinians apart. Today, these two peoples live behind walls and checkpoints, in fear of aerial attacks and suicide bombers—in fear of one another.

Hank made his first trip to Israel in 1995, after hearing a report on the radio about a suicide bombing. “He wanted to see things firsthand, to understand why someone would do that,” explains Michele. But when he arrived in Israel, what he experienced was far messier and more complex than any news coverage he'd seen in the States. Hank recalls, “That first year, I was really struck by the realization that there are two sides to every conflict.”

An ordained minister, Hank continued to visit Israel and Palestine, making friends on both sides of the border and growing in his concern for families, especially Palestinians, who have limited access to medical care.

On one such trip, Hank met Jumanah (pronounced joo-MAH-nuh). A young Muslim girl from Hebron, a town in the Palestinian-controlled West Bank, Jumanah had been diagnosed with leukemia. Her father was out of work and her condition required a costly bone marrow transplant. Jumanah was expected to die within a few weeks. After listening to Hank read from the book of James, Jumanah's father asked him to anoint her with oil on the spot and pray to Jesus because their prayers to Allah had not been answered.

After returning to the U.S., Hank and the BIC church plant he was leading began a fundraising campaign for Jumanah's family. The bone marrow transplant would cost \$80,000 (U.S.), far more than they could raise, so the funds went to help the family with their living expenses. Without insurance or money to pay for the procedure, Jumanah died a few years later, leaving the Danneckers with a heart and vision to help other kids like her.

## Saving hearts

In 2007, Hank and Michele, along with their young children, moved to Jerusalem to partner with Save a Child's Heart (SACH), an Israeli humanitar-

ian agency that performs surgeries on children from around the world who are born with congenital heart defects (CHDs). While many CHDs can be reversed through reconstructive surgery, such care is often out of reach for children in less developed countries. They rarely live to adulthood. SACH performs—and, along with the Israeli government, subsidizes—each surgery, relying on sponsor agencies to provide transportation in and out of Israel, hospitality, and additional funding.

Initially, Hank and Michele worked under one of these existing sponsor agencies as covenant partners with Brethren in Christ World Missions (BICWM). But in 2009, when they became full-fledged workers under BICWM, they founded 1NewHeart, a new sponsor agency, in order to more fully invest in families' lives as their children undergo heart surgery.

1NewHeart's primary focus is on Palestinian children from the West Bank and Gaza, for whom the incidence of CHD can be as high as 30 in 1,000 live births (as opposed to 8 in 1,000 in the U.S. and 10 in 1,000 in Canada). Lacking the medical facilities to perform these open-heart surgeries, Palestinians must look to Israel for treatment. But





because they cannot cross into Israel without sponsorship, organizations like SACH and 1NewHeart are often their only hope.

In March 2009, an 8-year-old girl named Majed (pronounced MAHjhd) became 1NewHeart’s first sponsored child. Born with a hole in her heart, Majed came from a Muslim family in Jenin, a city in the West Bank where Israeli–Palestinian tensions run high. When the time came for her surgery, Hank drove out to Jenin to take her to the Wolfson Medical Center in Tel Aviv. Majed’s parents were

and invited all the poor people of the town to join his family for a daylong celebration. Before Hank left, Majed’s father made him promise that he would always be a part of her life. “You helped save her; you help raise her,” he said. This is a charge Hank and Michele don’t take lightly.

Crossing the barrier

Although Majed’s surgery and recovery spanned just one week, many children spend months—or even a year—in the hospital. While there, these children and

Won over by gratitude, these families welcome people of another faith into their homes and into their lives—a rare occurrence in this land of barriers and walls. “Even though it might be against the culture in Israel and Palestine, they attach to us,” explains Hank. “They want to be part of us. They want to hear about Jesus.”

Back home in Jerusalem, and at the Jewish-staffed hospital in Tel Aviv, Hank and Michele raise plenty of eyebrows with the work they do among Palestinians. Because it is illegal—and highly dangerous—for Israeli citizens to

get involved in someone’s conflict. And that’s messy business. But if the Jews believe in saving their enemies’ lives, how much more should the Church be engaged in this?”

It is this intercessory position to which Hank and Michele feel most called. Citing Jesus’ role as mediator in believers’ individual hearts, their ministry is firmly grounded in Ephesians 2: “For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility. . . . His purpose was to create in Himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace,



BIC missionaries Michele and Hank Dannecker have three children, AbbyRose, Levi, and Moriah (not pictured).



Eight-year-old Majed (right), 1NewHeart’s first sponsor child, says goodbye to her parents, who, as Palestinians under the age of 37, were not permitted to cross into Israel to be with her as she underwent major heart surgery.



Following hours in surgery, Majed recovers in record time at Wolfson Medical Center in Tel Aviv, under the watchful eye of her grandfather.



More than 100 friends and family gather to welcome Majed home after her surgery.

unable to accompany her, so the only familiar faces she saw at the hospital were that of her grandfather and Hank. This is common among the Palestinian children the Danneckers have served. Parents from Gaza who are under the age of 37 are not permitted to accompany their children to the hospital in Tel Aviv because they fit the demographic for a suicide bomber.

“It’s heartbreaking,” Michele reflects. “We have pictures of Majed’s parents hugging her goodbye as she leaves with her grandfather and not knowing if they’re going to see their child again.”

Majed was in surgery for five hours; her heart was stopped for 18 minutes while surgeons repaired the hole. She recovered in record time and, when Hank drove her home to Jenin five days later, more than 100 friends and family members were ready and waiting. In traditional fashion, Majed’s father had borrowed money, killed two sheep,

any accompanying family members require daily support. Palestinian parents and grandparents are never permitted to leave the hospital building, and from Friday to Saturday night—the Jewish Sabbath—the hospital prepares no food. So, it’s up to Hank and Michele to make sure the families have everything they need, from clothing and meals to toiletries and SIM cards for their phones.

With children’s lives on the line, it can be tempting to sponsor too many surgeries at once. Hank and Michele’s target is to sponsor one child per month. “It’s a huge responsibility,” Hank says. “After the surgery, there’s a spiritual connection, and we want to take time to really invest in these families.” Long after kids are discharged from the hospital, Hank and Michele are keeping in touch with their Palestinian friends.

For many Muslim families, this is their first face-to-face encounter with Christianity, and they’re visibly impressed.

go into the West Bank, the medical staff can’t help but ask why Hank would risk his life to transport a Palestinian child to the hospital. Doctors tell him, “Your heart is great, but you have no common sense.”

This is something Hank and Michele hear a lot. But they stick to their calling, as Hank put it to Michele back in 2000, when violence erupted in Israel and Palestine, and the U.S. State Department advised all U.S. citizens to leave: “Christians should be in Israel.”

Making peace

Three years into their ministry, Hank and Michele feel more strongly than ever about being a Christian presence in Israel and Palestine. “One of our Core Values as Brethren in Christ says that we embrace peace and reconciliation,” Hank says. “If you’re going to be a peacemaker, you gotta

and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross” (verses 14–16a).

The Danneckers’ visas run out in two years, at which time they pray God will continue to work through 1NewHeart to share the disarming compassion and love of Jesus with people on both sides of the conflict. Until then, fueled by a faith that crosses borders and values life regardless of religion or nationality, Hank and Michele stand firm in the middle of the conflict.



Dulcimer Hope Brubaker formerly served as editor for the BIC Communications Office. A 2004 graduate of Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.), she and her husband, Jason, live in Pittsburgh, Pa., with their toddler daughter.



## VIBES

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH AND POPULAR CULTURE



Looking at Brett McCracken's book as it considers the relationship between "cool" and "Christian"

BY JEFF MILLER

**"Cool."** The word has had little to do with Christianity. That is, until now. And for author Brett McCracken, this brings up a whole lot of questions—questions that he explores in his new book *Hipster Christianity: When church and cool collide*.

*Hipster Christianity* revolves around one main question: Should Christianity be cool? Wisely, he does not race to answer this but instead seeks to define his terms.

Cool, McCracken writes, is "an attractive attribute that embodies the existential strains to be independent, enviable, one-of-a-kind, and trailblazing." (Yeah, I had to take a nap half-way through it too!) And what about hipsters? For the author, hipsters are simply young people who are rebellious, edgy, and fashionable.

After examining the history of hip in North American culture (think hip-pies) and the various types of hipsters that exist today (think urban or college-town artists, yuppies, or activists), McCracken shares the story of Christianity's journey toward embracing the "cool"—from the Jesus People movement in the '70s to Christian rock.

This movement toward what is hip, McCracken suggests, has created "Christian hipsters," young people in the Church today who embrace certain shared values and attitudes. For one, fashion and art are huge among Christian hipsters. Skinny jeans and scarves are common, while listening to tunes from Sufjan Stevens and U2 is almost required. They celebrate a wide array of artistic forms and appreciate the works of authors like Ron Sider, N.T. Wright, and Anne Lamott.

Christian hipsters aren't big fans of altar calls and door-to-door evangelism, and they tend to look up to people like Shane Claiborne, Mark Driscoll, Donald Miller, and Rob Bell. Theologically, they often resonate with parts of the emergent church conversation and to the idea of missional living, which centers on living for God's kingdom right now. Consequently, they are known for being passionate about social justice issues, such as poverty and creation care.

To be honest, in many ways, I was hearing McCracken describe me. These were the things I was passionate about, the people I respected and read, and the things that I did or didn't like. I soon thought, "If this was what it means to be a Christian hipster, then sign me up!" Cool never looked so good.

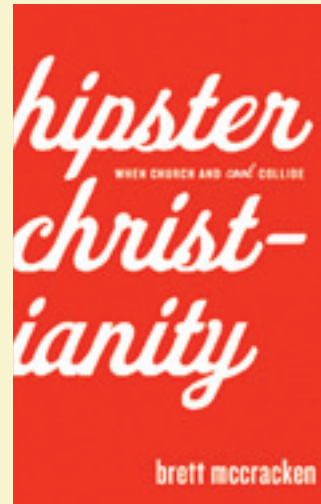
Yet this wasn't the whole story. *Hipster Christianity* isn't a mere

announcement of this new movement but also a critique of it. First off, McCracken rejects the idea that the Gospel needs to be marketed as "cool" for its audience. Though I see where he's coming from, I was surprised that he didn't wrestle with Paul's charge in 1 Corinthians 9 to become "all things to all men," because sometimes we have to speak the language of the people we're trying to reach.

## In our changing culture, I think cool has the chance to be redeemed.

Secondly, McCracken suggests that some Christians have gone too far to embrace culture for the sake of seeming cool. This is an important issue because, as he points out, the message is not separate from the medium we use to share it. How we live and present ourselves to the watching world is fused with the good news we bring, so we need to be careful that they both reflect Jesus.

That said, I agree with McCracken when he says that coolness is often undergirded by un-Christ-like traits, such as individualism, pride, vanity, and a



focus on the now. If that is what cool means, then it has little room for Jesus and His kingdom.

But I wonder, Is that what cool *has* to be? You see, in our changing culture, I think cool has the chance to be redeemed. Pursuing peace and justice in order to advance God's kingdom can be cool. Loving and accepting all people, no matter who they are can be cool. To his credit, McCracken acknowledges this and in fact calls believers to pursue what he calls the "authentic Christian cool."

As a whole, this book was thought-provoking, timely, and something that I didn't expect: fair. McCracken's love for the Church shines through as he spends most of his time looking for common ground to build others up instead of tearing them down. It's a beautiful thing and a hopeful sign for future dialogue.

Overall, *Hipster Christianity* is one of the first books that gives an objective and holistic picture of this fresh wind that is blowing through Christianity. And though it's a wind that has its flaws and potential hazards, it is full of Jesus and has the ability to speak to the younger generations in a powerful way. And that, I think we can all agree, is pretty cool.



**Jeff Miller** is an associate pastor at Cumberland Valley Church (BIC). He lives in Dillsburg, Pa., with his wife, Shannon, and their 9-month-old daughter, Alyssa, who, for the record, thinks her dad is cool . . . at least for now.

## RECORD RECORDINGS: BRETHREN IN CHRIST REVIEW THEIR FAVORITE ALBUMS OF ALL TIME



SARA GROVES

*Fireflies and Songs* (2009)

Sara Groves is well-known in Christian music for her thought-provoking lyrics. I had especially enjoyed "You are the sun" and "The first song that I sing" on her previous albums, so last Christmas, my husband purchased Groves' new *Fireflies and Songs* album for me. We usually just purchase songs we really like, so I wasn't sure whether buying the whole album was a good move. However, over the next few weeks, I found myself playing it again, and again, and again.

*Fireflies and Songs* is not necessarily a Christian album; it is more about life, and it genuinely captures the way that faith can intersect with many experiences, including marriage, relationships, and common struggles. "Different kinds of happy" is a beautiful song about honesty in marriage: "It's a sweet, sweet thing, standing here with you with nothing to hide, light shining down to our very insides." Later, "It's me" lyrically captures the pain that can come quickly during marital discord: "Run for your life, all tenderness is gone." The sweet joy and true connection of special friendships are the subject of the upbeat track "Twice as good."

There were some songs on the album that I didn't connect with as well as others. In "This house," Groves recounts going with her daughter to visit the home where she grew up, but the track's lyrics are so personal that they might not feel relevant to a wider audience. Additionally, the fast beat and bluegrass sounds of "Setting up the pins" are catchy but seem out of place on the album.

The album's final track, "Joy is in our hearts," is a song of encouragement in the Lord, reminding listeners that Christ is our joy and strength.

I resonated with this album's authentic, acoustic sound, and with Groves' poignant words, which expressed experiences and feelings that can sometimes seem as elusive as fireflies in the night.



**Michelle Foster** and her husband, Jeff, are new BIC church planters at Gospel Life BIC in Des Plaines, Ill. A graduate of the University of Missouri and a mother of four, Michelle currently works as a business information editor.



## TO THE POINT

How does your congregation balance the call to provide an “active and loving witness to all people” and the practice of tailoring its ministries to meet the needs/tastes of a particular demographic?

### David Brandt

Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC

Successful marketing often depends on finding specialized segments, and the Church has long catered to specific demographic groups.

Yet somehow, marketing the Gospel is both the same and different from marketing commercial goods. We are commanded to witness (sell), and I find strong support in Scripture that this witness should be for everyone. ***I don't find anything in Scripture that suggests we segment the market. The church has always been for everyone.***

Tensions of any kind require wise, discerning leaders who help the congregation depend on the Bible to find its way. This is usually neither easy nor simple.

### Dan Houck

The Table Community Church (Lancaster, Pa.)

The reality is that this is not a new issue. Churches have always made decisions that appealed to some but not others. Think of your “base,” the people you are most likely to connect with. ***Now, the goal is to stretch that base, challenging them in new areas of diversity and moving them out of their comfort zone.*** Make the defining feature of your church not the worship style or programs, but rather the sense of community. People from all backgrounds are loved and cared for at your church.

### Ron Bowell

CrossRoads Church (Salina, Kans.)

It is impractical to expect any individual or local church body to succeed at witnessing to all 7 billion people living in this world.

When my Dad taught me how to hunt ducks, he said, “Sometimes the flock will look so thick that you think you can't miss, but resist the tendency to just shoot into the flock. ***You need to pick a target or you'll usually end up missing them all.***”

The targeting of a specific demographic should not be seen as a decision to exclude, alienate, or fail to welcome those outside that demographic but instead as the best shot we have at not missing them all.

### Todd Hammond

Highland BIC (West Milton, Ohio)

Ideally, we'd like to be all things to all people at the Highland Church, but the reality is that we do not have the resources to offer services and programs across the spectrum of styles and interests that would allow us to do this. Rather than try to do everything and end up succeeding at nothing, we are focusing on cultivating a spirit of hospitality to everyone who visits. ***Our hope is that even if our particular worship style isn't exactly what they're looking for, the love of Christ that they feel will make them want to come back again.***

## PARTING WORDS

### OF SHEEP AND WOLVES

*A call to commission the whole flock*

by PERRY ENGLE

The congregation chuckled when I told them the title of my message: “Finding joy and purpose in living like sheep among wolves.” I mentioned I would be focusing on the Scripture where Jesus commissions His followers by telling them, “Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves” (Luke 10:1–3).

Personally, I've always liked commissioning services where pastors, Sunday school teachers, and deacons are blessed for work within the Church. But I've come to consider it a shame that we don't go to the same lengths for those who make up the majority of our congregations—those in the flock who head out into the workplace every day, with wolves howling and nipping at their heels. I've wondered lately what it would be like if we, like Jesus, celebrated and commissioned every believer for the work of the Kingdom, sending each one forth to live a life of mission and purpose in an increasingly anti-Christian world.

With this in mind, I interviewed some friends whose lives and vocations are centered outside the four walls of the Church. I asked them what it's like to find joy and purpose in living like sheep among wolves.

Allison, a senior at a State University in California, told me that most of her professors are not sympathetic at all to her Christian values. “You need to know what you believe and why you believe it,” she said, “because your faith will be tested. It's hard. But if you let it,

the experience will definitely sharpen your witness for God.”

I spoke with Rod, who is vice president of human resources for a global architectural and engineering firm. He told me he prayed for two things his first day out of college: that God would help him become the best professional he could be, and that people would always know what he stood for. Certainly, there are times when he is asked to bend the rules in some “gray” legal areas of business. But his goal every day is to stand firm in his values and say no to moral compromise.

I interviewed Brooke, a middle-school math teacher in inner-city Philadelphia. “The need is so great,” she said, “and the work so all-consuming, that sometimes I feel close to burn-out.” She told me that she's very aware that she can't do the job alone and desperately needs the Holy Spirit for God's wisdom and strength. She added that one of the greatest encouragements is when her church acknowledges that

what she does as a public school teacher is a ministry and not simply a job.

I ended my talk that morning with these words of commissioning to the congregation:

“Jesus has appointed each of you to go and live a life of mission in your schools, jobs, communities, and churches. I commission you to live as examples of God's love and grace in the midst of a broken world. Embrace every opportunity to share the good news of Jesus Christ, whether by word or deed. Be strong in the Lord, and put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. Above all, never forget that the One who lives in you is infinitely greater than the one who is in the world. To this good work I commit you, in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”



**Perry Engle** finds joy and purpose in his job as bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church. He and his wife, Marta, and their family live in Ontario, Calif.





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