

# IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

*Fall 2011*

## MOSAIC COMMUNITY

IN THE MIDST OF GROWING DIVERSITY, HOW CAN WE RELATE TO EACH OTHER?

**PLUS:** One small group gets (un)comfortable.

**AND** Can churches learn about community from the Y?

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I'm signed up to receive *In Part* by email, but I'm wondering if I can please get a copy of the summer issue mailed to me? I'd like to keep it around and read it often—and have my visitors read it, as well.

Thank you for a “breath-of-fresh-air” issue.

Julie Moyer (Waterloo, ON)

Although I am not attending a Brethren in Christ church at present, I lived under the spiritual wings of the BIC for 70 years. The summer issue of *In Part* was filled with memories about and by friends. Thank you for such good reads!

I was especially excited to read about dear Virgie Kraybill [in “Overcoming obstacles, fulfilling needs”]! Her home was my second childhood home. Mary Helen [one of Virgie’s daughters] was a “big sister” and my matron of honor. Never was I aware of Virgie’s struggles—we just had fun at her home.

Lois A. Tidgwell (Upland, Calif.)

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Dear brothers and sisters,

I was all set to write a letter to you about how we’re making history by being a part of the BIC Church in North America—which, today, is more diverse than it’s ever been in our entire 230 years of existence—and about the joys and challenges that come with this. But then, I came across this quote from priest and writer Henri Nouwen, whose reflections on community seemed to encapsulate my message with greater acuity and in far fewer words—gotta love when that happens.

COMMUNITY IS THE PLACE WHERE THE PERSON YOU LEAST WANT TO LIVE WITH ALWAYS LIVES. OFTEN WE SURROUND OURSELVES WITH THE PEOPLE we most want to live with, thus forming a club or a clique, NOT A COMMUNITY. Anyone can form a club; it takes grace, shared vision, and hard work to FORM A COMMUNITY.

—Henri Nouwen (1932–1996)

To realize the kind of authentic, untidy community Nouwen envisions, we’ll need to intentionally seek out relationships with those who seem different from us, as illustrated in “Belonging to the community of faith” on page 10. And as “You are here (and here and here)” on page 6 conveys, we’ll also need to come to a better understanding of the full, splendid mosaic of which we are a part as a Church family. Just one word of warning: This might require a (literal) change in perspective!

In peace,

Kristine

Kristine N. Frey, editor

A FAREWELL . . .

This spring, Nate Bridi, the graphic designer and web developer for the BIC Church in North America, and his wife moved to Pittsburgh, Pa. Despite being out of the office, he graciously worked to design *In Part*’s summer issue, as well as the beginnings of this fall edition, from his new home. We would like to offer our deep appreciation to Nate for the ingenuity, calm, and cleverness he brought to the BIC Communications team over his four years with us.

Thank you!

. . . AND A GREETING

We would also like to extend a very warm welcome to Will Teodori, who has taken on the position of graphic designer/web developer. Will, a 2011 graduate of Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.), comes to us with bright ideas and fresh perspectives, and we look forward to the ways he’ll continue to shape *In Part*, beginning with this Fall 2011 issue!



IN PART

Fall 2011 VOLUME 124 NUMBER 4

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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NOW AT INPART.ORG:

“Life together”

By Keith Miller

One BIC church planter explores the community of faith as it existed in the days of the Early Church.

FEATURES

6 You are here (and here and here)

→ Viewing the BIC Church in North America as a full mosaic

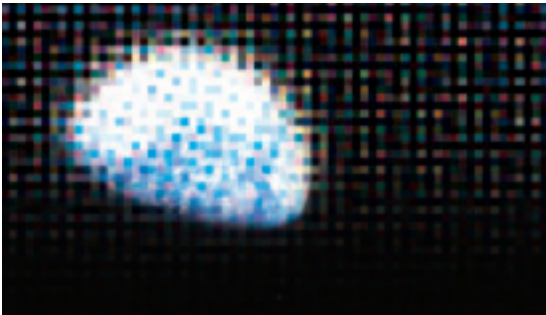
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## IN MOTION

## TRANSFORMATION 2020

We're one year into *Transformation 2020*, a vision for what the BIC Church of North America hopes to be by 2020. Here's a glimpse into some of the ways we're pursuing transformation together!



## EQUIPPING LEADERS FOR TRANSFORMATION

One of the greatest threats to those in ministry is burn-out. That's why, this July, the BIC Church in North America hosted its quadrennial Ministry Enrichment Retreat (MER), welcoming 180 ministry leaders and their spouses to Dublin, Ohio, for relaxation, celebration, training, renewal, and fellowship. "Everything—from the schedule to the accommodations to the chance to connect with others—was awesome," noted one attendee. "We needed this!" See MER 2011 highlights at [vimeo.com/26633547](http://vimeo.com/26633547).



PHOTO: Courtesy of Ron Howell

## MULTIPLYING SITES FOR LIFE CHANGE

On January 1, 2011, Ron Howell, pastor of CrossRoads Church (Salina, Kans.), posted the first entry on his blog, "Friar Tuck's Word of the Day." At the time, his vision for the daily devotional was fairly simple. "I promoted it at church, thinking I would have some folks interested in it," he states. But just 10 months into the project, Ron reports that in addition to locals, he has regular readers from 47 countries, including Bangladesh, Bosnia, Turkey, and South Korea. "We really can have an effect on the world without ever leaving home," he says. [crossroadsdevotional.blogspot.com](http://crossroadsdevotional.blogspot.com)

## SENDING WORKERS FOR WITNESS AND SERVICE

At this point, there are two BIC churches in Spain. One, a storefront below an apartment building, faces a bustling highway that heads straight into the heart of the sprawling metropolitan city of Madrid. The other is located 35 minutes away, in Hoyo de Manzanares, a secluded, rural town nestled in the mountains. Despite their differences and the distance between them, these two churches have been meeting three times a week to pray for radical transformation in their lives and the lives of their neighbors.



## SPIRITUAL REVOLUTION

The timeline below summarizes the myriad changes that took place in the BIC community in the 1950s, as we worked to balance our desire to embrace tradition while avoiding legalism.

1950

At the National Association of Evangelicals, BIC leaders are galvanized by the "peculiar liberty and opportunity for ministry" they observe among evangelicals.

The Church Review and Study Committee forms to discuss issues such as Christian apparel, head coverings, life insurance, etc.

Full-time, financially supported pastorate replaces the practice of hiring bi-vocational, self-funded pastors.

1951

Use of musical instruments in worship, purchase of life insurance, and associate membership for divorced/remarried persons are permitted.

1952

"Plain" church uniforms are no longer stipulated.

1955

Re-baptism for new members not originally baptized by trine immersion is no longer mandatory.

1957

Specific type of head covering for women is no longer required.

1958

Wedding rings and military service by members are allowed.

## NEWS FLASH

Updates about the summer programs hosted by BIC camps across the U.S. and Canada



FEATURED EVENT



NUMBER OF GUESTS/CAMPERS



HIGHLIGHTS

## CAMP FREEDOM (St. Petersburg, Fla.)

- ★ Camp Meeting (Jan. 28–Feb. 6)
- # 3,121
- 👍 1,419 viewers from 10 different countries watched live-streaming from the camp's website

## CAMP KAHQUAH (Magnetawan, ON)

- ★ Youth summer camps and family camp
- # 1,200
- 👍 As a result of completing the camp's leadership training program, several campers returned as youth camp directors

## CHRISTIAN RETREAT CENTER (East Waterford, Pa.)

- ★ Youth summer camps
- # 211
- 👍 Scholarship program enabled 112 at-risk youth to attend
- 👍 Twenty-eight campers accepted Christ

## KENBROOK BIBLE CAMP (Lebanon, Pa.)

- ★ Youth summer camps
- # 650
- 👍 Over 50 campers made commitments to Christ
- 👍 Said one camper, "[Camp] was a major encouragement to my walk with Christ."

## MEMORIAL HOLINESS CAMP (West Milton, Ohio)

- ★ Camp Meeting (July 15–23)
- # 150
- 👍 The 2011 meeting took place during the hottest week in a decade
- 👍 Attendees raised \$5,500 (USD) for BIC World Missions and church planting

## MILE HIGH PINES (Angelus Oaks, Calif.)

- # 2,300
- 👍 One young woman contemplating suicide found Jesus and has since joined a nurturing spiritual family
- 👍 Overall guest attendance was up 32 percent and camper days were up 68 percent from last year

## ROXBURY HOLINESS CAMP (Roxbury, Pa.)

- ★ Camp Meeting (Aug. 5–14)
- # 1,250
- 👍 From a college student: "This week, God confirmed in so many ways that I am to serve Him in cross-cultural missions."
- 👍 Fifty children responded to the invitation to put their trust in Christ



PHOTO BY MAHLEN PETRY

## FOCUS

This year, two BIC churches—Morning Hour Chapel BIC (East Berlin, Pa.) and Luz, Alegria, y Esperanza (York Springs, Pa.)—decided to combine their Vacation Bible School (VBS) programs. As a result, 113 Spanish- and English-speaking kids participated in the joint offering, together raising \$1,400 (USD) for the week's mission goal. Says David Rose, pastor of Morning Hour Chapel, "We weren't even sure that we'd all be able to fit into our sanctuary, but God provided, and VBS this year was such an example of God's outpouring into the lives of the children in our community."

# PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE WOMAN’S FAITH

## BARBARA TEDFORD

*She doesn’t attend a BIC church or come from a BIC home. But as a resident of Upland (Calif.) Manor, a BIC-sponsored retirement community, she is part of a diverse and growing network of people being reached by our shared ministries. Barbara Tedford will now take your questions.*

### Would you share a bit about your spiritual journey?

My parents did not go to church, but they made sure my two brothers and I attended—first the Church of England and then a neighborhood Methodist Church. I didn’t have an emotional experience like some people talk about. It’s just always been there.

I’ve been a member of the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Ontario, Calif., for over 50 years. I currently serve as a deacon and member of the worship committee.

### What brought you from England to the United States?

In January 1944, I met an American serviceman, Sergeant Doyle “Ted” Tedford, from Waco, Texas. It was love at first sight! We were married in September of the same year. After the war, we moved to the United States in 1946 and eventually settled in Southern California.

### How did you hear about Upland Manor?

A friend of mine—a lady from Holland—lived here. When she learned that there were openings at the Manor, she suggested I move in. That was in 1994.

The Upland Manor community was very welcoming. It felt like I was coming home. In fact, it was so good that I’ve found myself inviting friends to come and live at the Manor, too!

### In what areas do you participate in life at the Manor?

I have been involved in creating table decorations for the Manor dining room for a long time. I work with Dorcas Engle, the Manor manager, in creating centerpieces on different themes. This led to the idea of getting residents together to make Christmas decorations. We’ve been doing that for about five or six years now.

### Has there been a time when you felt especially supported by your neighbors at Upland?

When my brother died very unexpectedly, members of the Manor community rallied around me. Expressions like, “I’m sorry to hear about Bill’s death,” and “Is there anything I can do for you, Barbara?” made me feel warm and cared for.

### Have there been any challenges to being part of a community?

Being part of a community means learning to give and take. You have to get used to living with people who are different from you—different cultures, different interests, different ages, different abilities. It’s been a learning experience—but a good one for me.



**Hometown:**  
Grimsby, Lincolnshire, in England

**Most cherished British custom:**  
Afternoon tea, a tradition I observe daily at 4 p.m.!

**Favorite music:**  
Opera

**Favorite dessert:**  
Pecan pie

**A movie that made you think:**  
*The King’s Speech* clarified for me happenings in England prior to World War II. (I was a teenager at the time and not interested in current events!)



This interview was conducted by **Dorcas Lady Good**, who lives with her husband, Dennis, at Upland (Calif.) Manor. They attend Upland BIC.

# TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

## A TIME OF TRANSITION

*A look at how 60 years ago, God transformed the BIC Church into a more welcoming and loving community*

by CHARLIE B. BYERS

In the 1930s and 1940s, a strong evangelistic fervor spread across the Brethren in Christ Church in North America. Outstanding revivals and camp meetings became an important way for the Brethren to share the message of God’s salvation with the world.

Unfortunately, the BIC were very modest about inviting converts from these services to join the Church. In this era, the Church encouraged a deep commitment to a way of life separated from “the world” and put a strong emphasis on conservative dress, the peace position, and codes of conduct. If new converts would conform, they could join—but few were interested in taking our “plain way.”

Soon a rude awakening came to the brotherhood. We found that our sons and daughters, like our converts, were not as much in love with the Church and its doctrines as we had assumed. Some were leaving our fellowship! Thus, by the late 1940s, we had to accept the fact that, despite the great revivals of the past decades, our small membership was decreasing in size. We were unprepared to serve the present age. The time had come for our Church to give serious consideration to its position.

That consideration was sparked by an informal, unplanned meeting of some brethren—including myself—during a National Association of Evangelicals convention in 1950. There,

→ **BELONGING TO THE COMMUNITY OF FAITH:** We value integrity in relationships and mutual accountability in an atmosphere of grace, love, and acceptance.



we talked unofficially of things in the Church that should be reevaluated.

Out of that meeting eventually came a study committee appointed by General Conference. And as a result of the committee’s work, the brotherhood made some sweeping changes in Church life.

Initially, these included a move away from small districts to large regional conferences, and soon to a salaried pastoral system. More radical changes followed: the use of musical instruments in church services; the acceptance of church choirs; dress codes as guidelines, not requirements. In addition, the Church developed new ecumenical associations and greater mission outreach overseas and in cities.

As a result, the Brethren in Christ Church has doubled its membership since the late 1940s. Instead of being a spectator watching the parade of the world go by, it has become a participant in the battle for souls.

This time of transition has not always been easy; transition causes certain pain and tension. Yet the brotherhood is still the same in seeking to know, understand, and apply the word of the Lord. I believe that God raised up the Brethren in Christ Church 200 years ago for a purpose and, amid all this transition, He has been preparing the Church to more faithfully go out into the streets and lanes of our cities and towns to “bring in hither the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind”—to see His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven!

*This article is based on “The Brethren in Christ Church in My Lifetime,” originally published in the June 1979 issue of the journal Brethren in Christ History and Life.*



**Charlie B. Byers** (1908–1996) served for many years as a bishop, minister, and evangelist in the Brethren in Christ Church of North America.



[and  
HERE]

By Warren L. Hoffman  
with Kristine N. Frey

# YOU are HERE

VIEWING THE BIC CHURCH  
IN NORTH AMERICA AS A

[and  
HERE]

[and  
HERE]

full  
mosaic

WHEN WE VISUALIZE THE WORLD, many of us conjure up images informed by photographs taken from space. For most of human history, these spectacular views of the Earth did not exist. But for those of us who were living when the first views of our planet from space came out, we remember the profound impact it had on our perspectives. As NASA photographic technician Jay Friedlander has observed, “We’re on this little Earth. We’re only part of some grand solar system in some big galaxy and universe. That’s why this picture is important, because this was the first time that anyone on Earth got this sense.”

Viewing our world from space helped us comprehend our place in the grand scheme of things and revealed the breathtaking beauty that we’re a part of. In the same way, having the opportunity to step back and look at the Church from a broader landscape than the one we usually see in our day-to-day lives can be eye-opening and magnificent. While celebrating what’s happening “here” in our local congregations and regions, we also proclaim the kingdom of God as it takes hold around the world—here and here and here—by being a part of a larger family, a denomination, which gives us a fuller view of the body of Christ in all its splendor.

#### A broadening vision

For much of our history, the full picture of the Brethren in Christ Church in North America would not have been so expansive. We were a relatively homogeneous community. Most of us were of European descent, spoke English

(and, before that, German and Pennsylvania Dutch), lived in rural areas, grew up in BIC households, and were connected by family ties.

As we view the BIC Church in North America as a whole today, however, we look distinctly different. We’ve truly become a mosaic community of . . .

- ▶ **312 CHURCHES**
- ▶ **composed of 35,000 people**
- ▶ **spread across 24 states and two provinces,**

▶ *two-thirds* brand new to the BIC, *one-third* growing up BIC

NEW TO BIC  
GREW UP BIC

▶ *one-fifth* worshipping in Spanish, the *rest* in English

SPANISH  
ENGLISH

▶ *one-third* in cities, *two-thirds* in suburban or rural areas

CITIES  
SUBURBAN or RURAL AREAS

#### Dramatic change brings new opportunities and challenges

As a leader of our Church family in North America, I couldn’t be more grateful to God for His work among us. Those of us who worked on the Church’s vision priorities 10 years ago didn’t know how powerfully—or how quickly!—the Spirit would move in furthering our objectives of expanding into cities, reaching out to Spanish speakers, and inviting new people to join our movement.

In response to this growth, we have been blessed with an abundance of new opportuni-

ties, as well as new questions. What does it mean to be Brethren in Christ? And how do we, as a Church, nurture a shared identity, while seeking to become an expanding mosaic of churches, all seeing lives transformed by Jesus Christ?

One exciting opportunity our growth presents can be found in the rising number of people who are coming to Christ and joining our body. With fresh eyes and perspectives, these folks have infused new energy and commitment into elements of our life together. They’ve learned about the values that shape our community, have interacted with them, and have embraced many of them as their own, even re-purposing or re-imagining them to fit their own contexts. For example, the BIC has had a rich history of practicing simple living and pursuing peace in rural or suburban areas. But as the city-dwellers among us have adopted these two values, they’ve been working out what it means to practice them in urban churches and neighborhoods. This has brought renewed passion and dedication to these values into the next generation.

Equally uplifting has been the richness of becoming a bilingual Church body. I have been especially gratified by God’s movement to introduce a significant Spanish-speaking contingent to the BIC body. Not only is our communal faith deepened by expressions of faith in multicultural settings and with a second language, but we now have new partners in ministering to a rapidly growing sector of the U.S. and Canadian populations. Furthermore, because a number of Spanish-speaking brothers and sisters among us are originally



from other countries, they have a passion to share the Gospel with their home communities. This has led to the planting of BIC churches and sites in countries that we might not have had the opportunity to reach otherwise. The seeds that our community planted have, in only a few years, taken root and blossomed, expanding God's kingdom beyond what we could have imagined.

At the same time, whereas we were once a community that found cohesion in our similar language, ethnicity, perspective, and traditions, we're discovering that we can no longer rely on these alone to define our relationships with one another. So a part of moving forward for us will mean training ourselves to recognize the many gifts that come with diversity and to grow in sensitivity and respect for one another. Our long-held assumptions about what it means to be in community with one another may need to be re-examined.

For instance, with people joining the BIC from a variety of backgrounds, it is reasonable to expect that, from time to time, new theological questions will surface. When this happens, we'll need to come together to examine our core beliefs, decide where our priorities lie, and, when appropriate, re-frame them for better relevance and clarity today. Likewise, we need to be mindful of accommodating both English- and Spanish-speakers, overcoming the divides that language differences can create and seeking to enable the worship of God in all tongues.

### Poised for transformation

I sense that God is calling the Brethren in Christ Church in North America to grow, as one body, into something new. But, rather than relying on the types of similarities we may have shared in the past, I suggest that we consider other central aspects of

our identity as the glue that holds all of our mosaic pieces together into a single masterpiece.

When leaders in our Church started to perceive God's movement in these areas of growth, we immediately began to pray and ask the Lord how we could partner in the work He had already begun. What could we do, as a denomination, that local churches or regions could not undertake on their own? By discerning the voice of the Spirit together, we formed *Transformation 2020*, a vision that proclaims our desire to become "an expanding mosaic of churches, all seeing lives transformed by Jesus Christ." To accomplish this, we've identified three main priorities for us to pursue over the next decade: equip leaders for transformation, multiply sites for life change, and send workers for witness and service. Such goals cannot be realized on our own as individuals or even exclusively within local congregations; instead, we will all need to come together—with our various gifts and skills, and in our various settings—to accomplish them.

Additionally, I would call us to remember the values that we all hold. Through two centuries of existence, we Brethren in Christ have pledged ourselves to pursuing a relationship with Jesus, seeking transformation from the Holy Spirit, and honoring the word of God. These beliefs serve as the basis for the 10 Core Values\* that we've articulated as deeply resonating within our hearts and minds as a Church. It is these commitments that touch our hearts, stir our emotions, and move us to action!

Along with rallying around the Brethren in Christ Core Values and *Transformation 2020* vision, we will need to communicate with each other not only within our local congregations but also across our denomination. Recognizing that language, cultural, experiential, and even geographic differences between us might make this more difficult at times,

we must find new ways to reaffirm the importance of talking with and learning from each other. I am hoping that one outcome of the magazine that's in your hands, *In Part*, will be to prompt conversation among us. Every quarter, *In Part* seeks to create a space for us to articulate our questions, share our thoughts, and encourage one another in our faith journeys. I am particularly excited by the possibilities presented at *InPart.org*, where you can find articles on a host of topics, leave your feedback, and interact with other readers.

I believe that we, together, are also called to live out our Church's vision in the interplay between tradition and innovation. On the one hand, an inflexible church unwilling to re-imagine itself is like a plant that refuses to flower; it has roots but fails to grow or blossom and then misses out on realizing its unique beauty. A rigid, ritual-bound church will not survive for long. But at the same time, a church that scorns tradition is like a plant without roots, and, again, will not survive. With these extremes in mind, I envision us being a Church body that is committed to learning about our past, while also following the Spirit's leading into the future.

Finally, though we are based in the U.S. and Canada, we will also need to remember that the BIC community extends beyond our nations' borders. In recent decades, the membership of BIC Conferences in countries outside of North America has grown far larger than membership inside of it. Brethren in Christ men, women, and children around the world are living out amazing testimonies

## HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY to step back and look at the Church from a broader landscape than the one we usually see in our day-to-day lives can be EYE-OPENING & MAGNIFICENT.

of God's grace. To be a more faithful, cooperative global community, BIC leaders from countries around the globe have come together to form the International Brethren in Christ Association (IBICA)\*\*. Through IBICA, our Churches can better exchange ideas, share resources, engage in conversation, and discern God's desire for the Church. What a gift to be a part of a mosaic that encompasses many nations, languages, and histories!

### A story of courage from our past

As we work our way through understanding what it means to be the united body of Christ in the midst of growth and change, we can take courage from the fact that this is not the first time the BIC family has navigated the creative tension between tradition and innovation. It is in our DNA to be renewed.

I think back especially to the BIC Church in the 1950s, when I was just a young boy. At that time, our brothers and sisters were struggling with some huge questions about what it meant to be a community. Did it mean abiding by a strict dress code? Did it mean rejecting the use of musical instruments in worship? Or was it something both within and greater than ourselves—a life offered to Christ in order to glorify His name?

These were the issues facing the Church at the time. But instead of complaining, giving up, or growing resentful—which must have been tempting responses—a small group of BIC leaders gathered together. The meeting was spur-of-the-moment, taking place after a conference in a hotel room. The men seated themselves wherever they could—on chairs, beds, and the floor—and started to humbly share their burdens with one another. Through the night and into the early morning hours, these leaders' conversation led to weeping, and their weeping led to prayer.

This event, unofficial though it was, served as a catalyst for the change and renewal that would spread across the whole Church over the coming decades, when our body moved beyond a rule-based code of conduct to become a more flexible community that relied upon the Spirit for leading.

When I look at the BIC Church today, I sense that we are at a place similar to the one we were at 61 years ago. Like our forbearers, we are facing the exciting and awe-inspiring prospect of discerning what it means to progress and grow as a Church while still remaining true to our identity as Brethren in Christ.

As we consider our vision and life together, we may not hold in our hands a single photograph that

can literally capture the splendor of our corporate body in the same way that the early astronauts could—with a single click—portray the entire "blue marble" that is the Earth. But we have the opportunity to create a far more compelling image of what it means to be the body of Christ today. We can each be present here—where we are right now, in our local congregations. And, at the same time, we can be present—here and here and here—joining in spirit and in purpose with believers across the continent and the world. Together, we can move from independence to interdependence, actively renewing our vision of what it means to be a mosaic community in which lives are changed and Christ is honored over all the Earth.

\* The BIC Core Values are as follows: Experiencing God's love and grace, Believing the Bible, Worshipping God, Following Jesus, Belonging to the community of faith, Witnessing to the world, Serving compassionately, Pursuing peace, Living simply, and Relying on God. For more about our Core Values, go to [bic-church.org/about/values/default.asp](http://bic-church.org/about/values/default.asp).

\*\* For more on IBICA, please visit [theibica.org](http://theibica.org).



Warren L. Hoffman serves as moderator of the BIC Church in North America, based in Grantham, Pa. He and his wife, Connie, have been a part of the BIC community for their whole lives, enjoying membership in churches in California, Oregon, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and, most currently, Elizabethtown, Pa. As a couple, they enjoy hiking and camping. And ever true to his Lancaster (Pa.) County roots, Warren is a pretzel enthusiast.



# Belonging to the ~~club clique~~ community of faith

Reaching **beyond** social comfort to pursue **community**

INTERVIEW BY  
Dulcimer Hope Brubaker



Photos by Brandie Stonge

## IT ALL STARTED ONE NIGHT IN 2008 WITH A CARD GAME.

Dave and Christie Gustafson had called Nathan and Brandie Stonge, friends from their church, Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC, to see if they'd be up for a game night. As the couples gathered at the Stonge's kitchen table for a round of Mille Bornes, they started talking about the small group they'd been a part of together and how much they missed the accountability and community of such a fellowship. So they decided to start a new one. But instead of calling up four of their closest peers, they got out the church directory and circled names of people of different backgrounds, styles, and ages—people such as Bob and Rosie Harlacher and Ed and Marj Strayer.

The community that resulted is built on shared faith, not on personal preferences. After three years together, this group of eight laughingly admits they can't quite agree on a fun event to do together: Dave wants to take everyone to a U2 concert, Brandie thinks they should go camping, and Bob and Rosie would prefer square dancing. What they can agree on is seeking God, serving their community, and supporting one another in prayer, all of which they do with a remarkable sense of earnest vitality. It's that vitality—along with the joyous laughter that fills each of the homes they meet in—that marks this group as a community of faith.

**DULCIMER:** What prompted you to be so intentional about inviting people of different ages and backgrounds to be part of your group?

**NATHAN:** We had previously been in a group where everyone was the same age, without kids, with shared interests.

**BRANDIE:** The strength of our previous group was that we were able to understand and relate to each other. But it was taxing when the group had similar needs around the same times since there wasn't a variation of experience and input. So our motivation in forming this group was to spread some of that out, gain some wisdom and insight from people ahead of us in life, and see what we could bring to the table as younger people. We wanted to see what that exchange would look like.

## CHRISTIE & DAVE GUSTAFSON

The Gustafsons live in Mechanicsburg, Pa., where they operate a landscaping business and raise their two young boys. Married in 2004, the couple recently sensed a call to cross-cultural ministry in Zambia. Before having children, Christie, 29, worked as a community center coordinator. She shares her talents through a variety of children's ministries, the Shalom ministries team, and volunteers with Family Promise, a local homeless ministry. Dave, 33, also serves with Family Promise, as well as ushering and teaching Sunday school.

## BOB & ROSIE HARLACHER

Bob & Rosie, of Dover, Pa., have been married for 51 years and are active in their local square dance club. They have five children, 10 grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. A retired auto technician, Bob, 70, volunteers with Family Promise as well as Dillsburg BIC's oil-change ministry and serves on the property and facilities commission. Rosie, 68, is a semi-retired hairdresser who directs the church nursery, helps with the congregation's Eat 'n Run events, and volunteers with Family Promise.

## BRANDIE & NATHAN STONGE

Brandie & Nathan were married in 2001 and now live in Dillsburg, Pa. Both talented musicians and artists, they enjoy making music and art to share with others. Brandie, 32, is a preschool teacher who also operates a private art studio. Nathan, 32, serves as both the BIC World Missions communications coordinator and Dillsburg BIC's pastoral assistant. They serve together in the congregation's worship and young adult ministries, and Brandie co-leads a discipleship group for middle school and high school girls.

## ED & MARJ STRAYER

The Strayers, of Dillsburg, Pa., have been married for 36 years and have two children and four grandchildren. As lifetime educators, they love learning and reading, and they serve as deacons and on Dillsburg BIC's prayer ministry team. Ed, 66, a retired elementary school counselor, has also served on the properties and facilities commission and as an usher. Marj, 60, volunteers with Family Promise, VBS, and in the church nursery.

**ROSIE:** When Brandie invited us, I was like, “You really want old people in this group?!” I couldn’t figure out what they were doing at first. But now we see that, even with the wide range of ages, when we talk about our families, every family has had the same problems and desire for prayer for certain things.

**DULCIMER:** Describe your group’s time together when it first formed. What was your experience?

**CHRISTIE:** At our first meeting, we went around and everyone was allowed to ask any question they wanted about anyone else, and then we prayed together. We also got to know each other by playing games and eating meals. We all felt from the get-go that it was a special group and that we were together for a reason.

**ED:** I think it was because of our level of openness. All of us were very open about our history and about where we were currently, spiritually and otherwise.

**DAVE:** There was a level of trust that we all had from the beginning. We invited people to the group whom we really respected.

**NATHAN:** Definitely. That said, I struggled at first to feel relaxed because our meetings felt like a translation process. I sometimes wondered, Are we all understanding each other, are we all hearing each other? Even though we easily trusted and had fun with each other, I didn’t feel like it was always easy to flow into sharing. I felt a little tentative about whether I was making sense or hurting anybody’s feelings because I didn’t know where they were coming from yet.

**DULCIMER:** What makes your group a community, rather than a club?

**CHRISTIE:** We all have our own circle of friends, so although we might occasionally do something together outside of small group, it’s not like we are a clique getting together every Friday night.

**ED:** And on any given Sunday, if you were to see us at church, we’re pretty well dispersed; we’re not all clumped together.

**NATHAN:** One of my favorite memories of our small group is when we played the game “Loaded Questions,” where everyone writes down their answer to a question and someone tries to guess who said what. One of the questions was, “What is your least favorite musical act of all time?” and the answers were very different across the group. Somebody answered Elvis’ *Blue Hawaii* and Rosie jumped up from her chair and said, “Who said that? That’s my favorite album!” That’s when we knew we were a good mixture.

**BRANDIE:** When you choose a group like this, it’s clear that you aren’t looking for camping buddies, or to get together and talk about shallow things. If we are going to be this intentional about relationships, what we really have in common is our relationship with Christ.

**DULCIMER:** How have you seen your group change over the past few years?

**NATHAN:** I feel like the group has come to be about what God is doing in our lives, what we are called to, and how we are growing or struggling. We have learned to take risks in vulnerability and make sacrifices of grace or patience with each other so that the real feelings and issues come out. I think the Lord did that among us and it’s become our common mode of relating. We have learned not to take offense, which I don’t think is always the case in group settings. It’s just a very positive type of environment. There’s active grace happening.

**BRANDIE:** Yes, we choose to assume the best about each other.

**DULCIMER:** How has your understanding of community changed as a result of being part of this group?

**MARJ:** Having Nathan [an active leader in Dillsburg BIC’s worship ministries] in our group has been interesting because I’ve learned more about what goes into putting together the weekly worship service. It’s very different from the way it used to be, with all the media and artistry woven in. But it’s been helpful for me to hear and see some of the thought that goes into our worship services.

**BRANDIE:** It raises the trust level within our church community because we spend time with and love these people, yet we know that some of our tastes and preferences

are different. So when we sense that someone is not happy with something, instead of reacting emotionally, we are picturing our friends and how they feel. It tempers our response and really calls us to the essence of family.

**DULCIMER:** Can you point to specific ways in which you’ve grown personally or spiritually as a result of being in a group of people you wouldn’t normally have interacted with?

**MARJ:** The biggest area of growth for me has related to the prayer requests we give each other. When we pray for each other, we sometimes find ourselves crying out to God for someone or questioning Him on some things. When we pray for each other, it changes our relationship with God, impacts it.

**BOB:** I’ve learned a new appreciation for when people hear God’s call. When Dave and Christie got this feeling last summer about going to Zambia, I was able to see more of what it would cost for them to go into missions. Dave has this business he’s trying to build up, and he’s willing to just leave it and go to Africa.

**DAVE:** I went to a Christian school, and Ed and Marj sent their kids to a Christian school. Getting to know them has helped me to understand what my parents might have been thinking when they chose to put me in Christian school. I wouldn’t say I had a bad experience, but there are things when I look back now that make me a little angry. Ed and Marj’s intentions were good and hearing that helped me get through.

**DULCIMER:** What would you say to other groups or individuals looking to be more intentional about connecting with others who appear different from them?

**CHRISTIE:** I think the buddy system worked for us, since we had another couple we were already comfortable with. If you are trying to start a diverse group, team up with another person or couple and go from there.

**ED:** You may need to give up the need to be understood. When you believe something strongly, you want to make sure the other person really understands what you’re saying. Sometimes you have to give that up. We don’t all walk away thinking the same thing and feeling the same way about it, and that’s O.K.

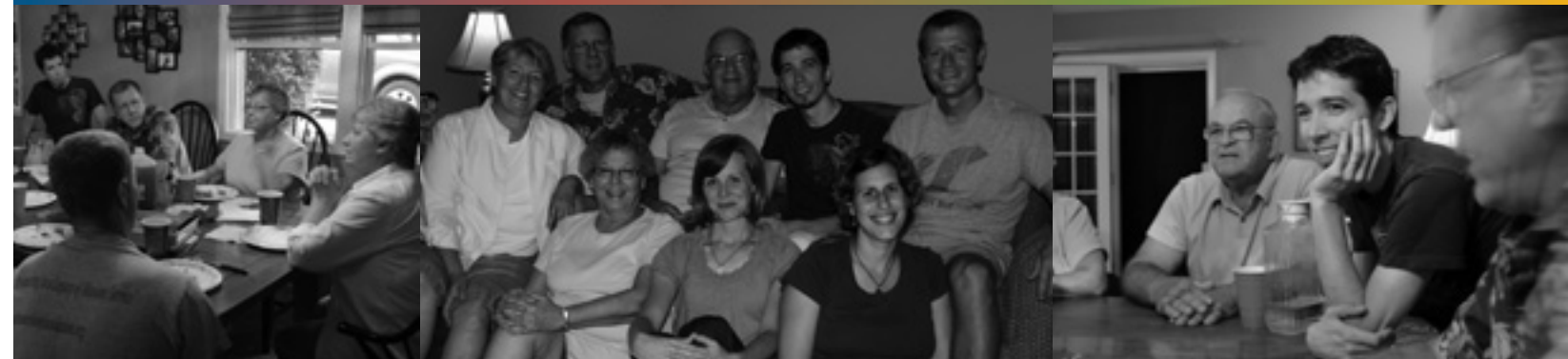
**BRANDIE:** Your number-one priority should not be, “How great do I feel in this group?” or “How much do they talk about what I like to talk about?” but instead, “How can I learn more about Christ and the body of Christ?

How can I be exposed to different expressions of my relationship with Christ and different expressions of service to help carry burdens that I wouldn’t normally encounter?”

**MARJ:** I would encourage people to be courageous enough to form a diverse group, knowing that if the Holy Spirit is involved, the rewards might be immeasurable. Fear isn’t something we should give into. Pray about it and really seek God, and He’ll honor that.



**Dulcimer Hope Brubaker** recently rejoined the community of faith at Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC after four years of urban living in Pittsburgh. She and her husband, Jason, live with their two young children in Mechanicsburg, Pa.





## VIBES

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH AND POPULAR CULTURE

## COMMUNITY

The YMCA isn't a church, but it sure knows something about bringing people together.

BY MATT TUCKEY

**At the Y,** I sometimes see people running alone on the treadmills. They stare straight ahead, eyes fixed on the TV monitors scrolling the news of the day. The only sound they hear is the one pulsing into their ears via buds. Eventually, they step off the treadmill, checking the pace and distance the cold machine has calculated for them. Satisfied, they move along.

It occurs to me that this is sometimes how we function in our churches, as well. We show up, get all we can for ourselves, and then move along. But just as there's another, more fulfilling side to community at the Y, so Christ offers more than that in the Church. And while the Y doesn't have it down perfectly, I don't think it's an accident that 23 million people in the U.S. and Canada engage in community at the Y each year. Actually, I think this is an indication that the Y is doing something right as it looks to cultivate a space for people

to connect and grow. And maybe—just maybe—churches can learn something from it.

**It's about diversity (not uniformity)**

Many people move through the fitness center at the Y, and, fortunately, they're not all like the sole individual on the treadmill, plugging into things rather than people.

The faces that I see each day represent an eclectic mix of ages, races, and stories. I've sipped coffee with the former pastor who loves football and is always asking me about the church plant I've been attending. "How is the choir?" he asks. "You've got to have good music." I've rowed beside the retired dentist, just soaking in his life experience. I listen to his life recounted, stories of joy and pain through times of war and peace. I shoot hoops with a recent Penn State graduate who's eager to tackle the world—change it for good.

It's these relationships and the unique stories written therein that form the underpinning of the fabric of the Y. This is community.

**It's about connection (not programs)**

There is a group of people that frequent the Y who are fondly referred to as the breakfast bunch. They spend a few hours at the Y most weekday mornings, but physical exercise occupies only a portion of that time. They arrive before sunrise and warmly greet each other, making small talk with the Y staff along the way. They each get in their workouts, which range from racquetball to lap swimming. After showering, they gather at the tables in the lobby and wind down the morning by sharing about their lives.

Sometimes, they follow up their Y visit by going out to breakfast. They enjoy their time together. I believe this is the healthiest group of people at the Y.

The breakfast bunch wasn't something that was planned for and promoted; the Y only needed to provide a space where something organic could form out of people simply wanting to spend time with one another. This is community.

**It's about collaboration (not isolation)**

It's widely understood that people remain committed to a gym (or any membership organization) only when they connect with another person. Community is about accountability. It's about trust. It's about recognizing our weaknesses and depending on others to pull us forward when we slow down.

At its core, community-building is the practical application of our God-given longing for relationship.

My friend John Ulsh blogs at *remotivate.wordpress.com* about his journey of recovery following a life-threatening car accident. Much of his rehabilitation has been done in community, at the Y. John says, "Trust is always easier when things are going well or when things are so bad that you are unable to do things for yourself. Trust becomes a completely different thing when it is blind or when you could just do it yourself but, instead, you decide to put your faith in another person or process."

His words reflect a self-reliant, successful man forced to depend on others in ways that he might never have imagined. Yet, through the process, he finds strength beyond anything he could possess on his own. This is community.

**It's about the young and old (not one or the other)**

At the Y, we offer free memberships to seventh-grade students, teens who are at a pivotal point in their development. We want them to connect with their peers and other adults in a positive, safe environment.

We also want adults to have the opportunity to get to know young people. There is a component of wellness that is found in the circle of giving back. Those with more wisdom and experience in life can pour back into those with so

much left to learn. And, likewise, those with fewer years encourage those who are older by sharing about their hopes and dreams for the future.

The Y recently looked at our youth mentoring initiative. We halted the program we were doing and instead invited our community to join a book discussion group on fatherlessness. This enabled people of all ages to come together and talk about what we're seeing in our neighborhoods. This is community.

**Redeemed and redeeming**

At its core, community-building is the practical application of our God-given longing for relationship. Tim Keller, pastor of Redeemer Church in New York City, says that the reason we experience breathtaking moments in nature is from our deep longing to connect with our Creator. It's something we yearn for.

Yet in the interim, God offers us opportunities to experience slivers of real community through deep relationships with others. These communities of broken, beloved people crop up in places like neighborhood associations, the Y, and churches. God uses us to show His love to others, flowing over our wounds to redeem and transform. And when you see it, it's beautiful.

As Ann Voskamp, a Christian blogger and writer, has remarked, "Maybe it's crazy to hum hymns through airports and smile at strangers and keep counting the graces—but the way His light slants across this world in all its broken beauty, really, who can help it?"

This, too, is community.



**Matt Tuckey** sums up his life's purpose in one sentence: He loves God, loves people, deeply values time with his wife and kids, and ultimately finds life to be enough. Matt serves as associate executive director at the Carlisle (Pa.) Family YMCA, as well as on the leadership team at Engage Community, a BIC church plant in Carlisle.

## FYI ON THE Y

**Background**

The first Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) was started in London in 1844, when George Williams and 11 friends organized a Bible study and prayer group for young men seeking escape from the hazards of life on the streets.

**Today**

The Y is the nation's leading nonprofit organization for youth development, healthy living, and social responsibility.

**Cause**

The Y is a powerful association of men, women, and children committed to bringing about lasting personal and social change. With a focus on nurturing the potential of every child and teen, improving the nation's health and well-being, and providing opportunities to give back and support neighbors, the Y seeks to enable all people to be healthy, confident, connected, and secure.

**Fun facts**

- Worldwide, the Y serves more than 45 million people in 124 countries.
- In 2010, the YMCA began officially referring to itself by its most familiar name: the Y.
- The Y extends programs, services, and initiatives according to the unique needs of the communities it engages. So, the offerings at your local Y might differ from those provided at others.



# TO THE POINT

## WHAT IS ONE WAY THAT YOU'VE BEEN BLESSED BY THE UNIQUE COMMUNITY WE HAVE AS BIC?

In my 19 years of being a part of the BIC, I've appreciated the freedom to explore relationship with Jesus in novel ways, with the protection of a multinational, multicultural body to keep me on track.

**Daniel Horwitz**  
New Vision BIC (*Pewaukee, Wis.*)

When I tell my ministry colleagues that after working as an independent church for so many years, we've joined a denomination, they go into shock. They get even more surprised when I tell them about the history, the values, and the outlook on life and faith of the BIC. It is very important that throughout history, the BIC has demonstrated a lifestyle and an experience of extraordinary faith. We are grateful to God for being part of this family.

**Alex Alvarado**  
Ciudad de Dios (*San José, Costa Rica*)

My wife, Leslie, and I visited a BIC church for the first time seven years ago, after moving to a new town. When we learned about the BIC Core Values through a membership class, we both felt that the BIC was the place for us. Through our experience of attending and now pastoring a BIC church, we have grown in our appreciation for the diversity of members, godly leadership, and strong support for world missions that are part of the DNA of the BIC Church.

**Sam Gates**  
TheWell Church (*Waynesboro, Pa.*)

I have been a part of the BIC for a little more than three years and have been blessed most by the support and care the BIC gives to its pastors. The BIC not only emphasizes lifelong learning by offering opportunities such as Core Courses and Impact Seminars, but regional and denominational leaders provide practical and financial support to participate in professional growth events, like the Ministry Enrichment Retreat. Upon returning from the recent Great Lakes Conference Pastors and Spouses Retreat, my wife, Andi, commented, "The BIC sure knows how to take care of its pastors."

**Todd Hammond**  
Highland BIC (*West Milton, Ohio*)

In my last 10 years as part of this community, I've learned that the BIC has, at its core, bible-based beliefs like many other churches, but the application of these beliefs is what makes the difference. I saw this in a tangible way the first time I attended an Atlantic Conference gathering. I was amazed at the variety of BIC church members in attendance. They ranged from conservative to modern, of various ages and ethnicities, all bonding to form this BIC family.

**Lisa Tomarelli**  
Daybreak Community Church (*Royersford, Pa.*)

Thank God for BIC scholars! In my 10 years as part of the BIC, I have been enriched by spiritual teachers—like Owen Alderfer, Martin Schrag, Luke Keefer, Jr., Henry Ginder, Eric Seibert, Ron Sider, and Terry Brensinger—and historians—such as Morris Sider and Carlton Wittlinger—as well as by our journal, *Brethren in Christ History and Life*.

**Janet Young**  
Pathway BIC (*Kitchener, ON*)

I have been a part of the BIC community for about two years now and have found it to be extremely generous. I have been blessed many times by people lending a hand. For example, helping build a fence for my dogs, no questions asked, just willing to buckle down and help people.

**Ryan Cobb**  
Manor Church (*Lancaster, Pa.*)

# PARTING WORDS

## EXPLORING THE OUTER BANKS OF CHRISTIAN UNITY

by PERRY ENGLE

### The general consensus was

that my wife's family reunion at the Outer Banks in North Carolina this past summer was one of the best vacations we've ever had. I mean, what's not to like about early morning runs to Light House Bagels, bobbing in the warm Atlantic Gulfstream, riding jet skis far out into the sound, and enjoying late evening *Just Dance* contests with cousins?

But for me there was something else about the seven families and 29 people who lived together for an entire week. It was the overwhelming sense that, for all of our differences as an extended family (and there are plenty), none of them really mattered as we came together for the first time in many years to celebrate our commonality as kin.

There were many things we could have discussed and even argued about: the size of government, home schooling vs. public schooling, creationism, immigration, the Emerging Church (whatever that is) and Rob Bell. You know the drill—all of the things we tend to fight about and divide over as Christians. We really could have gotten into it, but we didn't. Why? Because we valued our time together as a family over the need to promote our own agendas and be right on every issue.

Reflecting back, unity wasn't a given at our family reunion; it was a decision we made individually and corporately to focus on the higher good of being together. Similarly, unity within the



↑ Hoffman Family Reunion, July 2011 (Outer Banks, N.C.)

Church is not just a state of being; it is a choice. It is a willful act of focusing on what connects us as Christians rather than what divides us. It is submitting ourselves to the heart-prayer of Jesus that we might be "brought to complete unity" as a witness to an unbelieving world (John 17:20–23).

As our BIC Church family becomes more diverse, we need to refocus on those things that unite us as brothers and sisters in Christ. Together, we affirm the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds, as well as our own Articles of Faith and Doctrine, which contain those elements that join us together as a people of God: our acceptance of the Bible as God's word, our confession of Jesus as Lord, our belief in Christ's bodily resurrection, our conviction that salvation is by grace alone, and our understanding that the Holy Spirit leads to a transformed life. These beliefs are at the heart of what it means to be followers of Jesus.

Near our vacation's end, when it was my time to barbeque, I turned away

from the grill for a moment, only to return to a wall of flames that had reduced my California burgers to smoked beef jerky. It was a reminder of how quickly a seemingly controlled blaze can turn into an all-consuming inferno.

Nothing destroys Christian unity more quickly than a dogmatic insistence on Christian uniformity. Our response to one another as sisters and brothers in Christ can either be a warming flame or a destructive fire.

Authentic Christian community results in a sweetness and humility that are both transparent and welcoming to others. It's like a family reunion where a group of diverse people from different walks of life gather to celebrate those things that join them together rather than argue over all those things that tear them apart.



Perry Engle is still awaiting his *Grilling for Dummies* handbook from Amazon. He attempts to be less inflammatory in his role as bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church in North America. He and his wife, Marta (who, for obvious reasons, does all of the cooking), live with their family in Ontario, Calif.



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## TRANS FORM ATION

# 2012

**Last summer**, the BIC Church in North America embraced *Transformation 2020*, a vision of becoming “an expanding mosaic of churches, all seeing lives transformed by Jesus Christ” by the year 2020.

Amid our other cooperative endeavors, we are combining our funds, efforts, and prayers to meet these ambitious goals in 2012:

### **1** expanded ministry in the Middle East

We'll continue to SEND workers for witness and service by supporting the growing outreach of BIC World Missions team members who are pursuing peace and sharing the Gospel in Israel and Palestine

### **25** new churches & sites

We'll seek to MULTIPLY sites for life change by planting 15 new churches, revitalizing five existing congregations, and establishing five new worship sites (via small groups, additional worship services, or new ministries).

### **50** new millennial leaders

We'll work to EQUIP leaders for transformation by inviting 20-somethings to take part in training and internship opportunities.

.....  
For more about Transformation 2012 and the ways you can take part, go to **[bic-church.org](http://bic-church.org)**.

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→ Guide to the 2012 Week of Prayer and Fasting

Embark upon 2012 by joining thousands of BIC believers from across North America for the Week of Prayer and Fasting (Jan 1–8).

To provide direction for this time, a weeklong devotional, “Following Jesus,” has been created. Available in both Spanish and English, this guide contains daily Scripture readings, meditations, and prayers by BIC people who have committed themselves to following Jesus—by living simply, pursuing peace, serving joyfully, and embracing community.

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