

IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

Summer 2011

FOUR STORIES *of*



..... *Plus:*

**2010 Annual Report
for the BIC Church**

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Thanks for a wonderful Spring 2011 issue. I especially appreciated your enlightening and encouraging article “The end of AIDS?” The potential outcome of the work being conducted in Macha is enormously important, and the quality of the research is also remarkable. What a huge example this is to the global medical community: that our faith in action is producing tangible, life-saving results that could mean near or complete eradication of AIDS. As someone who has traveled to Zambia for BIC purposes, it’s very meaningful and exciting for me to read about what’s going on.

Kristin Messick (Elizabethtown, Pa.)

As a pharmacist and Brethren in Christ member, I get encouraged with the strides taken in eliminating malaria and a new hope against HIV. It can be done. We thank you, Dr. Thuma and Dr. Spurrier!

Muchindu hampango, from InPart.org

Back in the early ’80s, my family spent some months volunteering at Macha Hospital. In the years following, as we became aware of the AIDS devastation, we thought of the people we knew there and felt such despair. It is so refreshing to hear updates of improvements in treatments. Now, reading of these great expectations for Test and Treat, I feel even more encouraged.

As I reminisce about the missionary doctors and nurses at Macha that I have known (some going back to my childhood), I am filled with awe and gratitude for lives dedicated to the Lord, and to serving others.

Karen Hostettler Deyhle, from InPart.org

Thanks for the excellent exposure [of the BIC Core Value on Pursuing Peace] provided by the article “Keeping the Peace.” This core doctrine must always be kept before us.

However, we should bear in mind that the BIC have wrestled with this for many decades. The Arthur Climenhaga biography, “Casting a Long Shadow” (*BIC History and Life*, Aug. 2004), shows how two strong church leaders—Arthur Climenhaga and E.J. Swalm—disagreed, with Swalm finally blessing Climenhaga’s understanding.

Harvey Sider (Stouffville, ON)

The opening paragraph of “Keeping the peace” says, “When it comes to peace, there seems to be a gap between what we say we believe as BIC and what reality shows.”

To me, the difficulty lies with the line in our Articles of Faith and Doctrine that reads, “[. . .] preparation for or participation in war is inconsistent with the teachings of Christ.” Given the information from the 2006 Church Member Profile as well the comments from several pastors that appeared elsewhere in the issue, it would seem that many in our denomination simply do not believe this claim to be completely accurate. I would count myself among that group. I can wholeheartedly affirm the statement from our Core Value on “Pursuing Peace,” but I don’t believe that Christ’s words in the gospels are strong enough to prohibit participation in or preparation for war. He had several opportunities to make such statements directly and did not do so, and I’m hesitant to do the same.

Tony Bowell (Salina, Kans.)

In the article “From Christ to combat,” the author, Bruxy, Cavey, writes about Roman emperor Constantine opposing the pacifism of the Christian movement and employing “some of the best minds to solve the problem, including Augustine.” Well, Constantine died in 337, and Augustine was born in 354, so if Constantine was influenced by Augustine, he must have had some supernatural ability to look into the future. And, of course, he didn’t.

Robert Ives (Grantham, Pa.)

Thank you very much for your keen reading. Although Constantine and Augustine are often spoken of together because, from a broad historical perspective, their lifetimes fell within such a close span, they were not immediate contemporaries. Despite the fact that these two figures did not live at the same time, historical evidence indicates that Constantine did set into motion what Augustine helped to formalize in his theology. (For more on this connection, please see the *Christianity Today* article “A time for war?” by Robert L. Homes, available at <http://goo.gl/YNKwa>.)

That said, we acknowledge that the wording in the article might cause confusion on this point. We will be sure to adjust this in the article as it appears at *InPart.org*.

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Summer 2011

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST
COMMUNITY IN NORTH AMERICA

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

BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

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2010 Annual Report for the BIC Church in North America

See what we’ve done as a Church this year, what we hope to do in the future, and how you can take part in that!

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IN MOTION

TRANSFORMATION 2020

Last summer, General Conference 2010 affirmed Transformation 2020, a new vision plan for the BIC Church of North America. Here's a glimpse into some of the ways we're pursuing that vision together!



PHOTO: Courtesy of Chris Sharp

equipping leaders for transformation

In November 2010, Lynn Myers, a BIC World Missions worker who ministered in Thailand, passed away. After hearing this news at a monthly prayer meeting led by BICWM workers, a Thai believer rose to his feet and said, "Now it is time for us to step up!" Since then, local pastors have helped lead the meetings and have expressed a desire to hold a larger gathering for all area churches. Chris Sharp, BICWM executive director, observes, "The legacy of Lynn Myers' call, passion, and vision for the people of Thailand is alive and growing!"



PHOTO: Chris LaChall/Courier-Post

multiplying sites for life change

After three years of searching and red tape, the Circle of Hope church plant in Camden, N.J., is under contract to purchase an old fire hall. In addition to its own public meetings, the church hopes to use the building to host concerts and art openings for area families. "Jesus is calling all of us to cross boundaries, and this strategic location will help us bridge the socioeconomic, racial, and spiritual divides that mark our surrounding community," shares Nate Hulfish, pastor of the new plant.



PHOTO: Courtesy of The Repository (Canton, Ohio)

sending workers for witness & service

It started out as a school project. But when 8-year-old Jonah Lytle learned about the earthquake and tsunami in Japan, he remembered what he'd learned about loving others at his church, Valley Chapel BIC (East Canton, Ohio), and he knew his efforts could be used for something more. "We decided to make a book," he says. Entitled *The battle is the Lord's: The dream of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*, the book has sold 75 copies and raised over \$700 for relief efforts in Japan. As orders continue to come in, more copies are in the works.

WHAT DO BRETHREN IN CHRIST SAY ABOUT LIVING SIMPLY?

How important is living a simple lifestyle to your personal faith commitment?*



32% Very important
54% Fairly important
13% Not very important
1% Not important at all

About what portion of your household income do you give to church and charitable causes?*



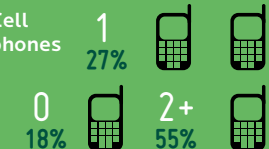
4% More than 20 percent
33% 11 to 20 percent
34% 10 percent
15% 6 to 9 percent
11% 1 to 5 percent
3% Less than 1 percent

How many of the following items are in your household?*

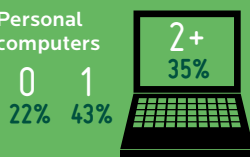
Televisions



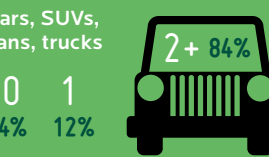
Cell phones



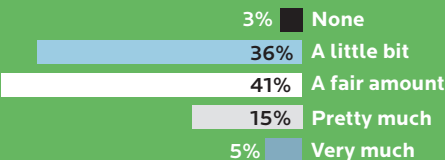
Personal computers



Cars, SUVs, vans, trucks



How much stress do you typically feel from the pace and complexity of life?*

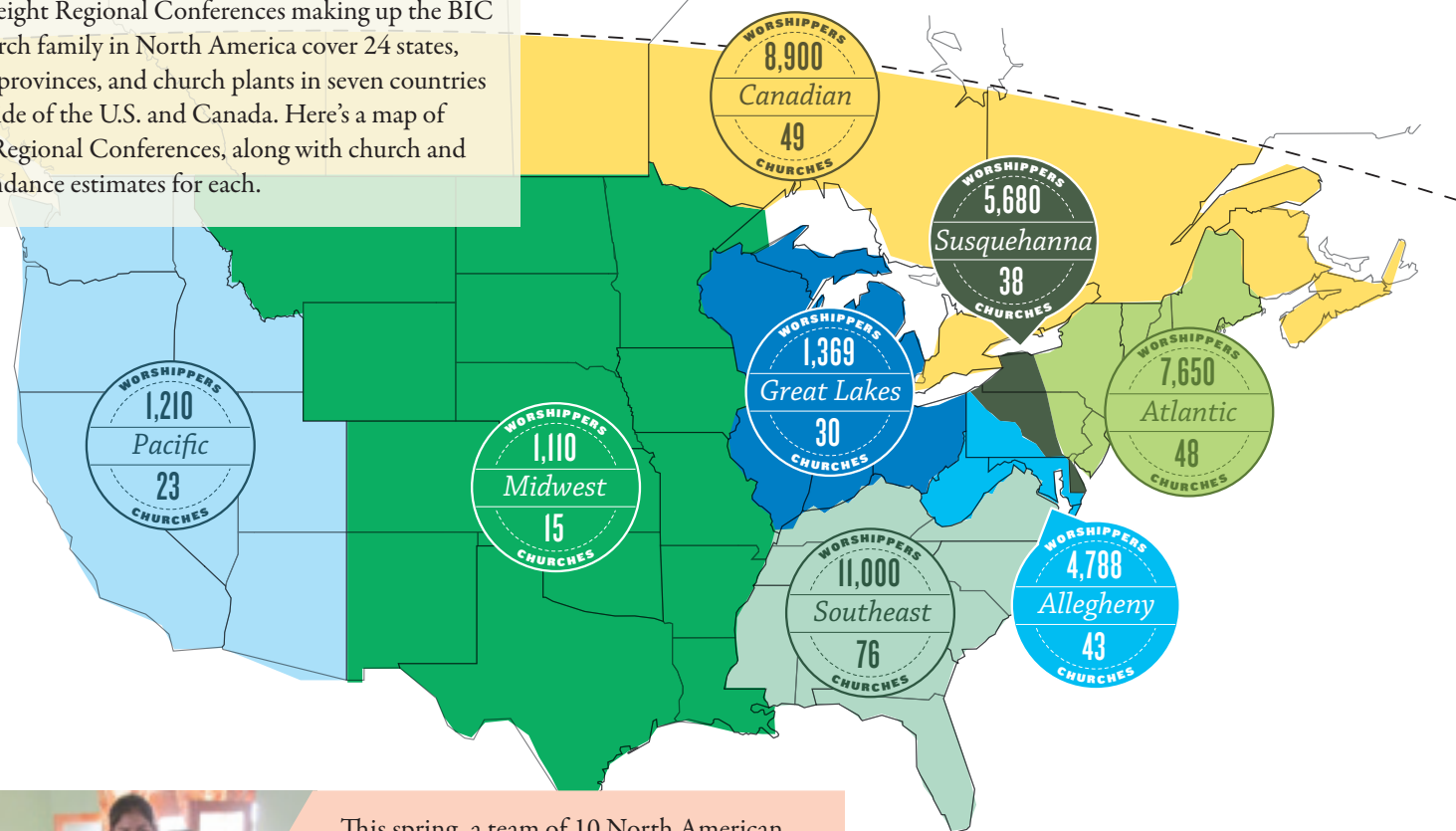


*Source: Church Member Profile 2006—a study of members in three denominations, conducted by the Young Center of Elizabethtown (Pa.) College and coordinated by Donald B. Kraybill.

**Source: Church Member Profile 2006, U.S. respondents only (This question was not posed to Canadian survey participants.)

MOSAIC IN NORTH AMERICA

The eight Regional Conferences making up the BIC Church family in North America cover 24 states, two provinces, and church plants in seven countries outside of the U.S. and Canada. Here's a map of the Regional Conferences, along with church and attendance estimates for each.



This spring, a team of 10 North American BIC men and women spent two weeks traveling across Nepal and India as a part of a Vision Trip sponsored by BIC World Missions (BICWM). One of their stops took them to the Mary Hoke Girls' Hostel, a BIC SPICE hostel located in Biratnagar, Nepal that offers food, clothing, shelter, care, and education to the children living there. Vision Trip participant Leah Cressman (left) had the unique opportunity to meet Puja Kisku (right), the girl she sponsors through the SPICE program. "What an awesome and unique experience!" Leah says. "She was so full of joy when she learned that I was her sponsor. Her joy now gives me a new excitement about giving each month."

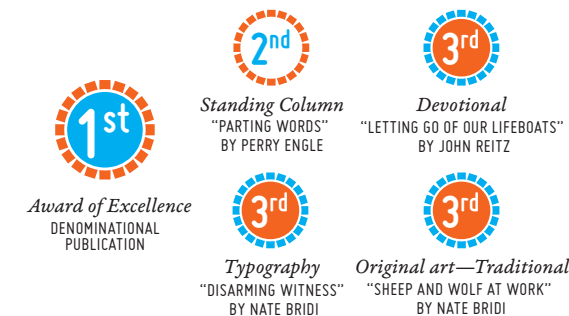
→ To learn more about SPICE, visit BIC-CHURCH.ORG/WM/SPICE.

PHOTO: Courtesy of Joleen Brubaker

IN MOTION

THANK YOU!

The BIC Communications team wants to thank all *In Part* readers and contributors for enabling our denominational magazine to be recognized by the Evangelical Press Association this year:



PART OF THE WHOLE

FOCUSING ON ONE WOMAN'S FAITH

BONNIE YODER

She grew up in a household that valued simplicity, but she never imagined that one day she would rely on the generosity of others to meet her and her family's daily needs. Bonnie Yoder is ready for your questions.

When did you begin your work at the Navajo BIC Mission, and in what roles do you serve there?

Our family moved from Nappanee, Ind., to the Mission in Bloomfield, N.M., in 2005. Ralph, my husband, and I manage the Navajo BIC Overcomers Program, a six-month alcohol and drug rehabilitation program for Native American men. I am also the administrator/principal of Nizhoni Christian Academy, an Accelerated Christian Education (ACE) school attended by the children of community members and Mission staff, including our son and daughter. And I'm the CFO for the Mission, Nizhoni, and Overcomers.

How were you introduced to the concept of living simply?

Both of my parents are from Amish–Mennonite backgrounds and grew up in households that valued living simply, which transitioned into their own family life. Dad pastored small churches that could pay very little to nothing, and Mom did not work outside of the house, so my siblings and I learned to have a garden, can our foods, and make do with a lot less than many of my friends. To my knowledge, this did not harm us in any way. ☺

In what ways do you pursue simplicity at the Mission?

We raise our own support for the ministry here and so try to maintain on as little as possible. The majority



Church: First Nations Gathering (Bloomfield, N.M.)

Favorite summer treat: Watermelon

Beach or mountains: I enjoy both!

Fun fact: I love horses and am a certified riding instructor.

of what is in our home and closets is donated to the Mission and to us. We share food items amongst the staff, and I shop locally from sale flyers. We've learned that we just don't really need all the "extras" that at one time seemed so important.

How does being at the Mission affect your understanding of simplicity?

In some ways, living simply is easier here, as life is very laid back, and so my wardrobe is also very casual and minimal. At the same time, the cost of living is higher here compared to where we used to live in Indiana. The cost of gas is also higher, and we need to travel further distances to get places, which means those of us on the staff try to consolidate all our trips into one. So, we've found it's a mixed bag when it comes to adapting this commitment to our lives today.

Having grown up aware of this value, what new aspects of it have you discovered?

I have learned over the years that if we do with a little less here and there, we have more to give to others in need. God has shown us in so many ways that He will supply our needs (not necessarily our wants) in every way.

I've also realized that being able to give to others goes beyond the monetary and involves time, energy, listening, caring, lending a helping hand, and giving of yourself.

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

A COLT FOR JESUS

How the call to generosity extends to us all

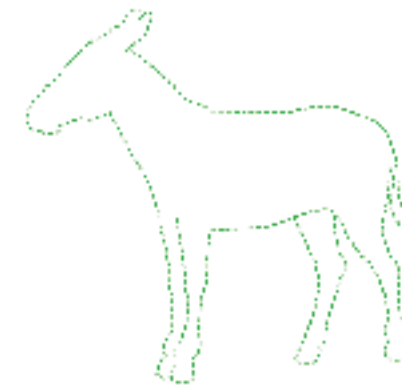
by ESTHER SPURRIER

Earlier today, I read the story in Mark 11 of Jesus preparing to enter Jerusalem on the Sunday before His death, and I found myself captivated in a new way by the willingness of the villagers to lend their colt for Jesus to ride. Did they worry about when (or whether) it would be returned? Would Jesus be too heavy a load for a colt that had never been ridden? Scripture doesn't tell us. We are also not told how many colts the owners had. Did they have a large herd of animals, or was this their only one? What we do see here is a simple and willing response to a direct request from Jesus.

Over the past decade, my life situation has changed from that of a North American physician's wife to an overseas worker to a semi-retired, elder-caregiver. Whereas I used to be sensitive to using our excess in ways that honor God, I am now more concerned about having enough for day-to-day needs. Heating oil and electricity costs are going up and up; the house needs paint; the barn roof has holes in it; window screens and floor carpets are worn out. And driving to visit my grandkids is getting more and more expensive!

I know I'm not the only one with such concerns. The economic downturn has created fear and uncertainty for many more people, with loss of jobs, loss of income from investments, and loss of confidence in government and financial institutions we once thought we could trust.

→ **LIVING SIMPLY:** We value uncluttered lives, which free us to love boldly, give generously, and serve joyfully.



It's not surprising that many who are wealthy struggle with holding on tightly to money and possessions, but as I'm learning, it's very easy for anyone's life to become cluttered (consumed?) by worry about how we're going to manage—or what further hardship the future might hold. Will we be able to put food on the table or pay the rent? Will we lose our jobs? Will we be able to send our kids to college? Will our pension fund or the Social Security system still be viable when we retire?

Yet our consuming anxiety over these questions can actually reveal what we really believe to be the sources of our stability. As one of our Zambian friends, a medical professional who came to the U.S. to attend a conference, observed, "North Americans don't need God." We appear to be putting our trust in our possessions, our resources, our abilities

and education. This prompted me to ask the question, Where does our ultimate trust for life and well-being lie?

Jesus may not need our colts today, but He is making a direct request to us: Put away your worry and have faith in God. Jesus worked continually with His disciples to move them from the grip of fear to an attitude of faith—faith in the goodness and provision of God. We are also Christ's disciples and need to operate from a foundation of faith, no matter what our economic situation. If we can choose to hold loosely to things, then we'll be more able to hold tightly to God.



Esther Spurrier and her husband, John, have served as medical workers with BIC World Missions in Macha, Zambia, for over 20 years, and while they never owned a colt during that time, they did keep chickens and rabbits. While John continues his work in Macha, Esther has returned to their family's home in Dillsburg, Pa. They are members of Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC.



The value of small

Experiencing the upsides of residing in close quarters

By E. Morris Sider

My wife, Leone, and I were both children in the Great Depression—she in northern Saskatchewan, I in the rural village of Cheapside, ON. To survive in those years, our families lived very frugally. My mother, to cite only one example, thought that even chewing gum was too much of a luxury. I occasionally indulged in this pleasure, but certainly not where Mother could see me. Yet both Leone and I recall our childhoods with great delight. We did not need much to be happy.

After our marriage, college and graduate school enforced this simple lifestyle. We had to “pinch our pennies”; we could afford only small apartments. One of our residences during these years was a tiny third-floor apartment reached by climbing an outside stairway, under which the garbage from the large building was placed.

Early years of teaching in church schools—first at Niagara Christian Collegiate (Fort Erie, ON), then at Messiah College (Grantham, Pa.)—meant receiving what can only be described as miniscule salaries. This resulted in continuing to live in small apartments and old houses.

Thus, when we constructed a house in Grantham, we were well conditioned to build on a small scale. Our one-story house is the smallest in the area; sitting between two large houses makes it seem even smaller.

The Anabaptist House

Over the years, the small size of our house has occasioned frequent comments. We have almost come to expect that when people visit us for the first time, one of their first comments will be, “What a small house you have!”

These and other instances, however, give us opportunity to testify (to use an expression of the Church in my earlier years) that as Christians, we have sufficient in this and in other ways. We call our house “The Anabaptist House” and explain that the Anabaptist tradition is to de-emphasize material things and to emphasize spiritual values.

We recently entertained two friends from outside the Brethren in Christ/Anabaptist traditions. When the conversation turned to the size of our house, we were pleased to tell our friends, yes, we could afford a much larger house but that isn’t where our values lie.

A small house helps us to exercise these values. It means smaller heating and lighting bills, as well as lower real estate taxes, among other reduced expenses. Even as Leone and I grow older we can, in a small house, do our own cleaning and much of our maintenance work. Thus again we incur fewer and smaller expenses.

In turn, this means that we can use more of our income for what we consider to be worthy causes. Beyond the traditional 10 percent tithe, we are able to give considerable amounts to charities and church activities. This also means that in retirement, we do not need to worry about continued employment to pay for a mortgage on a large house. Instead, we are free to do volunteer work—Leone among women in the community and I in my writing and editing.

Despite the relatively small size of our house, we can mostly do as much as people who live in large houses. Over the years, we have entertained many guests for meals and given lodging to many people who have come to the Grantham area for church or committee meetings. (Some people refer to our house as the Sider Motel!)

Acknowledging abundance

In these and other ways, we do not think of our small house as being a negative factor in our lives. We have never felt cheated by our lifestyle; in fact, our convictions on the subject have grown stronger over the years because we have found simplicity to be both fulfilling and scriptural. Yet we do not judge those Christians who live by another style.

And we realize that our manner of living must be seen as being relative. Leone and I have frequently commented to each other that most people in the world would not see us as living simply.

This thought struck us forcefully some 20 years ago when we invited a family who had begun to attend our Grantham Church services to Sunday dinner. As soon as they entered our house, the two young teenagers walked throughout the rooms (including the bedrooms). When they returned to where we were talking, they exclaimed to their parents, “We told you that they are rich!”

Their words were a reminder to us that we have little reason for self-congratulation, even when we are intentional about living simply. Such incidents have led Leone and me to talk about our lifestyle as modest rather than simple.

.....
Dr. E. Morris Sider’s favorite room in his small house is the study, where he wrote most of his 30 books, has edited *The Journal of BIC History and Life* for the past 34 years, keeps up with his correspondence, and enjoys listening to classical music. He and his wife, Leone, are longtime members of Grantham (Pa.) BIC.



The stove project

After losing his job, Wayne found it necessary to live more simply, which enabled him to cook up new ways to serve others

By Wayne Ridgeway

I had been in the mechanical engineering field for 40 years when the company I worked for went under. Being in my late fifties, I found that jobs of any kind were few and far between, so I turned my hobby of refinishing furniture into a business. 2008 was a banner year, good enough for me to quit my part-time job. Then, in 2009, we encountered difficulties. The business started to feel the effects of the recession, I had a heart attack, and I lost sight in my right eye.

It was in the midst of these challenges, in 2009, that I was setting my goals for the next 12 months and I felt compelled to add “go on a mission trip” to the list. This was surprising to me. I’d been involved in missions for a number of years but never had the desire to go on a trip. Knowing this and our financial situation, I really didn’t feel this would actually come about.

A short time later, my wife shared my desire with a close friend, who immediately responded, “I will sponsor Wayne.” I was almost embarrassed to accept his offer, yet I knew there was something greater than all of us behind what was happening. A few months later, I signed up for our church’s annual mission trip to the Dominican Republic. I knew when and where I would be going; I just didn’t know why.

Discovering my purpose

In April 2010, our mission team boarded a plane headed for the Dominican Republic. For the past five years, my church has been sending groups to the D.R., to partner with Dominican Crossroads, a Christian organization founded to serve Haitian refugees living there.

Lured by promises of a better life, Haitians were smuggled into the Dominican in the 1970s to labor in the sugar cane fields. The sugar cane companies took the Haitians’ identification to keep them from running away. But later, when the cane fields shut down, the workers’ documents were nowhere to be found. Unable to return to Haiti without identification or to find employment because of their low social status in the D.R., the Haitians became refugees. The conditions of their newfound lives were now equal to those they had experienced in Haiti, if not worse.

On the first day of our trip, we toured Ascension, the first village built by Crossroads for Haitian families. We were invited into one of the homes, and the first thing that caught my eye was a charcoal stove in the corner. I questioned our guide about this, and she explained that the women, to economize their use of the charcoal, cook inside, away from any air movement. She also added a lot of women have lung problems from the charcoal’s fumes and young children are constantly being hurt by walking into the hot stoves.

I now knew why I was on the trip: to redesign the stoves for safer, efficient use by Haitian families.

New designs

After returning home from the trip, I began researching charcoal stoves on the internet but didn’t find anything new; most posed the same problems as the ones I’d seen in the D.R. Then I noticed a candleholder my wife had on the coffee table. It had exactly the shape I was looking for! Using the holder as my inspiration, I was able to design a new charcoal stove that would be affordable, safe, and efficient for outdoor use.

While unsuccessful in some ways, my time researching did bring to light initiatives around the world regarding the use of organic fuels, which decrease deforestation caused by charcoal production and create a use for common “waste” products like paper, grass, and sawdust. My investigations also revealed a blueprint for a concrete block stove, which, though expensive to construct, utilizes organic fuels, offers greater safety, and can be installed with a venting system for use inside the home.

With my background in project management, it was easy to set up a testing area for each new design in my backyard. And with that, the stove project officially began! The question that came to my mind next was how this was all going to get back to the Dominican.

Getting back

We were still not financially able for me to make another trip, yet God had the answer again, indicating that I should raise my own support.

This was something that was well outside my comfort zone. With the help of others, however, a letter outlining the program and why I needed the money was written. Three months later, over \$6,000 had been raised. This past February, I returned to the D.R., with another team for a week. During the time, I built two presses for making organic fuel briquettes and hired a refugee to make the new charcoal stove.

This coming June, I will be returning again, along with my daughter Christa, for a month to introduce the new charcoal stoves, to research and test organic fuel materials, and to build a number of concrete block stoves in Haitian homes.

Looking back, I see just how involved God was in making this stove project possible. What I might have once counted as loss—loss of work, income, and health—God has taught me to count as gain, not only for myself, but also for my Haitian brothers and sisters in the Dominican.

Wayne Ridgeway and his wife, Debra, live in Collingwood, ON, where they are part of New Life BIC Church. Follow the project at thestoveproject.blogspot.com.

Learning to be

In the hustle and bustle of Southern California, one couple is growing intentional about rejecting busyness and excess in order to make space for God

By Dan & Julie Weatherford

JULIE

Tsk, tsk! Don't be such clutterbugs!" I can still hear my mother's voice and the click of her tongue as she insisted that my two sisters and I pick up the toys and clothes we'd scattered around our shared bedroom. Even though I have no memory of my childhood bedroom ever being messy at all (and certainly not even close to as messy as my own children's rooms routinely were!), Mom carried the memory for years.

Now, with our own kids grown and out on their own, my husband and I deal with our own clutter—and our differing perceptions of what it is and what it isn't. I guess clutter, like beauty, is in the eye of the beholder.

This has caused me to wonder, How does God perceive our clutter?

Considering our earth

When it comes to the environment, I doubt that it's typical household clutter that most concerns God. It's

not that I don't think He cares about the state of our homes, but even a cursory overview of Scripture shows God's deep concern about the physical environment of our world. God desires our imprint on the world to be nurturing and life-sustaining, yet "clutter" would be far to gentle a word to describe the human-caused degradation that the world is experiencing.

Thus, attempts at simple lifestyles must address environmental de-cluttering. Out of love for the world, for humans and other living things on our planet, Christians should be the first to translate God's environmental concern into simple lifestyles.

This involves asking some pointed questions of ourselves: How can we claim to follow Jesus in living simply when our gas-guzzling vehicles and our overworked air conditioners, heaters, and other appliances are still polluting the air, adding to global warming, and depleting natural resources? How long will we happily participate in a culture that

defines us as consumers whose ongoing and escalating purchase habits are crucial to keep the economic wheels spinning? How does simplicity spell itself out in the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the things we buy, and the places we shop?

DAN

Over time, we've made changes that decrease our environmental footprint—like driving a hybrid car, installing more insulation in the attic, replacing our water-thirsty lawn with water-wise landscaping, buying energy-efficient appliances, and purchasing clothes and other items at a local thrift shop. One of Julie's favorite weekly jobs is buying fresh, local groceries at the local farmers' market (the one place she is tempted to over-buy!). She finds herself shopping less and less in those middle sections of the grocery store, where everything comes in packages or cans (that then fill the landfills) and where most of the items have been transported hundreds or thousands of miles (using non-renewable energy sources and pushing up the cost). Growing some of our own fruit and vegetables is fun for us, too.

Considering our time

JULIE

Simple living means letting Jesus take control of our cluttered schedules, too. Of course, we all differ inherently in our need for structure, for spontaneity, for closure, for flexibility. None of us has a corner on perfection here: We all need one another to stretch us toward simple lifestyles with a healthy balance of organization and freedom.

Yet without some sense of Spirit-led planning behind one's day-to-day existence, it's hard to imagine a life characterized by love, giving, or service. And, without ample, godly freedom within helpful boundaries of organization, there would be little room for boldness, generosity, or joy.

When was the last time you gave a day, or even an hour or two, to listen to Jesus about the way you're running the race of your life? How might you incorporate routine, Sabbath-type freedom and rest in your life?

DAN

Rather than adopt and adapt to the "tyranny of the urgent" that is the cultural norm in North America, Julie and I wanted to be "small-scale revolutionaries." For us, this has taken shape with both of us pursuing careers that allow us to incorporate times for personal and spiritual retreat, exercise, and recreation. Julie has worked in a permanent part-time role with our local health program, while I've been a history teacher. Even though it means making less money, having more time to "be" has proven more valuable in the long run . . . and has resulted in a simpler lifestyle to boot!

Considering our thoughts

De-cluttering one's mind goes even deeper into the work of the Spirit. Our minds are cluttered with regret over past losses, hurts from wounds sustained, fears of an uncertain future, despair over broken relationships, worry over our own and our loved ones' welfare. Our mental clutter has the potential to distract us from following Jesus. It stops us in our tracks. It paralyzes us.

The first step toward simplicity of mind is to notice the clutter. Sometimes I'm knee-deep in it—immobilized by fear or despair or anger, or trudging in circles, lost in a mental maze of faithlessness—before I realize where I am and remember that Jesus has a better way for me.

But once I've noticed, there is hope. I can mentally choose to take Jesus' hand and let Him love me back on to His path of hope and truth. I can say "no" to the quicksand of my mental clutter, letting go of unhealthy goals, being gentle with myself in recognition of my brokenness, inviting Jesus to create images of hope, faith, and love in me to replace the old, sinful clutter, and asking Him to help me notice the clutter sooner next time.

How does clutter accumulate in your mind? How will you notice when it's first collecting? What will you do when you notice it?

A key weapon to be used in the war against mental clutter is the ability to say "no." It takes a lot of practice, as it's not usually our default mode. I am reminded of Romans 12:2: "Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—His good, pleasing, and perfect will."

Julie and I have found that submitting ourselves to a "personal inventory" of the things that contribute to worry, fear, a sense of being overwhelmed, and so on, often points us to our own mental clutter, and potentially to what needs to be changed or exchanged in order for us to be more at peace.

There is a need for a conscious extracting of oneself from the dizzying pace of daily life in order to rediscover one of the simplest (and most powerful) truths in faith: "Be still, and know that I am God." Again, we must wrestle with our schedules, realizing that they ultimately reflect our hearts and minds.

Julie & Dan Weatherford have made their home in Riverside, Calif., where they attend Madison Street Church. They have two grown children and enjoy reading and spending time in their garden.

JULIE

DAN

Overcoming obstacles, fulfilling needs

How one turn-of-the-century single mom provided for her family and her community in the midst of the Great Depression

By Dori (Steckbeck) Landis

For Virgie Felker Lehman, a young girl growing up in Lancaster County, Pa., in the early 1900s, living simply initially centered around wearing plain clothes. Although commonplace among Brethren in Christ of the day, the practice often left Virgie feeling isolated and lonely. In later years, she remembered being teased once on the school playground when she ran and her head covering fell off. And as a teenager, after her family's move to Harrisburg, Pa., she pronounced herself to be "the only plain girl in the city."

But later in life, when she understood the meaning behind the tradition, wearing plain clothes developed into a vital expression of Virgie's faith. And it became just one piece in the mosaic of her expanding understanding of simplicity, a value that helped her face the economic burdens she would carry throughout much of her life.

Head of the household

In 1916, Virgie married John Garman, a man with whom she'd shared a deep friendship and love. But in

1918, just three months before the birth of their son, John succumbed to influenza. Two years later, Virgie married Martin Kraybill, a widower with five children. In the coming years, Virgie and Martin added four more of their own children to the household. Unfortunately, the marriage between the two deteriorated under relational and financial strains, and in 1928, Martin moved out permanently.

Virgie, left alone, faced a difficult situation. Although the three oldest children from Martin's first marriage were supporting themselves, she was still responsible for the support and care of the seven remaining children. So Virgie relocated the family to Grantham, Pa., and not long after, the U.S. plummeted into the Great Depression.

From the beginning of her experience as the sole parent in the Kraybill household, Virgie's message to her children was clear: "In order to stay together, we've got to work together." And work together they did. Virgie mobilized her family to meet the demands of life without a father during the Depression. She taught the children to save every penny and to use necessities carefully.

Each child also had specific responsibilities and worked outside the home at every available opportunity. The girls prepared meals and managed kitchens in community homes. The boys walked miles to a neighboring county before dawn to be ready to pick berries at their destination before the sun came up. Their earnings were shared with the entire household. When questioned about her ability to support her family, Virgie cited earnings from the two oldest children as a source of income.

Virgie was equally busy supporting her large family, whether by cooking, cleaning, or providing nursing care. Her efficiency and willingness to take on any task to provide income caused one family member to dub her "a lass of all trades."

One of her sons, Homer, concludes, "Many women would not have been able to bear [...] the things she went through: the separation from her husband and the resulting loss of relationships, and the strain of the Depression."

To be served . . . and to serve

No one questioned Virgie's ability to survive the hardships of her life, but she still needed support from family and friends. Her mother frequently traveled from Harrisburg to Grantham to manage the household when Virgie was away providing care at various homes in the community. And the family always had enough food, in part because of

the generosity of her church, Grantham BIC, and neighbors. Local grocer D.S. Keefer deferred payment on the family's grocery bill. Sometimes their credit would accumulate to \$100 or more—a large amount during the Depression—but Keefer never asked for interest when the Kraybills paid their bill. Two other families shared a cow and meat with the family when possible.

Virgie willingly imitated the kind deeds bestowed on her and her family. The fruits of her active mind and industrious spirit made her particularly adept at identifying and then filling areas of need that, Homer declares, "a lot of people would not have the innate ability to uncover."

Her desire to meet the needs of others was, in fact, so strong that she boldly entered situations where others trod carefully. Families in the neighborhood received food and care from Virgie when they were in need. In one large family, both parents had steady employment, but Virgie often invited the children to her home for meals because she sensed they were hungry. Neglected women, plagued by illness or recalcitrant husbands, received household goods from Virgie's limited resources. And many homeless men, following the railroad tracks that ran through the town, knew they would not be turned away if they asked for a meal at the Kraybill house.

Virgie also offered tireless support for her alma mater, Messiah Bible School and Missionary Training Home (now Messiah College), and BIC missionaries serving around the world.

While Virgie's physical strength began to decline at the end of her life, her active mind continued to nurture a concern for the needs of others. As a capable seamstress, Virgie purchased material from a local dress factory to make blankets, quilts, and clothes for missionaries and local acquaintances. She often asked, towards the end of her life, "Who's going to do this when I'm gone?"

Virgie died on June 12, 1992, but the story of her ability to find abundance in the midst of scarcity serves as a reminder of how God can move us to help fulfill the needs of our families and our world.

Adapted from "Overcoming obstacles, fulfilling needs" in Celebrating Women's Stories, ed. Rebecca L. Ebersole, Dorcas I. Steckbeck, and E. Morris Sider.



Dori (Steckbeck) Landis first learned about Virgie Kraybill while working in the BIC Historical Library and Archives, where she served as director from 2000–2004. She and her husband and son live in the city of Lancaster, Pa., where they are part of In the Light Ministries, an urban congregation.

↑ Virgie Kraybill (right), a member of Messiah College's (Grantham, Pa.) first graduating class, with Dr. D. Ray Hostetter, who served as the College's president from 1964–1994.

VIBES

AN EXPLORATION OF FAITH AND POPULAR CULTURE



Thrift and frugality weren't always as cool as they seem to be today. Remember the '90s? So what is our response to the sudden interest in economy, and how does our view of minimalism compare to society's?

by Valerie Weaver-Zercher

Christians concerned about poverty and the environment aren't used to sitting at the popular table in the cultural cafeteria. So when Cindy Crawford waxes poetic about her "eco-awakening" in *Vanity Fair* and a Procter & Gamble advertising circular shows a smiling woman icing a cake beside the words "Do more with less"—well, we can be forgiven for not knowing whether to applaud or grimace.

By now, many Christians are accustomed to being branded "green" because they freeze corn or bike to work. The corporate hijacking of the environmental movement is old news, writes Lauren Weber, author of *In Cheap We Trust: The Story of a Misunderstood American Virtue*. What is new, Weber claims, is the extent to which "cheap is the new green." Stories about the new frugal-

ity have hit most major news outlets, and what Weber calls the "eco-cheap" economy—the world of secondhand commerce, bartering, and freeganism—is drumming up increasing attention.

So when simple living becomes stylish, what's a Christian to do?

Approaching the trend

It seems a little priggish to insist on drawing distinctions between the pop-culture iteration of living more with less and "our" version. Besides, many different environmentalisms and movements toward thrift are afoot today, and Christians are often at the forefront of both, making the comparison between Christian "more-with-less-ness" and popular movements a little muddy. And despite the *More-with-Less Cookbook* by Doris Janzen Longacre and its

companion volume, *Living More with Less*, Mennonites (and other Christians) don't own the phrase any more than Procter & Gamble does.

Plus, isn't this exactly what we've been hoping for—more people detoxing from their consumptive and earth-destroying addictions? Who cares whether people are motivated by authentic concern for the poor and the planet—or by how gorgeous Cameron Diaz looks in a YouTube video about the environmental crisis when she tilts her head and asks earnestly, "How do you get people to care?"

On the other hand, an uncritical embrace of all things touted as thrifty and green could weaken the kind of rigorous approach that more-with-less living can entail. Is it really possible for Hollywood to contribute to the cause without cheapening it?

At the risk of sounding pedantic, I offer three things that the fashionably green and cheap movements might learn from Longacre and the contributors to her more-with-less books, most of whom were living eco-frugal existences long before Cameron Diaz hit the big screen.

Styles pass; standards have staying power

Doris Janzen Longacre, who died in 1979, knew her cookbook about eating responsibly in light of global hunger was selling wildly, and she wrote *Living More with Less* in part because the oil crisis and stagflation had readers scrounging around for practical tips on how to live with less in all areas of life, not just cooking. She knew the planet was being stressed by human habits of extraction, consumption, and fuel-

burning, and a few other folks did too, but their concerns remained marginal to the still-ballooning American dream.

Still, Longacre had a hunch that her ideas might someday become chic. She avoided the word "lifestyle" because it "bears the stamp of the new, the distinctive, the fun," choosing instead the term "life standards" to describe a "way of life governed by more than fleeting taste." It's as if she foresaw—and rued—the day that Matt Petersen, president and CEO of Global Green USA, would gush, as he did at a celebrity-studded Oscar-week fundraiser, "The solutions [to global warming] are . . . fashionable. They can be fun! They can be sexy!"

The language of Longacre's five life standards—do justice, learn from the world community, nurture people, cherish the natural order, and non-conform freely—may sound frumpy to contemporary ears accustomed to a vernacular of "fashionable, fun, and sexy." But they interlock to create what theologian Malinda Berry, in the 30th-anniversary edition of *Living More with Less*, calls "a more-with-less theology." And while theologies and standards aren't as appealing as styles, they also don't topple over when the winds of public opinion change direction.

Because here's the thing: As author Lauren Weber reminds us, Americans' commitment to frugality waxes and wanes. "History shows us that in hard times, we hunker down and make do with less," Weber writes. "It also shows that as soon as the danger passes, we cheerfully reset our appetites a notch or two higher than before." Only when (or if) the economy rebounds will we know whether the new frugality is a durable virtue or passing fancy.

Changing habits may require—are you serious?—hard work

Despite chirpy checklists of five simple ways to save the planet, it's not always easy being green. Hanging up laundry takes more work than tossing it in the dryer. Biking takes longer than driving. Making food from scratch, repairing broken items, and taking care of your neighbors might mean sacrificing recreational or even vocational pursuits, for both men and women.

When it is not moored in concern for those with less, commitment to sustainability and simplicity can fold in on itself.

Of course there are payoffs in contentment and spiritual health—those constitute the "more" in "more with less." But frugality for the sake of the environment and the poor isn't some accessory value that you can splice onto a maxed-out, harried lifestyle. It's a set of practices that displaces some priorities and disrupts others. It's not always convenient, and it's not always easy. Expecting it to be either means that, when the going gets tough, you'll be more likely to throw in the organic cotton towel.

Living more with less is about more than personal—and even planetary—health

When it is not moored in concern for those with less, commitment to sustainability and simplicity can fold in on itself. Local living can contract its way

toward narcissism, or at least provinciality: Being cheap saves me money. Eating organic lettuce helps me be healthy. Growing a garden feeds my family.

Even though such actions are inarguably good for the planet and often for the poor as well, self-interest can sneakily supplant such concerns. Books such as *Living More with Less*, rooted in Mennonite Central Committee's relationships with the global poor, can remind a movement in danger of navel-gazing that sustainability has at least as much to do with the climate refugees crowding into the slums of Dhaka because their coastal villages are being flooded as with the fact that asparagus and morel quiche tastes lovely in the spring.

So if cheap is "the next cool," as Jeff Yeager of the Cheapskate books predicts, so be it. The fact that U.S. and Canadian citizens are wasting less, borrowing less, building smaller houses, and staying around home more is, as Yeager claims, undeniably a good thing. Perhaps the role of more-with-less Christians is to gently support adherents to the new frugality if or when thrift once again moves from chic to passé. Perhaps then we can remind them that, when the planet and the poor are concerned, responsible living never goes out of style.

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For more on *Living More with Less* by Doris Janzen Longacre and edited by Valerie Weaver-Zercher, please see *In Part's* back cover.



Valerie Weaver-Zercher is a freelance writer, a contributing editor to *Sojourners*, and editor of the 30th-anniversary edition of *Living More with Less* (Herald Press, 2010). She, her husband, and their three children live in Mechanicsburg, Pa., and are members of Slate Hill Mennonite Church (Camp Hill, Pa.).

TO THE POINT

What is one decision that your church, as a community, has made that supports the BIC commitment to living simply?

At Pathway Community Church, we've been offering Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University for at least five years. This course has opened the eyes of so many families to understand what God's word has to say about debt and giving. Personally, my wife and I have been taking steps over the years to get out of debt because we don't want to be a slave to anyone but Christ. We can't wait to be freed up to give and serve in greater ways.

Danny Tanner

Pathway Community Church (York, Pa.)

We have tried to maximize our resources (in terms of both people and money) so that we are making the main thing, *the main thing*. We have cut back on our advertising budget considerably, relying primarily on our people to talk to their friends one-on-one. We also use Constant Contact, an email marketing program that costs us \$25 per month.

We are constantly thinking about how we can plan events that are highly relational and at a low cost. Coffeehouse events with local volunteer artists, church picnics, VBS in a park, and chili cook-offs are ways that we have fun, meet new people, and do church more simply. I like to think of it as more organic.

Environmentally, we collect plastic grocery bags and egg cartons and donate them to a homeless shelter, which reuses them in its food bank. We also recycle cans and plastic water bottles.

Dan Houck

The Table Community Church (Lampeter, Pa.)

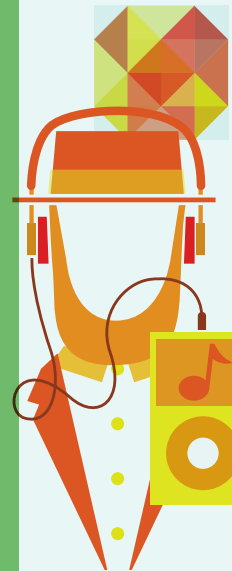
At Revolution, we did a five-week series called "The Simpler Life." Among other things, we discovered that God wants us to enjoy the process of working, and not to just accomplish something. It is not enough to say, "I finished my work." We should instead say, "I enjoyed the process of working." We want to see people come to church and give their lives to God, but what if we enjoyed the process of telling people about Jesus? This can help us simplify because we aren't necessarily looking for the biggest, most complicated, or fastest solution. Rather, we are able to enjoy what our Creator is doing through us whatever we do.

Jeff Piepho

Revolution BIC (Salina, Kans.)

LOOKING BACK

From the beginning of our history, the BIC community has been committed to simplicity. What did this look like for us in the past?



Dress » Clothing was plain: Women wore modest cape dresses and prayer veils, while men donned suits with erect collars.

Jewelry » BIC were taught to not wear jewelry of any kind, including wedding rings!

Hair & makeup » Men didn't shave their beards and kept their hair short. Women, on the other hand, were urged to tie their long hair up into buns and discouraged from wearing makeup.

Music » Neither instruments nor choirs were permitted in church worship; the emphasis was instead placed on congregational singing.

Church buildings » For 75 years, church happened in individuals' homes. Eventually, some groups began building meeting houses, plain brick structures designed to hold services.

PARTING WORDS

IN PLENTY OR IN WANT

Finding contentment no matter what you're driving

by PERRY ENGLE

The running joke about living a simple lifestyle is that every time you find yourself in a situation where there is even a hint of extravagance, you open yourself up for criticism, or at the very least some snide comments.

I expected as much last summer when my rental car selection in Kansas took a turn for the better. I was at a car rental counter in the Wichita airport, and the lady ahead of me couldn't figure out how to shorten the restraint straps on the infant seat that came with her car. The agent couldn't figure it out either, so I took a couple of minutes and helped her adjust the seat.

As I approached the counter to pick up my reserved *economy* car (note the emphasis), the agent thanked me for helping the woman. He said, "Our company would like to give you an upgrade for your help."

I responded suspiciously, as I usually do in these kinds of situations, and said, "How much will it cost me?"

"No extra charge," he replied.

"What do you have?" I asked.

"We have a new Camaro that's pretty nice."

I said, "Cool, I'll take the Camaro. And, oh, by the way, so I'm not wandering all over the parking lot looking for it, what color is it?"

"Don't worry, you'll see it right away," he answered. "It's the bright yellow one that looks just like Bumblebee in the movie Transformers."

I replied, "I didn't see the movie, but I'm looking forward to the car."

I'm really not a fast-car kind of guy. My vehicle life has centered mostly around old Volkswagens, low-end Hondas, and mini-vans. So when I hopped in the Bumblebee and buzzed out of the parking lot, I felt strangely conspicuous—and more than a little bit extravagant. My friends at the conference I was attending had a good laugh when I pulled up. More than one asked if the car was in keeping with my commitment to simple living. The requisite photos were taken and promptly posted on Facebook.

The Camaro got me to thinking about what Paul said in Philippians 4:12 about being content "in any and every situation... whether living in plenty or in want." I often find myself worrying about what people will think about this, that, or the other thing. Am I being frugal enough? Am I drawing too much attention to myself? Am I properly stewarding the Lord's resources? Are my actions becoming those expected of a church leader?

As I tooled around Wichita in my hot rod, I decided that I could either live my life worried about what everybody thinks about me, or simply embrace the fact that God had blessed me with 48 hours in a brand-new Chevy.



I decided I could either live my life worried about what everybody thinks about me, or embrace the fact that God had blessed me with 48 hours in a brand-new Chevy.

I determined that my commitment to a simple lifestyle has a lot more to do with the state of my heart than with the kind of car I'm driving.

At the end of the day, I'm no less a follower of Christ in a bumblebee yellow Camaro than I would be in the beat-up Honda that I drive every day. The main difference is, in the Camaro, I'm just a whole lot faster off the line.



Perry Engle has submitted a formal request for the Bumblebee Camaro to be recognized as the official car of Brethren in Christ bishops. Not having received a reply, he continues contentedly overseeing the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC Church.

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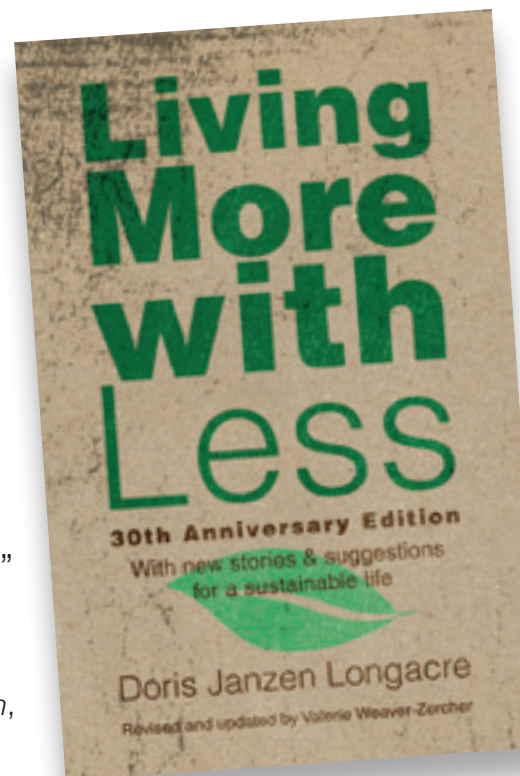
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