

IN PART

THE MAGAZINE FOR THE BRETHREN IN CHRIST COMMUNITY IN THE U.S.

Fall 2013



EVANGELICALISM

**We
believe**
JESUS IS
SENDING US

THE VIEW FROM HERE

“A new heart I will give you, and a new spirit I will put within you; and I will remove from your body the heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh.” (Ezekiel 36:26, NRSV)

Even as a child, I was moved and mystified by these words of God to the Israelites. In this passage, I heard a foreshadowing of the coming Savior, whose heart of flesh would replace the stone-built temple system. On a more personal level, though, I’ve often wondered, What does it look like to have a heart of flesh?

My understanding has deepened, as I’ve journeyed with a friend who’s walking through a painful life crisis. Over the last year or so, she’s candidly shared the emotions she’s experienced—throbbing grief and haunting uncertainties, seething anger and numbing indifference.

In the darkest moments of my life, I’ve often responded by allowing my heart to grow hardened. It’s surprisingly easy to turn away from hope and tune out love.

Though my friend has also experienced this, I’ve noticed her taking a different posture: listening intently for the voice of the Lord. She tells me about how Jesus has met her in her mourning, speaking words of comfort and clarity in all sorts of ways—through music, movies, podcasts, books, sermons, conversations. By choosing to keep her heart tender, she’s able to hear God’s voice, even through fresh and pressing pain.

And there’s more: My friend’s heart of flesh has enabled her not only to *hear* but also to *respond* to that voice. For months, she’s been living in limbo, unsure of how this crisis will unfold. An open heart strengthens her to resist the impulse to grasp at control and pursue immediate resolution. It empowers her to live, for now, in the midst of uncertainty.

While working on this issue of *In Part*, the fourth installment of the “We believe” series, I’ve come to a new appreciation for the Brethren in Christ as a body with a

heart of flesh. We are a listening Church, humble enough to hear God’s voice and to change course in response to new revelation.

Starting out as Anabaptists, we embraced Pietism’s message of heartfelt, personal faith. One hundred years later, we responded to Wesleyanism’s call to holiness. Then, in the 20th century, we opened ourselves up again, this time to the work being done by the Spirit through the Evangelical movement. Some of us sensed that the Brethren in Christ family had become a stagnant, even legalistic group. As we interacted with Evangelicals, we noticed they had a “peculiar liberty and an opportunity for ministry”* that we didn’t necessarily possess. To reinvigorate our witness and broaden our horizons, we began to adopt the tools and perspectives offered by Evangelicalism.

As it turns out, embracing Evangelicalism became a major turning point for the BIC, and we are still examining, processing, and debating its influence. Growing up immersed in the Evangelical movement of the 1990s, I’ve certainly experienced its excesses. I’m disillusioned with how Evangelicalism has been used as a tool of partisanship, consumerism, exclusivity, nationalism, pride. But when I consider the story of the BIC, I’m mindful that earlier BIC brothers and sisters saw value in Evangelicalism: They heard God speaking to them through it, and they responded. Their hearts of flesh helped our community to move from stagnation to growth, from legalism to freedom.

In this issue of *In Part*, we examine Evangelicalism, perhaps the most complex stream in our theological history. I hope that it fosters conversation, as we continue to sift through the legacy of this movement. And I pray that as a Church family, we’ll continue to have tender hearts of flesh that recognize Christ’s voice and follow where Christ leads.

Peace,

Kristine

Kristine N. Frey, editor

**Quest for Piety and Obedience* by Carlton O. Wittlinger, pg. 480

Creative contributors



Cover art by Andy Rash

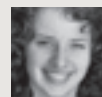
ARTIST'S STATEMENT

To create this visual representation of our Evangelical heritage, I drew in a variety of elements, each with symbolic meaning:

- Christ’s **crown of thorns** is again in the corner, but this time **vines** sprout from it, symbolizing new growth and reach. The guiding latticework conveys the tools for outreach and bold commitment to witnessing to the world that Evangelicalism offered the BIC.
- The **central figure**, filled with the words of John 3:16 and carrying the light of the Good News, is breaking out of the **enclosed arc** to actively engage the world. Prior to encountering the Evangelical movement, the BIC Church was an isolated sect; afterwards, we became a diverse body of peoples, groups, and talents, as captured in the **mosaic of colors** within the figure.
- The world is represented by the **rows of people**.
- The foundation of the piece is made up of **soil**, which runs into the foot of the figure itself. This reminds us of our creation and the redemption of all things that is to come.



Andy Rash attends Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC with his wife, Jennifer, and stepson, Noah. After working for months with small drawers for this “We believe” series, he’s ready to let loose, predicting that his next artistic venture will involve something large-scale, with a lot of splashed paint!



Muriel Kratz is a graduate of Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pa.) and recently became an art teacher for grades K–12. Muriel enjoys cooking, travel, and photography, samples of which appear on pages 8–9.



Gregory Snader is an illustrator whose work appears on page 13. A 2007 graduate of Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), he lives with his wife at their home, Blossom Place, in Lancaster, Pa. SNADERILLUSTRATOR.COM

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

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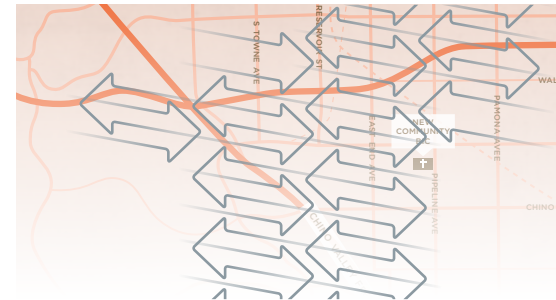
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About “We believe”

“We believe” is a four-part series examining the theological streams that have shaped our identity and values as Brethren in Christ:

- Anabaptism—Winter 2012
- Pietism—Spring 2013
- Wesleyanism—Summer 2013
- Evangelicalism—Fall 2013

While a single issue of *In Part* cannot do justice to the full richness of each stream, the goal is to spark further exploration, conversation, and unity in our shared beliefs.

Additionally, we credit Perry Engle with expressing how all streams of BIC theology find their source in Christ (as in, “Evangelicalism: Jesus is sending us”).

IN MOTION

Ever wondered . . .
what's Evangelicalism?

e·van·gel·i·cal·ism

| ē-van-'je-li-kəl-i-zəm |

Origin: from Ancient Greek *euangelion*, meaning “gospel” or “good news”

NOUN:

a diverse, trans-denominational Protestant movement emphasizing personal conversion (being “born again”), the centrality of Scripture, the sacrifice of Christ on the cross, and the call to actively share one’s faith*

USED IN A SENTENCE:

While Evangelicalism began as a series of revivals based in Europe and North America, a 2011 survey by the Pew Research Center reveals that it has become a global movement, with more Evangelicals living outside the English-speaking world than in it.

*Adapted from *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain* by David W. Bebbington and *The Rise of Evangelicalism* by Mark A. Noll

FOCUS Young believers respond to a message shared at Vacation Bible School



In May, 94 children participated in Vacation Bible School held at Bethany BIC (Thomas, Okla.). Through a drama and activities, the children were invited to consider their struggles and heard the story of Christ’s sacrifice and resurrection. “The kids really got it,” says James Rainwater, pastor of Bethany BIC. “Moved with conviction, they came up and surrounded the cross and just had a moment of thanksgiving and commitment.” In the following weeks, five of the children took the step of being baptized.

Tracing our history

Evangelicalism

Radical Reformers in Switzerland, of which the Brethren in Christ are direct descendants, hold their first adult baptism and initiate Anabaptism.

1525

1730s-40s

1760s

c. 1780

1790-1840

1870s-80s

1910-15

1930s-40s

1947

1949

1950

1956

1959

1974

1977

1999

2006

2012

Evangelicalism emerges in Britain, then crosses into present-day New England, where its emphasis on personal salvation ignites the First Great Awakening.

Pietist ideas initiate a spiritual awakening among believers in Lancaster County, Pa.

The first Brethren in Christ begin to meet in homes and barns in Lancaster County.

The Second Great Awakening sweeps the U.S., as Evangelical ministers preach Postmillennialism and rally believers against deism.

Elements of Wesleyanism begin to influence BIC thought.

The Evangelical movement grows divided as Fundamentalist ideas emerge in protest of modernism and liberal theology.

BIC “legislate” communal norms, supporting bivocational pastors and adopting a uniform for plain dress, while banning life insurance, musical instruments in church, and wedding bands.

“Neo-evangelicals” seek to reclaim Evangelicalism by opposing Fundamentalism’s perceived anti-intellectualism, focus on doctrinal minutiae, and aggressive tactics.

The BIC Church becomes officially involved with mainstream Evangelicalism, joining the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE).

Inspired by the Evangelical believers they meet at an NAE convention, BIC leaders discern that the BIC have fallen into “legalism” and must reinvigorate their outreach in order to retain young people and witness to others.

The BIC Bible Quizzing program begins, drawing on the Evangelical movement’s emphasis on reaching young people.

By this year, General Conference has reversed its former positions on the Church uniform, pastoral employment, life insurance, musical instruments, and wedding rings.

The BIC World Hunger fund is set up to help meet the physical needs of people around the world.

51 BIC believers from across North America gather to identify the Core Values of the BIC, many of which reflect Evangelical themes.

In *Part* magazine, the *Brethren in Christ History and Life* journal, and the Messiah College Sider Institute call our denomination to refocus on our identity and heritage.

Church Member Profile indicates that 44% of BIC describe their faith as “Evangelical,” 30% as “Anabaptist,” and 5% as “Pietist.”*

Anabaptist influence Wesleyan influence
Pietist influence Evangelical influence

*For more on the Church Member Profile, go to BIC-CHURCH.ORG/CMP.

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

LETTING GO OF APPEARANCES

The challenge to be clothed with Christ in order to share the good news

by RUTH DOURTE

In the 1920s, when I was growing up, Brethren in Christ people gave visible evidence of our beliefs by how we dressed: erect collars without ties for men and cape dresses and head coverings for women. Our appearance expressed our deep commitment to the values of modesty, simplicity, and nonconformity.

I remember my grandmother’s black, ankle-length cape dress. The “cape” lay around her shoulders like a shawl, rounded off in the back and pinned in the front at the waist. She also wore an apron (in which she pocketed mints for the children) and was so conscientious about having her head covered that she wore a nightcap.

When I joined the Church at age 9, I complied with the standard of dress among the BIC. For many years, Church leaders resisted setting specific guidelines for dress, but in 1937, out of a desire to preserve our values, General Conference did just that.

It wasn’t until I was in my early 20s that I began to question the imperative of wearing the traditional dress of the BIC. In 1943, my husband, Eber, became pastor at Hollowell BIC, a little one-room country church near Waynesboro, Pa. When we arrived, the church had 11 members and about 35 in attendance at Sunday School. The church began to grow as a result of revival meetings, and we saw many people “go to the altar,” declaring their allegiance to Jesus.

Up until then, Grace Woglemuth—the wife of our district’s bishop—and

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

I had been sewing cape dresses and making pleated head coverings for the women in the church. But now, with so many converts, we could not possibly keep up. As a result, we began to wear modest dresses, without capes.

This decision generated distress among some. Two deacons pled with me to reconsider, and my own father was so stricken by this change that he stopped coming to church for a time.

But even more surprising and heartening was the response of one woman in the church, who told me that she and others began to feel like they could be up “on my level now.” While I had always thought that plain dress spelled humility, my neighbors had interpreted it as a sign of righteousness that seemed unattainable.

By 1957, the Hollowell Church had 85 members, and attendance averaged over 250. God revealed His presence and power in ways we cannot fathom!

Throughout the 1950s, we Brethren in Christ changed in our dress, as well as other practices. Yet my recollection is that many of these transitions had been evident in places like the Hollowell Church prior to the BIC’s official involvement with the National Association of Evangelicals in 1949.

Frankly, I had no personal desire to be rid of the plain clothing I’d grown up

wearing. In fact, doing so felt like a serious “betrayal” of my heritage, as I loved following after the unpretentious examples of my aunts and grandmother. Yet the church member’s comment about my clothing helped me realize that others didn’t always see plain dress as setting Brethren in Christ apart—but as setting us above. As I was learning, following Christ and spreading the Gospel should be kept as our most important priorities.



This traditional BIC cape dress from the 1900s is housed at the BIC Historical Library and Archives (Mechanicsburg, Pa.).



Ruth Dourte, pictured at age 92 on right, is a member of Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC. She and her husband, Eber, will celebrate their 70th anniversary this December. Recently, she was in her attic and found one of her old cape dresses, like the one she wore in the picture of her at age 16 on the left.

A mighty convergence

Shoring up our values in the wake of the Evangelical flood

by Dulcimer Hope Brubaker

desire to see individuals, families, neighborhoods, and whole cities being transformed by Jesus Christ. If you take away its political affiliations and history of proselytizing without ongoing discipleship, Evangelicalism can serve as a catalyst to partner with God in what He is doing in all of creation.”

But, as Brickner notes, we may have gotten more than we bargained for when we jumped on the Evangelical bandwagon. With the tools for more effectively sharing the Gospel, we also received theological and practical influences that didn’t line up with our historical commitments. And more than 50 years later, we have yet to fully reconcile the discrepancies between our pre- and post-Evangelical selves. “We believed we could learn from [Evangelicalism] discreetly, adopting only what was of value,” wrote Church historian and theologian Luke Keefer, Jr., in 1996. “But the stream had more force than we anticipated. We have not domesticated [Evangelicalism . . .]; instead, it has domesticated us.”¹

Validating Keefer’s concerns 16 years later, Scott Elkins, pastor of Canoe Creek BIC (Hollidaysburg, Pa.), affirms the difficulty of gleaning what’s helpful from the tradition without becoming overwhelmed by it: “Try-

ing to learn discreetly from American Evangelicalism is like trying to sip from a fire hydrant.” As he considers its broad-ranging influence Elkins believes, “Without a doubt, Evangelicalism has affected our practice of the Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan streams of our heritage.”²

A turbulent theology

Early Brethren in Christ embraced a non-participatory approach to government, insisting instead that Christ’s followers were citizens of the kingdom of Heaven. Having come from Anabaptist groups that fled religious persecution in Europe, our forebears had good reason to draw such a dramatic distinction between Church and State. But that line began to blur when Evangelical thought entered our congregations.

At the turn of the 20th century, Evangelical voices were calling loudly for the Church to become a more active political force. In many cases, Evangelicalism’s conservative theological views put it in line with conservative political perspectives, as espoused by the Republican Party. Hence the rise of the Christian Right, a socially conservative coalition that seeks to apply its understanding of Christianity to public policy. Modern critics of the Christian Right point out that Jesus was not a Republican, but early Anabaptists would

probably go a step farther and remind us all—wherever we are on the political spectrum—that our ultimate citizenship is in heaven. They knew how easily nationalism and social agendas could take the place of our allegiance to Jesus, and they steered clear of politics. “If we know our heritage well,” wrote Keefer, “we shall realize that what we stand for is a model of the [C]hurch’s penetration of the world which avoids aggressive use of the state to achieve religious and moral ends. The [C]hurch’s responsibility to the world is that of witness and friend. We are not in the position to be its master.”¹

With wider political participation also came a greater acceptance of military involvement among our membership. For hundreds of years, non-resistance was a defining component of Anabaptist discipleship; when Evangelicalism entered the Brethren in Christ bloodstream, it became one of many ways to interpret Jesus’ words about peace. Ron Sider, founder of Evangelicals for Social Action and a credentialed BIC pastor from Lansdale, Pa., laments this waning commitment. “Our tendency and temptation as we’ve come in contact with Evangelicals has been to lose the peace witness,” Sider says. “Thinking and saying that Jesus meant His disciples never to kill? That’s a very unpopular thing in the Evangelical world.”

And perhaps that’s due in part to a changed understanding of salvation

England and North America, Evangelicalism preached a high view of the authority of Scripture and the importance of personal conversion. What gave Evangelicalism its name, however, was its high-octane fervor for sharing Jesus with everyone—and subsequently warming the pews with plenty of born-again converts.

Feeling irrelevant, and that we were neglecting Jesus’ commands to engage the world, we folded away our head coverings, joined the National Association of Evangelicals, and sought to move from isolation to become a more diverse, hospitable community of believers. Plain clothes gave way to more modern fashions, bi-vocational pastoral ministry was replaced by full-time pastoral staff, and Church members began voting in political elections at much higher rates than before. Following the lead of other Evangelicals, we began to focus a great deal of energy on children and youth, starting up a Bible Quizzing program and other youth outreaches.

When a trickle becomes a flood

The “Evangelicalization process” did not happen overnight—and indeed there were more than a few brothers and sisters who resisted—but over time, the Brethren in Christ Church grew from what was essentially a large extended family to a modern denomination galvanized by the Great Commission.

Ron Howell, pastor of Crossroads BIC (Salina, Kans.), puts it this way: “Before Evangelicalism, the feeling was that, where we were visible, the world would be drawn to us. After Evangelicalism, we realized more fully our call to go out and preach the Gospel. Evangelicalism has helped us balance the call to go into the world with the call to be separate from it.”

That same call has been on the BIC since the beginning, says Heather Brickner, pastoral resident at Carlisle (Pa.) BIC: “Evangelicalism can compel us to continue the early BIC Church’s

When Jesus talks, we listen.

So when early Brethren in Christ believers read “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19b–20a), we took it seriously. Our evangelistic tactic—wear plain clothes, live apart from the world—is probably no longer on anybody’s top-10 list of most effective ways to share the Gospel. But in hindsight, we can see the wisdom of our forebears, who believed quite simply that the best way to lead others to Christ was to live an authentic life of obedience; anyone hungry for peace with God would naturally seek to join us.

The difficult commission

On a cross-cultural scale, we have been going to all nations since the 1890s, when intrepid BIC believers heard God’s call to share the Gospel beyond North America. On the home front, however, making disciples was slow work. By the middle of the 20th century, we had become a cultural sect, cut off from “the world” by our lifestyle choices and dress. Not many people wanted to become Brethren in Christ, and as our children came of age, an increasing number left the Church.

Enter the Evangelical movement. Having fueled a number of revivals in

We must continue to highly value **Scripture**, we must share the **Gospel**, we must **disciple**, and we must **go to the lost**—this is not just acceptable **Evangelicalism, it is who we have always been.** —*Hank Johnson, Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC*

and discipleship, courtesy of—you guessed it—Evangelicalism. The Evangelical impulse to lead others to salvation—while well-intentioned—has frequently been characterized by a lack of follow-through in the area of discipleship. If you take the “once-saved, always-saved” view, there’s little motivation to help new believers grow in continual obedience and surrender to God through relationship with Him.

“Our Brethren in Christ ancestors understood true conversion to be substantiated by following Jesus, not merely, ‘Repeat this prayer after me,’” says Timothy Fisher, pastor of the Walkersville (Md.) Community Church and a member of the BIC Commission on Ministry and Doctrine. “This is a message that Evangelicalism

needs to hear. In many cases, the salvation Jesus described as narrow and hard is substituted by a salvation that demands nothing.”

Fred Miller, pastor of Cumberland Valley BIC (Dillsburg, Pa.) agrees: “This ‘easy salvation’ has affected the BIC, especially in ministry to children and youth. The view that people become Christians by believing the correct things has lost the Gospel’s transformational emphasis and requirement that we acknowledge Jesus for all He is for us—Savior, Lord, friend, teacher, bread, and water.”

Our BIC predecessors more clearly understood that salvation demanded everything—full submission to God and unfailing dedication to the faith community. Ruth Pawelski, 78, a

member of the Dayton (Ohio) Mission, reflects that discipleship and obedience to God were key teachings in her Brethren in Christ upbringing. “We were taught tremendous faith in the Scriptures from [the time we were little],” Pawelski remembers. “So when we were taught specifics or principles from God’s word, we were eager to understand them. And because, with loving nurture, we had also been led to embrace the truth that loving and obeying God with all our hearts was the only satisfactory way to live, we espoused them.”

We’ve come a long way from the Church of Pawelski’s childhood. Ron Sider remembers joining the Church as a teenager in the 1950s, listening to Matthew 18 and solemnly promising to submit to correction by another believer if he was found to be sinning. “That’s been lost,” Sider says. “There’s a sense that it’s just a matter of me and Jesus, me and God. But Christian community is also a matter of being brothers and sisters and being accountable.”

Eduardo Llanes, who served as bishop of the Southeast Regional Conference from 2006–2012, is not quick to be critical of Evangelicalism. However, he acknowledges that Evangelicalism has, at times, deemphasized communal connection and accountability, teachings that have been revitalized through the community-oriented Hispanic BIC churches planted over the last 20 years.

“Evangelicalism can espouse individualism,” he observes. “Instead, we stress the need for life in community.”

A call to communal discernment

As Brethren in Christ, we are accountable to one another as we discern what it means to be faithful Christ-followers in our current age. Key voices within our community have been proclaiming that it’s time to fully assess Evangelicalism and its influence on us, to claim the tenets of Evangelicalism we can affirm, and discard what we cannot. “Our great mistake was embracing Evangelicalism without critique, and embracing North American culture without shame,” observes Nate Hulfish, pastor of Circle of Hope Marlton and Crescent (Pennsauken, N.J.). “We have—like good American citizens—gone with what works because being a citizen of the kingdom of God is too demanding and requires too much trust in Jesus.”³

At the same time, Eduardo Llanes maintains that taking into account voices from across the BIC U.S. family—including those of us who are Spanish-speaking—will provide crucial insight and perspective as we tease out the extent to which we identify as Evangelicals. “Among Hispanic people, Evangelicalism has a very different

meaning than it does in the North American mainstream,” he explains.

“For Spanish-speakers, being Evangelical has to do with passionate faith and charismatic worship. I am eager to embrace the gifts that Evangelicalism has to offer us in how we understand our call to follow Christ.”

How do we begin to navigate these waters? Hank Johnson, youth pastor at Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC, says we have already made a good start: “We must continue to highly value Scripture, we must share the Gospel, we must disciple, and we must go to the lost—this is not just acceptable Evangelicalism, it is who we have always been.” However, Johnson insists, “We must no longer let Evangelicalism erode our view of salvation, our focus on discipleship, our value of piety and obedience, our doctrine of two kingdoms, or our theology of life.”

And, if the popularity of recent books by authors such as David Platt, Kyle Idleman, Carolyn Custis James, and Shane Claiborne exploring these alternative perspectives are any indication, Evangelicals are hungry for much of what the BIC Church stands for.

“I frankly think that the combination we have of Anabaptism, Pietism, Wesleyanism, and Evangelicalism—

with a strong emphasis that the Holy Spirit intends to change us and sanctify us—is finally solidly biblical,” says Ron Sider. “We have a lot to give.”

That is, if we can find the still waters beyond the convergence of all these theological streams. But Beth Claassen-Thrush, of Upland (Calif.) BIC, offers hope. “As we have been engaged in this identity crisis,” she says, “suddenly Evangelicalism itself slows down and catches a whiff of something ‘new’ and enticing—and it smells a lot like Anabaptism.”⁴ With Jesus sending us, let’s go and make disciples—in our very own Anabaptist-Pietist-Wesleyan-Evangelical style, of course.



Dulcimer Hope Brubaker is one of the many believers grafted into the BIC after we caught the Evangelical wave. A stay-at-home mom of two, Dulci and her husband, Jason, attend the Dillsburg (Pa.) congregation.

¹ “The Three Streams of Our Heritage: Separate or Part of a Whole?” by Luke Keefer, Jr., reprinted in the August 2012 issue of *Brethren in Christ History and Life*.

² “Sipping from the Fire Hydrant of Evangelicalism: A Response to Luke L. Keefer, Jr.,” *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, August 2012.

³ “Why We Must Take the Three (or Four) Streams in Our History Seriously: A Panel,” *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, April 2013.

⁴ “Fellow Pilgrims: A Response to Luke L. Keefer, Jr.,” *Brethren in Christ History and Life*, August 2012.

REVELATION

A HUSBAND'S INCARCERATION LEADS TO NEW INSIGHTS ON TRUTH, MERCY, AND GOD'S UNFLINCHING LOVE

by NICOLE HOOVER



Ananias' story has taken on flesh for me in recent months. In light of events in my own life, I understand his shock at being asked to reach out to Saul. "But Lord . . ." I imagine Ananias stammering. The Message even translates Ananias' response as, "Master, you can't be serious."

Saul was a killer. Saul was a deceiver. Saul was a man marked by sin.

Yet God had called Ananias to touch Saul in the name of the Lord and wipe away his blindness, both figuratively and literally. Touch a killer. Touch a deceiver. And see the redeeming love of Christ within.

THE STORY, MADE REAL

In January of 2012, I was sitting on the couch in my dad's house as I received the news from a police officer.

"Mrs. Hoover, I suggest you take your boys and get somewhere safe," the officer had asserted on that frigid afternoon. "We believe your husband is responsible for a number of burglaries in the area. He seems to have quite the drug problem. You need to take the necessary precautions to keep you and your family safe."

That was it. I had discovered the drugs. I had discovered the mounting evidence, which would eventually lead to his conviction for the burglaries. I had discovered his infidelity. I had discovered that my God-fearing husband was in fact a very, very marked man. And a few excruciatingly long weeks later, he was in jail, leaving me and our 2- and 1-year-old sons behind.

Denial, detox, lies, remorse. Denial, exhaustion, guilt, pain. Denial, confession, judgment, time.

Anyone who has loved a drug addict, particularly an incarcerated one, will know this cycle all too well. I was on "the outside" trying to piece together what had happened and deal with its repercussions, all while sustaining and providing for my two young children. For months, my life was in flux. I went

through periods of deep grief, rooted anger, intense shame, and spirited vengeance. I wrote my husband off a half-dozen times, at least.

Yet this period of deep pain also ushered in a time of unimaginable growth and a closeness to the Lord I have a hard time describing in words. Never was the word *love* fleshed out more clearly to me than when I grasped the feet of my Savior and walked through this journey, as unstable as it was. 1 Corinthians 13 was engraved in my heart, as I daily fought the desires of my flesh. Would I stay? Would I love? Would I forgive? Would I reconcile? But more directly, would I allow Jesus to answer all those questions for me?

This is not the important part of the story, though . . .

A 30-SECOND MOMENT

The most important part of the story resides in one 30-second moment: when my sons were reunited with their father after a year's absence. They climbed out of the car and laid eyes on the man who had abandoned them for cheap highs and even cheaper relationships. Did they cry? Did they yell at him? Did they shy away from him, as if he were nothing but a stranger?

No. None of the above. They ran to him as fast as their little feet could get them there and gave him a hug that will remain with him forever. They did not see the marked felon that I saw standing before us. They saw love. And they reached out to touch it.

That moment changed my life forever. The Holy Spirit could not have spoken any louder to me than He did that day. I knew that I needed to take the gift of this experience and help other families coping with pain, mercy, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

I got that chance in May of this year, traveling with over 400 other volunteers to Louisiana State Penitentiary

(commonly referred to as "Angola") for the annual Returning Hearts Celebration. The event provides an opportunity for inmates (roughly 375 this year) to reunite with their children and to be *fathers*, not inmates, for a day. The volunteers set up carnival games, food, bouncy houses, and a prize store. In one of America's most notorious prisons, these men get a chance to enjoy *unfiltered time and space* with their children. And they have the opportunity to seek forgiveness and stop a familial cycle of crime many of them know all too well. I got the chance to be a part of another family's 30-second moment. I was blessed to witness *love* that day.

MY OWN MARK

In the days before the big event in Angola, I had the privilege of listening to one inmate, "Pat," speak about a particular Bible study group in prison called the Malachi Dads. The leaders seek to train other Christian inmates how to be godly parents and spiritually equip their children, regardless of their circumstances. Pat stood in the blazing Louisiana sun for four hours, talking to us about God's calling in his life and how blessed he was to be able to share this ministry with thousands of others. I remember noting how eloquent he was. How empowering he was. How presentable he was. How *Christian*.

Yet I knew Pat was serving a life sentence. Pat was a killer. Pat was a deceiver. Pat was marked.

It was at that moment that the Holy Spirit took my breath away. I had traveled down to Angola as the wife of a felon, yet I'd *still* entered that prison with preconceived notions of not *who* I was going to run into, but *what*. I expected to walk in and be able to see, hear, taste, touch, and smell what sin does to a person. I expected to run into men who were living in a different echelon of the Kingdom than I was. Of course, I never would have said this out loud, but deep

inside, those prideful feelings were as clear as the nose on my face.

The Lord used Pat like Ananias, to remove the scales covering my eyes. Then, I was moved to reach out and touch the face of another once-blind murderer. Through tears, I placed my hands on Pat's strong jawline. It felt absolutely no different than my own. I intensely searched his eyes for his sin, his evil, his mark. I looked for a reason to feel comfortable in my own self-righteousness again. I could not find it. I did not see his mark. Instead, God showed me that he was a chosen, loved, forgiven, reconciled child of God. I touched him. I touched love.

RESTORING SIGHT

The world will always remember Pat for his greatest mistake. And because of that, I will not leave anyone's side again without letting them know that they are not what they have done.

You are not what you have done.

It's from this vantage point that I can say I am so grateful to God for 2012. I am grateful that the Lord brought me to the end of myself, forcing me to live day-by-day in His provision, not my own. I am grateful that the Lord touched my face and wiped away the pride in my heart that stopped me from seeing people as worthy of love. And most importantly, I will forever be grateful that Jesus took His last breath on that blood-stained cross, so that we will never be remembered for our blinding mistakes.

Nicole Hoover attends Millersville (Pa.) BIC. When not busy raising two boys, she's either at work or volunteering as a Zumba instructor. For more of Nicole's story, read her article in the summer issue of *Shalom!* at BIC-CHURCH.ORG.

THE 5 HOUR GIFT



by Michael Shipman

How many people go to your church? How big is your meeting space?

So often, these are the questions that churches get hung up on. And when a church doesn't have the "right" answers ("hundreds," "huge"), people can begin to think that their church is somehow lacking. This throws the congregation into survival mode, as people shift their gaze inward, intent on changing the church's perceived weaknesses before looking to reach out to others.

Over the last few years, my church, New Community BIC (Chino, Calif.), has experienced several major transitions, all of which had left us feeling vulnerable. We didn't have the "right" answers to questions about our size and space, and we began to focus on ourselves.

What could we do to make ourselves look stronger, more attractive? Once we had everything just right, we reasoned, we could start thinking about reaching out to others.

But over the last year, our church has begun to second-guess this approach. Rather than asking how we can make ourselves look like we have it all together, we've decided to be honest. We've also discovered that, even in the midst of uncertainty, we have something to offer to our community, so we've started listening to our neighbors, asking what they need and how we might serve them.

The response we've heard has blown us away. In looking to bless others, we ourselves have

been blessed, receiving the gifts of new joy and vision for the journey ahead in abundance.

A season of transition

New Community BIC began in 1988 as a church plant in Phillips Ranch, an upper-middle-class, planned community about 25 miles east of Los Angeles. The church leased a building in the community's central shopping area and was conveniently located next door to a park.

After years in that setting, the church was forced to consider a change when the shopping center filed for bankruptcy. A new owner came in, and soon the monthly lease that New Community BIC had been paying was raised considerably.

At that time, New Community made the decision to leave the center and temporarily moved to a Holiday Inn in a neighboring town. In the midst of that shift, the pastor felt a call to another ministry.

Thus, in a matter of weeks, the congregation had left its original location, had moved to a hotel, and now faced a vacancy in the pastorate. As a result of these major transitions, attendance declined, and we were facing a crisis in our emerging identity.

New neighborhood, new mission

When I joined New Community as the "transitional pastor" in 2011, it didn't take long to realize that our facilities at the Holiday Inn were not conducive to reaching our community. Located at the junction of two freeways, the hotel was surrounded by corporate buildings, with no homes within a mile in any direction.

(Still, those of us at New Community BIC joked that we were a church with all the amenities—a gym, a swimming pool, a restaurant, and an ATM!)

I soon began the process of looking for a new meeting location for New Community BIC. After four months of searching, we found a church in the nearby town of Chino that was willing to let us hold our services in their building. Though only six miles from Phillips Ranch, Chino is in a much different setting, as an older, more rural community, historically centered around the dairy industry. We would need to make adjustments in order to fit into this new context.

At the same time, our church needed to take a realistic look at the toll of these transitions on our people. We've found ourselves focused upon surviving, rather than thriving. We've been expecting new people to come to us, rather than embracing our call to initiate interactions with our neighbors. We've been basically unknown to anyone outside of our regular attendees.

But over the last few months, we've heard Christ calling for us to move again—not to another building, but to a new sense of mission. To borrow from two reality TV shows, we want to see our church move from the "Survivor" mentality to "The Amazing Race" vision!

Tapping into our passion for service

New Community has always had a heart for those in need. Last year, our congregation sent a team to work on construction at a BIC church in El Salvador, and one of our ladies travelled to India with Mennonite Central Committee. We have served in Skid Row, L.A., and actively support compassionate ministries worldwide. But what about Chino, the community in which we're currently meeting?

As we considered this question as a church, I was reminded of how another church I pastored had engaged the community in several annual events and had built a strong relationship there. Could a similar approach succeed at New Community?

I took this idea to the church board at New Community BIC, and after discussion, they encouraged me to move forward with the plan. I contacted the mayor of Chino, and he graciously agreed to meet with me, along with Chino's community services director.

I expressed to them that New Community BIC wanted to get to know Chino, and we wanted Chino to get to know us. As a way to realize those goals, we offered a gift of 500 hours of volunteer service to the community: We would be available to help in whatever ways that we are needed.

Initially, I had envisioned that we'd be called to serve in after-school tutoring, at the senior citizens center, and at a center for victims of domestic violence. However, in addition to those areas, the mayor asked if we would help with many of the events of the city, such as its weekly Farmer's Market, weekly summer Concerts on the Green, annual car show, a city fireworks show, and a Relay for Life fundraiser. Not exactly "Mother Teresa" activities . . . but still, they were areas in which our community needed help. We wanted to demonstrate our faith to the community and to build relationships, no longer expecting that they would come to us. And if this is what it took, then Chino could count us in.

Unwrapping our gift

We've begun this process with anticipation! In June, we participated in our first community event, the city's fireworks show. We had an information booth for our church, and we wore T-shirts identifying us as volunteers from New Community BIC. After helping with setting up, tearing down, cleaning up, and parking for the show, we'd logged 72 hours of service. In the coming days, we'll also be serving as tutors in the learning center, working with seniors, and helping at the Pacific Lifeline Women's Shelter.

New Community BIC has been a church that has met in several buildings, in several towns. But we have come to learn that a church is the people, not the building. We are moving forward with our vision to connect to our community—not waiting until we have it all together, but offering what we have and trusting *that* to be our testimony of faith to our neighbors.



Michael Shipman has served as pastor at New Community BIC (Chino, Calif.) for two years. Michael is married to his high school sweetheart, Lyn, and has three children. He loves snorkeling, hiking, and his Golden Retriever, Lily.

TO THE POINT

How did Brethren in Christ respond to Evangelicalism in the early days of its influence on our community?

In "Born-again Brethren in Christ¹," Devin Manzullo-Thomas, a BIC member and scholar, describes three ways that Brethren in Christ reacted to the Evangelical movement.

RATIFICATION

[The National Association of Evangelicals] demonstrates the essential unity of Bible-believing and Bible-loving evangelical groups. . . . [J]oining the Association . . . would keep our people more aggressive and alive regarding fundamental issues of our Christian heritage as they relate to worldwide problems.
—Report from the BIC committee appointed to study affiliation with the NAE, 1948²

For the first time in most of our lives, we began to fellowship with [Evangelicals . . .] in a setting where we felt the velocity of [the Evangelical movement]. . . . [W]e found that they had a peculiar liberty and an opportunity for ministry that we did not have. We had closed the door on ourselves. . . . It wasn't a case of finding fault with the Brethren in Christ Church. . . . it was a case of finding a . . . ministry.
—BIC leader, 1950³

For the Brethren in Christ . . . fellowship [with Evangelicals] has helped to fire the hearts of bishops, ministers, and laymen, to make our Sunday schools more effective, . . . and to fan and fuel the flame of evangelism and personal testimony.
—C. N. Hostetter, Jr., 1958⁴

RESISTANCE

[As a result of] interacting with [workers from other denominations who do not teach holiness . . . coverings will get smaller and smaller, bonnets [will] become more like hats, and dresses [will be] cut on more fashionable lines. How must this look in God's sight? Isn't this trying to serve God and the mammon of fashion at the same time?
—Leah Dohner, 1947⁵

[If we modify our] unalterable . . . standards [of nonconformity], will we not forfeit our witness to the unsaved?
—Emma Etterline, 1952⁶

REFORMATION

The inclination of Evangelicals is to take for granted that the Bible approves participation in war and [to] classify all opposition to it as identified with the pacifism espoused by liberals. The Evangelical fellowship should be better informed.
—C. N. Hostetter, Jr., 1954⁷

The hope of some of us is that the Brethren in Christ will take stock of the degree to which we are in danger of being acculturated into mainline evangelical Protestantism. We would like to see [our] group become more of a "voice" and less of an "echo."
—Carlton O. Wittlinger, 1970⁸

In interdenominational associations such as the NAE, we [BIC] ought to be . . . prayerfully prodding and pushing for a more biblical division of time and resources. My prayer is that we be given the courage to risk being called modernists (by fundamentalists) and old foggies (by liberals) precisely because we dare to be evangelical—that is, to take seriously the total teaching and example of our Lord.
—Ron Sider, 1970⁹

¹ Presentation by Devin Manzullo-Thomas at Elizabethtown (Pa.) College (March 2013) ² General Conference Minutes, 1948 ³ Quest for Piety and Obedience (1978) by Carlton O. Wittlinger, p. 480 ⁴ "NAE and the Church," *Evangelical Visitor* (June 16, 1958) ⁵ "Dangers that threaten the Church," *Evangelical Visitor* (April 21, 1947) ⁶ Letter to Henry N. Hostetter, dated March 5, 1952 ⁷ Letter to Carl F. H. Henry, dated December 14, 1954 ⁸ Letter to John N. Hostetter, dated February 25, 1970 ⁹ "Dare we be Evangelical?" *Evangelical Visitor* (April 25, 1970)

PARTING WORDS

RIDING THE WINDS OF CHANGE

The Evangelical movement may have blown us out to sea, but it can also help us set a new course

by PERRY ENGLE

The breeze was already blowing steadily offshore, directly out of the Santa Barbara harbor, and it was barely 8:30 in the morning. I was a junior in college and had promised to take three classmates on a short sailing trip along the California coast. The 14-foot vessel that my family owned jointly with some friends was nondescript in every way except for its laughably menacing name: *Kamikaze*. I set the sail and we shot out of the mouth of the marina like a rocket on the Fourth of July.

We had barely caught our collective breath when we were already a mile or two out into the now-rolling Pacific. The whitecaps on the rising waves signaled imminent danger. Another hour and we could have been halfway to Hawaii. I turned *Kamikaze* into the wind, attempting to work back towards shore.

But to no avail. The gusts that had filled our sails with such exhilaration and promise now threatened to push us even farther out to sea. The boat began to take on water and eventually capsized, leaving the four of us clinging to its side. It wasn't long before we were spotted and rescued by some local fishermen. But the *Kamikaze*—God rest its soul—never sailed again.

One moral of this story (I know, there are many) is that winds that are favorable to your journey at one point in time might eventually push you further out to sea than you intended to go. Quite possibly this is the lesson

to be learned from the powerful influence of Evangelicalism in the life of the Brethren in Christ Church.

Now, I don't want to be overly dramatic, so let me just say this up-front: The Brethren in Christ are Evangelicals in the strictest sense of the term. To be an Evangelical is to be about the good news of Jesus Christ. Evangelicalism is the good news of the Bible, of personal conversion, of the saving work of Jesus on the cross, and of sharing our faith in word and deed. In the 1950s, the BIC embraced this movement because of what we discerned God doing in the world. We joined Evangelicalism's winds of change quite simply because we felt compelled to reach people for Christ.

What we could never have known was how far out to sea those winds would take us. We didn't know that the favorable breezes of this valuable movement would eventually merge with the gales of nationalism, individualism, materialism, and political partisanship. We couldn't foresee that the Evangelical movement would eventually push hard against some of our most heartfelt convictions—convictions like belonging to the community of faith, pursuing peace, living simply, and following Jesus.

Some might say our denominational ship has been swamped, like the ill-fated *Kamikaze*, by the Evangelical storm of the past 60 years. I would disagree. Instead, I'd suggest that, although we may have taken on some

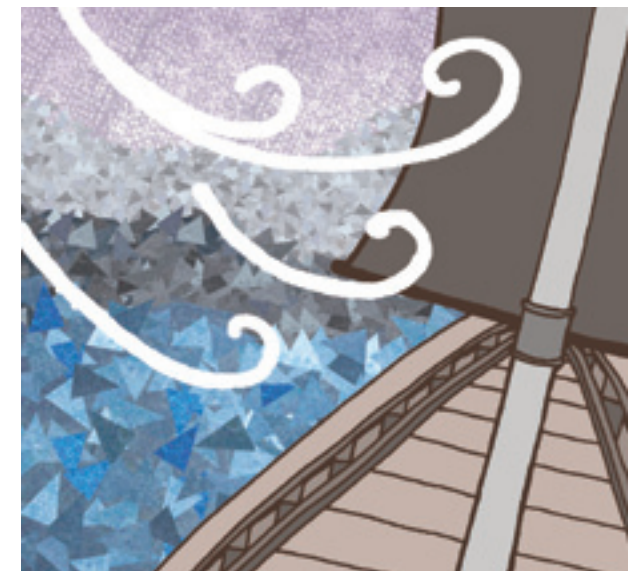


Illustration by Gregory Snader

water, we have also gained a better appreciation for who we are as a people of God. We have reestablished the importance of reaching people for Christ and for planting new churches.

Every generation needs to check its compass from time to time, reassess its progress, bail a little water, and reset its course. The BIC Church is no different. We may not be the biggest ship in the water, but we are solid and strong and have weathered the test of time for 235 years.

Today, it seems we are steadily working our way back into the shipping lane where God has called us to be as a Church. When Jesus said, "The wind blows wherever it pleases" (John 3:8), it was a reminder to always be prepared to set sail for wherever God's Spirit is stirring. Just make sure the name on the back of your boat isn't you-know-what.



Perry Engle has never had a sailing lesson in his life—and it shows. He is bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Regional Conferences of BIC U.S., and lives with his wife, Marta, and their family in Ontario, Calif.

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Evangelicalism



the BIC

The Brethren in Christ believe that Jesus is transforming His followers into His image as we seek to love God and love neighbors. Within our “theological DNA,” the Evangelical strain shows itself most prominently through our Core Values of:

- Witnessing to the world
- Experiencing God’s love and grace
- Believing the Bible
- Worshipping God

To learn more about our Evangelical values and how to put them into practice, check out these and other resources available at BIC-CHURCH.ORG:

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