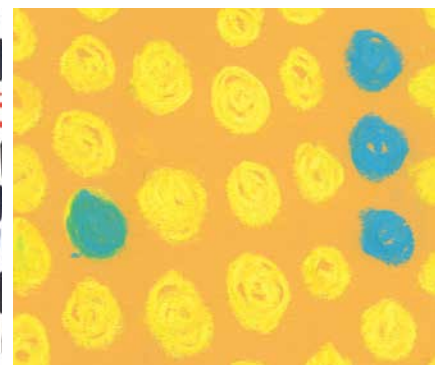
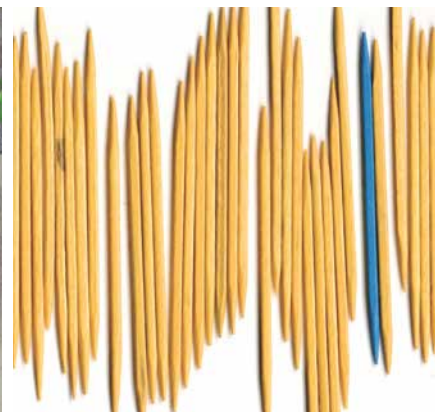
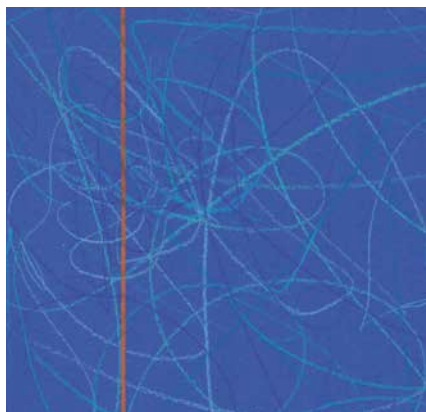
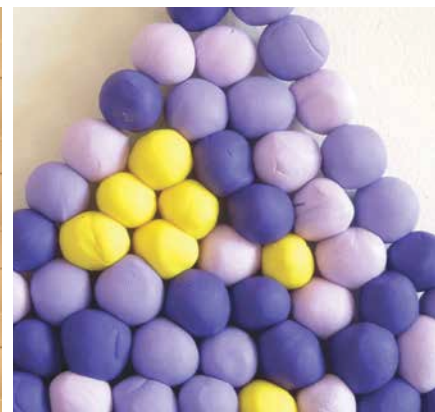
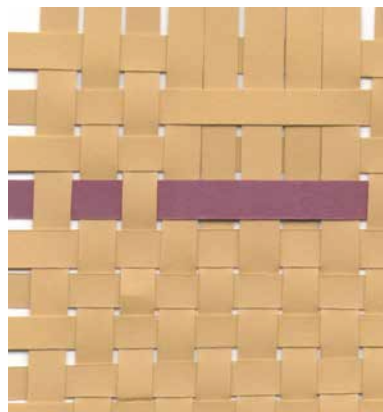




IN PART

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

Spring 2014



A few months ago, I was feeling more than a little intimidated by the idea of planning for this spring issue of *In Part*. Where could our family of faith go, after the incredible yearlong “We believe” series? I just loved being on that journey of exploration and celebration together!

Deadlines were approaching, and I was getting nervous, when I happened to attend the Brethren in Christ Study Conference, an annual event sponsored by the Sider Institute of Messiah College (MESSIAH.EDU/SIDERINSTITUTE) that invites research and conversation on topics related to the BIC. The 2013 symposium focused on the theme “Do Justice: A Biblical Mandate for the Church,” and as part of that I attended a breakout session on “Combating Systems of Injustice.” It was then that Patrick Cicero, a member of Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC who was co-leading the session, said this:

I think that our sense of nonconformity as Brethren in Christ has been lost. I’m not saying we have to go back to dressing in plain uniforms. But what if pursuing justice for the poor was our act of nonconformity? What if seeking peace and reconciliation were our acts of nonconformity?

I’d heard the word “nonconformity” linked with the Brethren in Christ before, but only as it applied to our past, when women wore head coverings, men wore

long beards, and going to the movies was forbidden. Yet the message that Patrick expressed that day changed my perspective; it helped me realize that nonconformity still spoke a relevant and prophetic message to our BIC faith community and to the world today. In that moment, the concept for this issue of *In Part* was born.

(I’m especially grateful to Patrick, who agreed to expand his thoughts on reimagining nonconformity in a feature essay.) Based upon the initial impact that this call had on my own mind and heart, I anticipated that I would be moved by this issue. I wasn’t prepared, however, for how deeply personal the journey of this issue would be and how the articles would speak into significant transitions in my life.

As you may have heard, my full-time service as editor of *In Part* has come to an end, as of December 31, 2013. My decision to step back from the role was a difficult one, made even more so by the fact that I don’t have another employment opportunity lined up. By the standards of North American society, this “career move” makes no sense. Yet over and over, my husband, Ryan, and I have been affirmed in our decision, experiencing God’s grace in new ways and receiving affirmation and support from other believers in our lives.

One concrete example of this was that, after receiving my resignation with grace,

leaders of BIC U.S. invited me to serve on a freelance basis in order to bring this edition of *In Part* to press. I am grateful for the opportunity to complete this issue—what a bittersweet experience!

Over the last few months, nonconformity has become a significant part of my story. I haven’t started wearing a head covering, nor have I dropped my health insurance. But now, when I think about nonconformity, I think about Christ—the God in the flesh, whose life and ministry confounded expectations, who rejected earthly power and became a servant, who overturned death in order to bring life.

Grace and peace,

Kristine
Kristine N. Frey



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

BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH IN THE U.S.

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INPART.ORG (ISSN 1940-2945)

IN PART (ISSN 1940-2937 | USPS 180300) is published four times a year by the Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S. *In Part* invites readers into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ within the context of the shared life and ministry of the BIC Church.

Printed by Graphics Universal Incorporated

Send feedback, address changes, or subscription questions to inpart@bic-church.org.

Postmaster: Send changes of address to:

IN PART

431 Grantham Road
Mechanicsburg, PA 17055 USA

Periodical Postage paid at Mechanicsburg, PA 17055-9998 & additional mailing offices.

Printed in U.S.A.

Member of the Evangelical Press Association.

Biblical quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are from the *New International Version*.

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Printed with soy ink on FSC®-certified Rolland Opaque 50 paper. Manufactured using biogas energy. 50% of the paper fiber comes from recycled, post-consumer waste, and 50% comes from well-managed forests.

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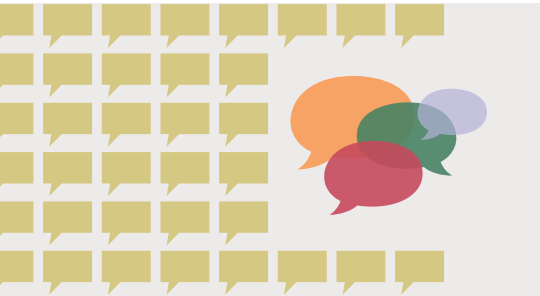
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IN MOTION

Ever wondered . . .
what's nonconformity?

non·con·form·i·ty

| nən-kuhn-'fawrm-I-tee |

NOUN:

the refusal or failure to abide by established norms or practices

USED IN A SENTENCE:

Early BIC believers expressed their nonconformity to the world through practices like plain dress, rejecting musical instruments in worship, and refusing to participate in politics or war.

Accessing our history
as nonconformists

One of the defining convictions of 16th- and 17th-century Anabaptists, from whom the Brethren in Christ are direct descendants, is that of adult baptism. This ran against the teachings of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Churches, which advocated infant baptism. As a result, Anabaptists experienced persecution and even martyrdom. In this photo, Ernest J. Swalm, who served as a BIC bishop from 1929 to 1967, stands on a bridge in Switzerland where Anabaptists were put into a weighted cage and lowered into the water until they died.

Photo courtesy of the Brethren in Christ Historical Library and Archives (Mechanicsburg, Pa.)

INVESTIGATING NONCONFORMITY

Some resources to help explain our heritage and teachings on nonconformity . . .

Nonresistance under Test (1949)

by Ernest J. Swalm, a BIC bishop from 1929–1967

A collection of essays by Brethren in Christ who served as conscientious objectors during World Wars I and II

AMAZON.COM

The Radicals

(1990)

directed by Raul V. Carrera

This 100-minute, B-movie offers a glimpse into the lives—and deaths—of leaders of the Anabaptist movement in its early days.

IMDB.COM/TITLE/TT0189038

Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger (1977)

by Ronald J. Sider, a BIC theologian and church member

Voted by *Christianity Today* as the seventh most influential book in the Evangelical world, this asks the provocative question of how Christ-followers should live in an age of exorbitant wealth and crippling poverty.

AMAZON.COM

Inglorious Pastors (2010)

produced by The Meeting House, a BIC church in Oakville, ON

A compelling series for small groups or individuals that examines early Anabaptist radicals who “dared to think that Jesus should be taken seriously when He taught His followers to turn the other cheek, love their enemies, and do good to those who hate them.”

THEMEETINGHOUSE.COM/PAGEID/1700

Celebrating Women's Stories

(2002)

edited by Rebecca Ebersole, Dorcas Steckbeck, and E. Morris Sider

Meet 21 BIC women whose lives of faith led them to unexpected places—like Virginia Kauffman, the first female medical missionary (and an excellent shot), and Virgie Lehman, a single mother whose resourcefulness enabled her to provide for her family and her community in the Great Depression.

AMAZON.COM

Everyone Called Her Sister Sarah

(2004)

by Ruth Bert

illustrations by Kristine Westbeld

This book (great for children and adults alike) tells the story of Sarah Bert, who, despite physical and mental health struggles, pioneered BIC urban outreach through her compassionate work at the Chicago Mission.

EVANGELPUBLISHING.COM/BOOKS/BIC/CHILDREN/EVERYONE_CALLED_HER-BIC.HTML

Resist and Restore (Spring 2013) & Patiently Impatient (Winter 2013)

from the Audio Art Team at Circle of Hope (Philadelphia)

Two full-length albums with a countercultural message and a countercultural marketing strategy (name your own price)

CIRCLEOFOHOPEAUDIOART.BANDCAMP.COM

TO OUR CORE

EXPLORING THE CENTRAL VALUES OF THE BIC CHURCH

THOU SHALT NOT BE BORED

When we de-clutter our lives, we may be surprised by what's left within us

by JONNY RASHID

Finding out what we're enslaved to can be hard. Recently, I've been reflecting on how entertainment has held me in bondage.

I doubt that I'm alone in this. I think many of us find ourselves just wanting to zone out, heat up some leftovers, and watch *Orange is the New Black*. And we justify it, too, by saying things like “I never get to do this” or “I'm so busy and stressed all the time that I deserve this.”

What's it like, though, when we turn off our TVs? Close our Facebook accounts? Put our phones on airplane mode? We rely on these mechanisms to keep us entertained and distracted. Yet Jesus compels us to strip ourselves of anything that tears our focus away from life with Him. When we choose to commune with Jesus, what's left in us?

In those moments, we may just feel bored. Yet our torpor is not simply the result of our Tweet-length attention spans; it's more ancient than that. And it's deeper, too. Monks and Desert Fathers called it “acedia.”

St. John Climacus describes acedia as “a paralysis of the soul.” In her book *Acedia & Me*, poet and essayist Kathleen Norris says acedia takes form as “restless boredom, frantic escapism, commitment phobia, and enervating despair.” The monks referred to it as the “noonday demon,” striking them at the hottest time of day, when they might feel so disillusioned that they question their lifelong commitment to prayer.

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



Photo by Steven Hess

boredom, and He listens. His answer isn't entertainment; it is stillness.

I think acedia explains why many of us binge on entertainment and distractions—and why we're bored when we try to pray. My journey has helped me realize that instead of clouding our acedia with distractions, we can use it as an opportunity to be honest with God and allow Him to change us.

In that process, we may find that life in Christ is simply ordinary. And that's all right, because in our moments of languor, we become still enough to perceive the Spirit's eternal presence—so gentle, so lasting, and so quiet. Through our new sight, Jesus can move our paralyzed souls.

.....
Jonny Rashid (pictured above) is pastor of Circle of Hope Broad and Dauphin (Philadelphia). He's a husband, father, sports fan, culinary enthusiast, and blogger. JONNYRASHID.WORDPRESS.COM

DIFFERENT & *distinct*

Nonconformity's invitation to a new reality

by Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas



I don't remember hearing the word “nonconformity” used in the Brethren in Christ (BIC) church I attended growing up, but I was vaguely aware of the concept. In youth group, sermons urged us to avoid certain “worldly” cultural forms: R-rated movies, alcohol, cigarettes, premarital sex. This message—which seemed identical to the one preached to youth and adults in most evangelical churches—was quite prescriptive in some areas but vague on most others. It occurred to me that, except for abstaining from a handful of activities, most believers (myself included!) looked, talked, and acted like the rest of “the world” around us. Though we professed to be “transformed” Christians, our lives didn’t seem to testify to any new reality; instead, they pointed to a stricter version of the present one.

By college, I knew that the Bible was calling me to something different. And I realized I needed a church community that could hold me accountable to the high standards of Christ’s example.

I had almost given up hope of finding such a family of faith, when I happened to take a course on Brethren in Christ history at Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pa.), a school founded by the BIC. For the first time, I heard a more holistic version of our heritage, including our historic teachings on nonconformity. Suddenly, I understood nonconformity as a radical, all-encompassing call to transformed and renewed hearts, minds, and even bodies. I found myself drawn to this message and re-attracted to the Church family in which I’d been raised.

Still, I struggled to reconcile my childhood experiences with my present reality. The late BIC theologian Luke Keefer, Jr., put it well when he observed that, for present-day BIC, “nonconformity is a word victimized by a conspiracy of silence!”¹ The message of nonconformity had been central to our identity as a Christian community for more than two centuries, but as my experience illustrates, it has now become so muffled that it’s hard to detect.

How had this happened? The story, I learned, reveals much about the long journey of the BIC Church—and offers some insights into how we might begin to recover a robust doctrine of nonconformity today.

The roots of nonconformity

What is the BIC message of nonconformity? In his account of our denomination, *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, historian Carlton O. Wittlinger claims that the impulse toward nonconformity was rooted in three important doctrines: the doctrine of Scripture, the doctrine of conversion, and the doctrine of the Church.

First and foremost, the earliest BIC rooted their understanding of nonconformity in the Scriptures. As a generation of BIC historians and theologians have informed us—and as our founding documents make clear—the BIC were, from the outset, a people of the Book. They took seriously the authority of Scripture in both faith and practice. In light of passages like Romans 12:2 and 1 John 2:15–16, the early BIC sought to distinguish themselves from the rest of society, so as to embody more fully the perfection of Christ.

And early BIC agreed that, in order to embody that perfection, believers first had to experience a life-changing, heartfelt conversion. Which brings us to the second root of BIC nonconformity: their doctrine of salvation. For the BIC, converted individuals were not just sinners saved by God’s grace; they were new creations in Christ, reborn into a new reality. They had turned away from the old and turned to the new. Thus, they sought to follow in perfect obedience God’s will for their lives—a will that included nonconformity in day-to-day living.

Finally, the BIC rooted their understanding of nonconformity in their doctrine of the Church. For this group of Christ-followers, existence was divided into two spheres: the Church and the world. The Church included all converted Christians committed to a life of obedient discipleship—as Wittlinger described it, “an earthly microcosm of Christ’s kingdom.”² The world included everything else: all of earthly society, from government to labor unions, from the entertainment industry to other “worldly” churches. The BIC saw these institutions as threats to the purity of Christ’s kingdom and to perfect obedience. Thus, they separated

themselves fully from the rest of society, claiming that “Christians should not be conformed to this world,” as they wrote in a 19th-century Confession of Faith.

Visible witness to a changed heart

How did this understanding of nonconformity—rooted in the authority of Scripture, in a life-changing act of salvation, and in the Church conceived as a glimpse into a coming Kingdom—play out in the first two centuries of BIC history?

Historically, nonconformity was a simple matter for the BIC: We were visibly different than most of our North American neighbors. Men wore high-collared jackets and eschewed neckties; women wore long, plain dresses with a cape over the bodice, and covered their heads with a prayer veiling and bonnet.

Our church buildings were similarly modest: single-story edifices made of brick or white clapboard, without the stained-glass windows, raised pulpits, or decorated altars of most other Protestant structures. (To further suggest our nonconformity, we even called them “meeting-houses” rather than “churches.”)

These outward appearances testified to our inner commitment to humility and were intended to set an example for the “worldly” people around us. As a 19th-century BIC bishop once wrote, “Our evidence of [nonconformity], to be scripturally complete, must not only show a difference from the world, but also should be that which will . . . visibly witness to our attachment to Christ.”³ In other words, nonconformity in appearance was both a confession of a changed heart and a testimony to society.

Of course, simple living was not the only means by which we BIC historically professed our nonconformity. We registered as conscientious objectors during national and international wars, practicing the nonviolent way of our Prince of Peace while opposing the coercive



violence of fallen humanity. We abstained from voting well into the 20th century, refusing to let our allegiance to Christ be compromised by our allegiance to Caesar (Matt. 22:21). We eschewed debt, movie theaters, card games, life insurance, and musical instruments, seeing all these elements as tokens of “the world” rather than the Kingdom.

Yet our nonconformity, though thoroughgoing, was not all-encompassing. As Wittlinger points out, the early BIC “rarely saw any danger of [the world’s ways] entering into our principal vocation” of agriculture. This, he further claims, gave the BIC license to adopt the latest innovations in farm technology and “gave indirect sanction to the aggressive pursuit of material gain”—certainly a manner contrary to the sacrificial way of Christ.⁴ We also didn’t avoid politics consistently. For instance, at the 1889 General Conference, the BIC debated the permissibility of voting on the issue of temperance. Ultimately, General Conference concluded that prohibition was “a moral rather than a political question” and allowed each member to determine, upon their own conscience, whether or not they would cast a ballot against the sinful liquor trade.⁵

Despite some exceptions, we remained non-conformed in many significant and radical ways. This vision of nonconformity, as indicated above, grew out of our Anabaptist and Pietist heritage. These two traditions gave us our theologies of the Church and of salvation, respectively, thus informing our particular notions of peculiar peoplehood. Our commitment to nonconformity was further reinforced through our adoption of the Wesleyan Holiness theology of sanctification in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. For a people seeking to live obediently and to avoid the temptations of sinful society, holiness theology provided a means by which to achieve these high standards: freedom from the sin nature. Sanctification’s empowerment to live a holy life thus included empowerment to resist worldliness in all its forms.

A “strange silence”

Yet social forces at work in early 20th century North America would ultimately affect our prac-

I think that
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being different
and **distinct**.

tice of nonconformity. These challenges to nonconformity were spurred by our changing demographics. We moved away from the farm and into urban and suburban areas; we shifted from agrarian vocations and into careers in business, education, and medicine; we accepted higher education; we encountered (and sometimes adopted) new technologies; and we realized increased economic prosperity. As a result, we experienced more interactions with those outside of our churches and stronger pressure to conform to the standards of mainstream society. And driven by this pressure and by an increasing sense of individual autonomy (among other factors), many of us did.

Church leaders responded decisively. Whereas nonconformity standards had previously been unlegislated, now General Conferences in the 1920s and 30s laid down specific mandates for plain dress and recreation. Church leaders stressed the indoctrination of young people and new converts, inculcating “the ways of the Brethren” instead of encouraging discipleship. As a result, conflicts spread throughout our community, both in local congregations and in regional districts. Converts found salvation

at our revival meetings, but refused to embrace nonconformity. Some longtime members were even dis-fellowshipped for their refusal to accept the mandated “plain way.” In retrospect, these efforts were earnest attempts to revitalize nonconformity and preserve expressions of faith within the community. But we also see that they were rooted in legalistic regulations and, ironically, resulted in greater diversity of practice.

In the midst of this internal turmoil, we sought resolution, as we’d done throughout our history, by refocusing our vision on Christ and by seeking out expressions of faith that might rekindle our devotional flame. Soon, we found ourselves drawn into the orbit of the Evangelical movement. Here were Bible-believing Christians committed to the Great Commission—just like us. And yet *unlike* us, they were not racked by internal conflict, and they were drawing unprecedented numbers of new believers into their folds. After attending a meeting of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1950, one Brethren in Christ participant noted that Evangelicals “had a peculiar liberty and an opportunity for ministry that we did not have.”⁶ Clearly, this community had something to teach us.

Indeed, joining the Evangelical fold had many benefits for the BIC. It helped us become more aware of the dangers of legalism—that many had left our community because they felt like they could not live up to our high standards, standards drawn more from our own convention than from divine revelation. And it helped us to achieve greater success in mission and evangelism: By the middle decades of the 20th century, we had opened a handful of new churches and welcomed a variety of new converts into our pews.

Evangelicalism encouraged us to revise our standards of nonconformity, with the intent of being more biblically faithful and evangelistically effective. Specific mandates were replaced by general principles. Instead of requiring plain dress, we emphasized modesty. Instead of forbidding certain recreational pur-

suits, we encouraged wisdom and discernment in cultural activities. While this move from proscription to principle was intended to revitalize our practice of nonconformity, it instead made the doctrine more difficult to discuss in practical, tangible ways. Even mentioning the term “nonconformity” sometimes brought up painful memories of the age of legalism. Thus, the “strange silence,” spoken of by Luke Keefer, Jr., crept into our preaching and teaching. Over time, we seemed to cease using the term altogether.

Breaking the silence, renewing convictions

If the preceding historical narrative is correct, and if my growing-up experiences are in any way indicative, then the BIC have arrived in the early decades of the 21st century with an eroded doctrine of nonconformity. Occasionally, I see glimmers of nonconformity—for instance, our Core Values of pursuing peace and living simply are concepts quite foreign to the mainstream of North American society and even to other Christian faith traditions. Yet, on the whole, we look and act much like the rest of the world around us.

Now, I’m not suggesting we simply revert back to the cape dresses and instrument-less worship of an earlier age. Nevertheless, I think that many people today, like me, identify as BIC primarily because we appreciate the historic emphasis on being different and distinct. We want a Christianity that emphasizes separation unto Christ rather than conformity to culture. We want a faith that entirely embraces biblical values like peace and simplicity; that resists politicization and rejects partisan bickering; that fully relies on God and the gathered community rather than on individual achievement or success. In short, we want a Christianity that is transformed and renewed—a Christianity informed by the vision of nonconformity.



Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas teaches at Messiah College, serves the Brethren in Christ Historical Society, and blogs about BIC history at DEVINTHOMAS.WORDPRESS.COM. He and his wife, Katie, attend the Grantham (Pa.) BIC Church.

¹ “Contemporary Nonconformity” by Luke L. Keefer, Jr., *Evangelical Visitor* (February 1990)

² *Quest for Piety and Obedience* by Carlton O. Wittlinger, p. 44

³ Quoted in *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 349

⁴ *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 109

⁵ *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 107

⁶ *Quest for Piety and Obedience*, p. 480



Reimagining NONCONFORMiTY *A call to be transformed*

Don't become so well adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out.
—Romans 12:2 (The Message)

by Patrick Cicero

he Bible is hard for me to read.

Not for the obvious reasons like time and commitment (though those barriers exist, too), but because it is often difficult for me to relate to its stories. For the most part, the Old and New Testaments are not about people like me. I think of the accounts of the wandering nation of Israel, of Abraham, of Ruth, of the disciples. I think of Christ during His time on earth. These were generally marginalized people, living under the rule of an oppressive state. This is very different context from the one in which I live. I am a white, male, upper-middle-class, highly educated, straight, North American Christian—the definition of dominance in the hierarchy that pervades U.S. society.

One of the reasons I'm particularly grateful to belong to the Brethren in Christ Church is that, despite the privilege and comfort that many of us have access to, we strive to be Romans 12:2 people. As BIC, we look not to conform but to be transformed. We seek to identify the ways that the world dilutes our witness as a “holy people,” and we work against that process.

Historically, these commitments were evidenced in how we looked and dressed. We also were conscientious objectors to war and proactive peacemakers. We didn't vote, avoided participation in politics, eschewed debt, life insurance, and even lightning rods.¹

Over time, however, these outward practices have become matters of personal conscience. And, in general, we contemporary North American BIC believers don't look or act all that differently than the rest of the Western world. While we profess to be people of a different Kingdom, we often act as though this one is our master. We have become too well adjusted to our culture.

I believe we must rediscover what it means to be set apart from this world, to offer a visible alternative. Toward that end, I offer a few examples of what nonconformity can look like in our current context.

VALUING COMMUNITY

In our highly individualistic culture, we must look for new ways to value community. Personal faith is, in my view, inseparable from community as the body of Christ.

One of the ways that my family has intentionally sought community is by living inter-generationally. Our household consists of my in-laws, my wife and I, and our two children. For the past six-and-a-half years, we've been living in a house that is large enough to give us some measure of privacy, but small enough to ensure that we have to make shared choices about the food we eat, the volume of our voices, daily chores, and the like. Our household is not perfect, and there are the inevitable conflicts. However, we try to extend grace to each other, accepting that each of us is flawed and that we have chosen to be companions along the way. We acknowledge that we could afford to live separately, but we've chosen to live communally.

What would our Church body look like if more of us choose to confront the world's me-first mentality with the practice of living in community?

REDEFINING STEWARDSHIP

In addition to reimagining interdependence, we need to rethink how we view our time, talents, and money. I fear that the Bible's message of stewardship has

been diluted by worldly greed to mean accumulating and grasping personal wealth. It has allowed many of us to justify and preserve our relative position in the world, leading us to condone miserliness as good stewardship.

The solution is not a rejection of stewardship, but a radical retelling of the story. In the Bible, we see Jesus living out a kind of extravagant generosity. We see Jesus turning privilege on its head, saying that He came to serve not to be served, that the first shall be last and the last shall be first.


An innovative approach to reimagined stewardship is being lived out at Circle of Hope, a network of BIC churches in Philadelphia. There, in the fall of 2010, a group concerned about their growing burden of consumer debt formed a “Debt Annihilation Team.” The team of five started off with nine lines of credit, and members collectively owed \$22,000. By using seed money from the church and pooling their own financial resources, they began to pay off each other's debt, one-by-one. In 24 months, all of their debt was paid *and* the group had provided an additional \$10,000 in seed money so that another group could start this process.

What would it look like if our communities of faith started addressing debt and stewardship, generosity and the sharing of resources?

ENGAGING IN DIALOGUE AND SEEKING RECONCILIATION

Finally, we need to examine our call to carry each other's burdens, especially when those burdens are the result of injustice or systems of injustice in the world. In order to do that, we need to be able to talk together, sharing our stories and perspectives on these deep and often difficult issues.

Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC, the church where I am a member, is a multi-racial, multi-ethnic congregation. It is full of people from all different walks of life. One of our most deeply held core values is pursuing reconciliation. So, when the U.S. as a whole experienced dramatic division over the shooting death of Trayvon Martin by George Zimmerman, people within our congregation called for us to respond with dialogue. Within a week of Zimmerman's acquittal, we held a public forum to discuss the impact of the verdict on the lives of members of the Harrisburg church and broader community. The purpose was to model constructive dialogue.



We must rediscover what it means to be set apart from this world, to offer a visible alternative.

Throughout the evening, we listened to one another as we shared our personal stories of injustice, systemic racism, and violence, brought to the surface by the verdict in the Zimmerman trial. We collectively acknowledged the pain caused by these experiences. As a result, I was again reminded of my call to intentionally displace myself and give up power in order to stand in solidarity with my brothers and sisters. And I think our church family was reminded how much we need each other and that to become reconciled we must embrace our mutuality.

The forum brought more issues than we could possibly explore or address in one evening, but we acknowledged them and stood ready to continue to hear each other. We had dialogue and disagreement without vitriol and disdain. It was very much unlike the world.

What would it look like if our churches created more space for conversations like these?

RECOGNIZING OUR DISTINCTIVENESS

I raise only three potential areas of nonconformity; I know that together, we could think of many more. I believe it is time for us to re-examine what nonconformity looks like. In the process, we may find an inviting and refreshing alternative to our culture. Like much of what we're called to as Christ-followers, nonconformity will also be profoundly challenging. In those times of difficulty, we can remember that we are not a people of this world. With God's help, may we once again reclaim our identity as the distinctively transformed people of Jesus Christ.



Patrick Cicero is a member of the Harrisburg (Pa.) BIC Church. He and his wife, Helena, live in Mechanicsburg with their two children and Helena's parents.

The pattern of our steps

Our family recently

enjoyed our first sunset on the Pacific Ocean. While it's difficult to rival the sun's striking display, we found ourselves more fascinated by the sets of footprints in the sand. With the brilliantly colored sky at our backs, we curiously examined the imprints left by others. What kind of person walks straight down the shoreline, just out of the water's reach? And who jogs along, dashing in and out of the ocean's froth? We turned to see what pattern our own steps made, and we were surprised to find that these trails revealed quite a lot about the identities, personalities, and purposes of those who left them.

This experience inspired us to consider the footprints of our family through life. A quick glance would not reveal anything noticeably different or unusual about us. As a white, middle-class family living in the U.S., our path may at first seem linear and well trodden. However, upon closer inspection, we see that it's woven in and out of the changing tide, doubled-back at times, and even grown faint in some places. We ask, How can we be leaving such

wild footprints? And we're realizing that the pattern of our steps reveals our efforts to intentionally and consistently walk as Jesus did, listening to the Holy Spirit's guidance for each next step.

Moving toward full surrender

My husband, Bob, and I were both raised in Ohio. When we got married in 1999, we jumped with both feet into serving in camp ministry, teaching positions, and pastoring the youth of our church. During the next eight years, we experienced invigorating conversation and challenging mentoring from our senior pastor and his wife. They challenged us to re-evaluate our preconceived ideas of God's expectations and our own expectations related to following Christ. We asked ourselves how we would measure "success" in life, balance priorities, and make decisions. And they helped us recognize the difference between submitting with full abandon to God's leading and remaining compelled by our own desires and expectations.

One of the significant family decisions we made during this period was that I would stay at home after the birth of our first child. While we were excited about this change and strongly felt that

A family reflects on their path of faith and the unexpected directions it's taken them

by Heather Beaty

God was calling us to it, there were questions that each of us struggled with in reaching the place of full surrender. Could we trust God to provide financially for us? Was it worth giving up the status and respect I'd established in my five years of teaching? Why would God call us to this, while many other godly families had spouses who were both still working where God had gifted them and raising their children at the same time? In the end, while recognizing that there was no clearly Scriptural right or wrong in this area, it was the compelling voice of the Spirit, our own personal preferences, and the encouragement of other believers that motivated us to make the decision we did.

As the years progressed and another child was added to our family, we had a surprising but timely call to interview and join a Brethren in Christ church in Abilene, Kans. We prayerfully considered moving our family four states away and into the most rural setting in which we had lived. With both of us strongly sensing that this was where God was leading, we quickly embraced our new life and were loved into the community in Kansas. Over the course of the next few years, we slowed down to a more leisurely stroll in wide open spaces. Our



For Bob and Heather Beaty and their two children, remaining open to the Lord's direction has had real relevance in their life decisions, including a cross-country move that took them to the California coast.

children enjoyed rich friendships, a delightful school experience, and a huge yard for imaginative adventures.

During this season, Bob and I also learned to take a regular Sabbath rest in order to minister out of fullness instead of frenzy. This was not a move toward legalism, with allowable or non-allowable activities on a particular day of the week, but rather, a recognition that God created a time for worship and renewal. This means that we intentionally take a day to put aside our work in order to spend time reading the Word, reflecting, and enjoying time with our family and friends. We also made the decision to eliminate television from our home for a period of time. These new patterns focused us more on others and on listening intently to the voice of God. They were simply family steps of obedience.

On solid ground

After only two-and-a-half short years in Kansas, we received a phone call from a BIC church on the West Coast. If we accepted this invitation to serve, it would take us the farthest we had ever been from the familiar and safe circle of friends and family. After discussing all of the reasons why this move was unrealistic, Bob and I again went to God in prayer. Rather quickly, we real-

ized that this was a path God wanted us to explore rather than to reject. The next few months were some of the most difficult and lonely we had ever experienced, yet we both clearly felt that God was indeed leading us to the next leg of our journey in Southern California.

Presently, we are going on three years serving the friendly, diverse, and genuine community at Solid Ground Church (Alta Loma, Calif.). During these last few years, God has been challenging us to closely examine our family's use of time and ways we can more generously use our resources to bless others. We also continue to learn how to intentionally preserve margin in our lives in a Sabbath rest. The practice of these intentional family decisions often marks us as "different" from others.

The journey continues

Through all of these family transitions, the one thing that we have learned is that there is not one perfect formula for many of the decisions which Christ calls us to make as individuals and as families. For us, nonconformity is not a goal in and of itself. Rather, living a life set apart and different than the world around us is

the natural result of walking with Christ and being obedient to the Holy Spirit.

People have sometimes assumed that nonconformity and being "set apart" means living in isolation, yet we have found that God's call has led us into deeper community. Over the years, we've sought wisdom from other believers, encouraged non-believers to ask questions, and explored life and faith with others.

I don't think following Christ usually means walking a clear, straightforward path, nicely marked out for us. Rather, as our mentors and the great heroes of the faith teach us, the journey of following Christ and living by the Holy Spirit sometimes means leaping into the waves. At other times, it means leaving the water to sit in the sun or inviting others to walk with us.

We, as a family, don't even begin to claim that we have all of this figured out, and we so value the voices and wisdom of other believers in that conversation. We intentionally surround ourselves with those who walked this stretch before us, as well as those who are still searching for how God wants them to live. But of one thing we are convinced: The best place to be is wherever God is leading—just for the next step!

Heather Beaty is passionate about serving Christ and His Church, especially through teaching and team-building. In her free time, Heather can be found cooking, reading, or working the backyard garden.

People have sometimes assumed that nonconformity and being "set apart" means living in isolation, yet we have found that God's call has led us into deeper community.

Photos by Nathan Jeffers

TO THE POINT

Not
of this
world

We walk in the unconventional footsteps of Jesus, who renounced violence, called strangers family, hung out with people who were poor, sick, and weak, and wandered far from the comfort of home to spread the Good News. How do our lives reflect the nonconformity of Christ?

Compiled by Dulcimer Hope Brubaker



Opening up our homes

Our story isn't "Mom and Dad fell in love, got married, and had a baby." Every foster child

in our home has been a risk. We risk our hearts every time, and we know that these kids' hearts will be broken if someone doesn't help them. Jesus has given us the charge to care for the orphans, and we believe He's given us the ability to carry the brokenness and pain that these kids go through.

.....
Jeff & Meadow Piepho, who pastor Revolution Church (Salina, Kans.), have fostered more than 43 kids in their home, and are Mom and Dad to two adopted children and three more for whom they have legal guardianship.



Peace in a time of war

I grew up believing the teaching of Jesus about peace versus killing. I had registered as a conscientious

objector (CO), and I was a senior in college in 1942 when my draft board assigned me to a Civilian Public Service camp. We served under government orders with not one cent of pay, or food, or clothing. The churches financed all the support. Some of us were kept in camp months after the war ended, and we left quietly, with no veteran benefits, and certainly no parades or celebrations.

.....
Eber Dourte, a member of Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC, served as a CO from 1942–46, during which time he and his wife, Ruth, also began pastoring Hollowell BIC (Waynesboro, Pa.).



Going into the unknown

The Lord came to me, as it were, in the midst of the class work, in the midst of other plans for the future,

and swept away my books, reserving only the Bible. In reality, He showed me Christ lifted up for a lost world. He filled me with an unutterable love for every soul who had not heard of Him, and with a passionate longing to go [...] away from civilization, away from other mission bodies, and spend the rest of my life in telling the story of the Cross.¹

.....
H. Frances Davidson left her family and successful academic career in Kansas in 1897 to become one of the first BIC missionaries.



Living Christ's love

We can admire and worship Jesus without doing what He did. We can applaud what He preached and

stood for without caring about the same things. We can adore His cross without taking up ours. I had come to see that the great tragedy in the Church is not that rich Christians do not care about the poor but that rich Christians do not know the poor. . . . I long for the Calcutta slums to meet the Chicago suburbs, for lepers to meet landowners, and for each to see God's image in the other. . . . I truly believe that when the rich meet the poor, riches will have no meaning. And when the rich meet the poor, we will see poverty come to an end.²

.....
Shane Claiborne, a member of Circle of Hope (Philadelphia), is the author of *The Irresistible Revolution* and a founder of The Simple Way, an intentional monastic community that has located itself among the poor and homeless.

PARTING WORDS

AN ELEMENTAL FAITH

Grace as the building block of who we are in Christ

by PERRY ENGLE

Maybe I should have given chemistry a chance. But I was only two days into the class my senior year of high school when I received my acceptance letter from the college of my choice. I realized that I didn't need chemistry to get into college, so I dropped the class quicker than you could say "beryllium" and switched to something more practical, like underwater poetry-writing.

After two 50-minute periods of diligent study (cough), the sum of all my chemistorial knowledge was this: Elements are pure chemical substances made up of one kind of atom, and *elements never change*.

In college, I found I had much more of an affinity for Christianity than for chemistry. But the concept of being "elemental" as a follower of Jesus hasn't left me. If we were to reduce the Christian faith to its purest form—the one Christ-like atom that never changes—what would it be?

A story is told about a group of scholars who gathered in England to dialogue about which belief among world religions might be unique to the Christian faith. The debate went on for some time until writer and theologian C. S. Lewis wandered into the room. Upon hearing the question being discussed, he responded, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

One might argue whether or not grace is limited to the Christian faith, but it's impossible to argue against its centrality in the life and message of Je-

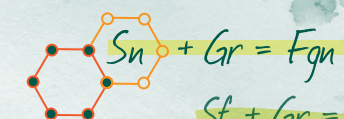
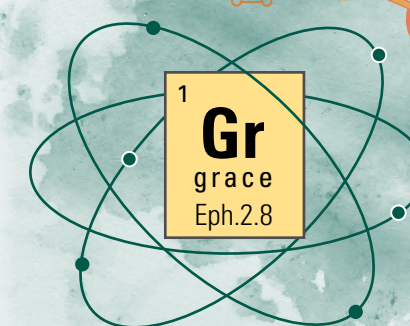
sus. If Lewis is correct, and the elemental attribute of the Christian faith truly is grace, then how might that affect the way we respond to the world around us?

In the past, we BICs have used various terms to describe our relationship to the world: separation, nonconformity, and, more recently, countercultural. Each describes us as people standing in opposition to the culture around us.

But what if we applied this basic tenet of chemistry to our faith, describing ourselves not by what we *are not*, but by what we *are*? What if we recognized that the singular, pure atom that forms our essential make-up and is at the heart of God in Christ is grace? What if we lived as though this "unmerited favor of God," as theologian St. Augustine put it, was the driving force behind everything we do, whatever our context?

An amazing thing about chemical elements is that although they never change, they can be combined with other elements to create completely new compounds. Join sodium and chloride, and you get salt, a preservative. Join hydrogen and oxygen, and you get water. Mix carbon, hydrogen, and oxygen, and you get sugar . . . or aspirin.

What happens when the element of grace is applied to a sinful world? Grace joined to conflict becomes peace. Grace combined with sin becomes forgiveness. Grace fused to selfishness becomes generosity. Grace applied to loneliness results in community.



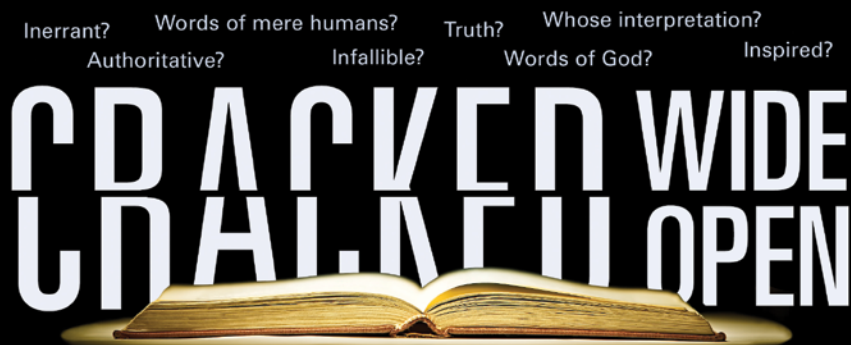
If we were to reduce the Christian faith to its purest form—the one Christ-like atom that never changes—what would it be?

John R. W. Stott, a leader in the Evangelical community, once described grace as being "love that cares and stoops and rescues." If chemical elements are the building blocks of matter, then grace is certainly the building block of a life that matters.

Maybe I should have given chemistry a chance. But even more importantly, maybe we should all give *grace* a chance. It is, after all, our elemental nature. It is who we are in Christ.



.....
Perry Engle's favorite element of all time is Californium (Cf, 98). He is bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Regional Conferences, and has great chemistry with his wife, Marta, who lives with him and their family in Ontario, Calif.



The BIC Approach to Scripture

IMPACT SEMINAR 2014

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→ Presenters: Tim Fisher, pastor of Walkersville (Md.) Community Church, & Jeff Piepho, pastor of Revolution Church (Salina, Kans.)

→ Cost: \$70 (group discounts available)

→ Visit BIC-CHURCH.ORG/EQUIPPING/IMPACT/CRACKED.ASP for more information on the Seminar or to register.

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May 17—Community of Faith BIC (*Roanoke, Va.*)

June 17—Pequea BIC (*Lancaster, Pa.*)

April 8—Pacific Christian Center (*Upland, Calif.*)

June 14—Fairview BIC (*Englewood, Ohio*)

June 19—Cumberland Valley BIC (*Dillsburg, Pa.*)

April 10—Revolution Church (*Salina, Kans.*), with live streaming

June 16—Hollowell BIC (*Waynesboro, Pa.*)

Jesus
is . . .



Brethren in Christ Church
in the U.S.

**general
conference**
2014

Lancaster Mennonite School
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Every two years, pastors and lay leaders from BIC churches across the U.S. come together to worship God, discuss questions facing the Church, and make decisions that guide the denomination.

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