

IN PART

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

Spring/Summer 2015

WHAT'S your CAUSE?

EXPLORING THE ISSUES THAT
ANIMATE OUR MINISTRY

MEDICAL CARE
MISSIONS
ECONOMIC
INEQUALITY

GATHERING NURSING BUILDING
TOGETHER COMMUNITY HOPE
ENVIRONMENTAL
HUMAN RIGHTS STEWARDSHIP
HOSPITALITY
SHARING THE GOSPEL WITH THE WORLD
CARETAKERS OF THE EARTH

LOVE
REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE

ADVOCACY

PROTECTING
PEOPLE FROM
VIOLENCE

ORPHANS

HUMAN
TRAFFICKING

PEACEMAKING

CROSS-

POVERTY

CULTURAL

CONNECTIONS

SUSTAINABILITY

EMPOWERING

the OPPRESSED

RACE RELATIONS

FOOD
justice

CARING FOR THE
HOMELESS

URBAN
RENEWAL

We ♥ our
EARTH

ADOPTION

CHURCH

PLANTING

ADVOCATING FOR
JUSTICE

la biblia

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Feed the children. End war. Spread the good news. Help cure cancer. Save the environment. If you're anything like me, you've probably been exposed to one of these causes—and many, many more—in your lifetime. Perhaps one or more of them stirs you personally and calls you to action. How you respond to the causes that capture your attention—by volunteering, praying, donating, raising awareness, or more—reveals a lot about your personality, your life experiences, your convictions, and your priorities.

As Christians, we all share a singular mission: to “make disciples of all people” (Matt. 28:19). This call of God should motivate every ministry in our churches. Yet individual Christians and congregations alike often have specific Kingdom causes they rally around. Whether caring for God's creation, translating God's word into new languages and dialects, or working within legal systems to change unjust and oppressive laws, believers and churches seek to love God and love neighbor (Luke 10:27) in tangible ways.

In this issue of *In Part*, we explore the causes that animate the ministries of BIC individuals and churches in the U.S. and around the globe. In so doing, we highlight the biblical values that shape our faith community—values like serving compassionately, living simply, witnessing to the world, and pursuing peace, among others. As you read the stories, essays, and reflections that constitute this issue of *In Part*, I hope you'll ask yourself, “What's my cause?” More importantly, I hope you'll also ask, “How does my passion for this cause honor God and demonstrate my love for my neighbor?”

Devin C. Manzullo-Thomas,
guest editor

INTRODUCING THE NEW-AND-IMPROVED *IN PART*

As we announced in our Winter 2014 issue, this year *In Part* will transition from a quarterly publication to a twice-yearly publication. This change allows us to better steward our BIC U.S. communications resources and to imagine new ways for *In Part* to tell the stories of our faith community and its work here and around the globe.

Over the last few months, *In Part* staff have spent numerous hours brainstorming ways to better communicate the dynamic life and ministry of our church family. You now hold the result of that careful deliberation in your hands. We hope you enjoy the new-and-improved *In Part*—especially the new content that will be carried in each issue.

Life in the Body will share stories of local BIC congregations and the interesting, Spirit-led ways they're ministering in and to their unique contexts.

Echoes highlights striking images from BIC history—snapshots that reflect the shared convictions that shape our heritage as a community.

Part of the Whole turns the spotlight on one BIC individual and her or his journey of faith.

By the Numbers offers an engaging, illustrated look at the facts, figures, and other data that tell the story of BIC ministry in the U.S. and around the globe.

Points of View invites two members of our BIC community to share their perspectives on a timely or challenging issue.

We believe these new sections of our magazine complement the regular content our readers have come to expect from *In Part*, including Bishop Perry Engle's popular “Parting Words” column. And we pray that the new stories and images you encounter in these pages will deepen your relationship with Christ, stir your passion for the Kingdom, and draw you into the vision and mission of the Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S.: to build a community of believers who worship and obey God, and to share the good news of Jesus Christ with all people.

IN PART™

Spring/Summer 2015 VOLUME 128 NUMBER 2

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

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

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Creative Contributors



Natalie Robb graduated from Messiah College (Mechanicsburg, Pa.) in 2007 and is currently working as a freelance illustrator and web designer in Pittsburgh, Pa. The challenge and creative freedom of freelance work is what motivates her.



Brae Howard is a freelance photographer who specializes in portraits of women. With a degree from Covenant College (Lookout Mountain, Tenn.), she lives and works in Philadelphia.



Samuel Loy is a mostly self-taught multimedia digital artist born and raised in Salina, Kans. He currently works at Revolution Church as the video team leader and ministry assistant.



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LIFE IN THE BODY

STORIES OF THE BIC IN ACTION

LIFE IN THE BODY

MOVING FORWARD
IN MISSION*Pastors gather for summit
on church planting*

How can the Brethren in Christ in the U.S. strengthen their commitment to planting and multiplying churches? That's the question that drew together over 40 pastors, leaders, and aspiring church planters from across the United States for a three-day summit in March 2015.

Jointly sponsored by the Susquehanna, Atlantic, and Allegheny Regional Conferences of the BIC U.S. and held at Pathway Community Church (York, Pa.), the "Navigating Church Planting" summit focused on networking, encouraging, and equipping BIC people for future success in church planting and multiplication.

A key goal of the event was to consider the ways in which BIC theology might distinctively shape practice in church planting and multiplication. According to Jon Hand, pastor of Engage Community Church (Carlisle, Pa.) and one of the conveners of the summit, "There are many resources available for church planting and multiplication within the broader Evangelicalism. But we want to know how our particular Anabaptist, Pietist, and Wesleyan Holiness heritage moves us forward in mission."

To that end, the summit included a variety of sessions specifically focused on this topic. They included "Church Planting with the Three-Legged Stool:



↑ Participants in the March 2015 church-planting summit listen as Chris Baeckert of Ecclesia Network gives a presentation.



↑ Attendees of the annual meeting of Nicaragua BIC hold signs commemorating the church's 50th anniversary.



↑ BIC church member Elmer Ticas, originally from El Salvador, secured legal residence in the U.S. through a temporary work permit.

Fontanez pointed Ticas to Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) East Coast's South Florida Immigration Program, which offers affordable, Christian legal counsel to members of Anabaptist churches in the area. Immigration attorney Rachel Díaz, a member of La Roca

Firme BIC Church (Hialeah, Fla.), and a consultant for MCC East Coast, took the cases of Rene Ticas' son and uncle. Their friend was deported.

Díaz pled their cases before a judge, who allowed both of them to be released while their cases continued in the courts. Though the uncle's asylum case was denied and a deportation order was issued, Elmer Ticas fared better. He was able to complete high school in 2012 and received a temporary work permit, allowing him to remain legally in the U.S. and to continue worshipping at Refugio Eterno BIC.

Meanwhile, Pastor Valentin—who is thankful his pianist is back playing for the church—continues to help those who are undocumented, which includes at least half of his 70-member congregation. "It's not fair to talk about Jesus if people can't see how Jesus is reflected in what we do," he says. "I can preach to you, but I can also walk with you. Jesus preached but he also gave food and healed the ill."

Adapted from a 2014 story by Mimi Copp Johnson, MCC East Coast

CELEBRATING
A MILESTONE
*Nicaragua BIC Church
marks fifty years of ministry*

Celebration and expectation marked the annual meeting of the *Asociación Misión Evangélica de los Hermanos en Cristo en Nicaragua* (Brethren in Christ Church in Nicaragua), held March 6–8, 2015, in Managua, Nicaragua. At that event, pastors, leaders, and laypeople from the conference's 100-plus congregations came together to mark an important historical milestone: the fiftieth anniversary of BIC presence in Nicaragua.

Established in 1965, the Nicaraguan church owes its formation to North American missionaries Howard and Pearl Wolgemuth. After serving in Cuba until Fidel Castro's 1959 Communist takeover forced them to evacuate, the Wolgemuths eventually set out for Nicaragua, where they established a BIC presence in the rural village of Esquipulas. What began as a mission of visitation, Bible study, and medical aid has grown into a thriving conference, autonomous since 2003. Today, the Nicaraguan church boasts more than 3,500 members—and a vision for growth through missionary activity and ambitious church planting.

Ever wondered . . .
what's cause?

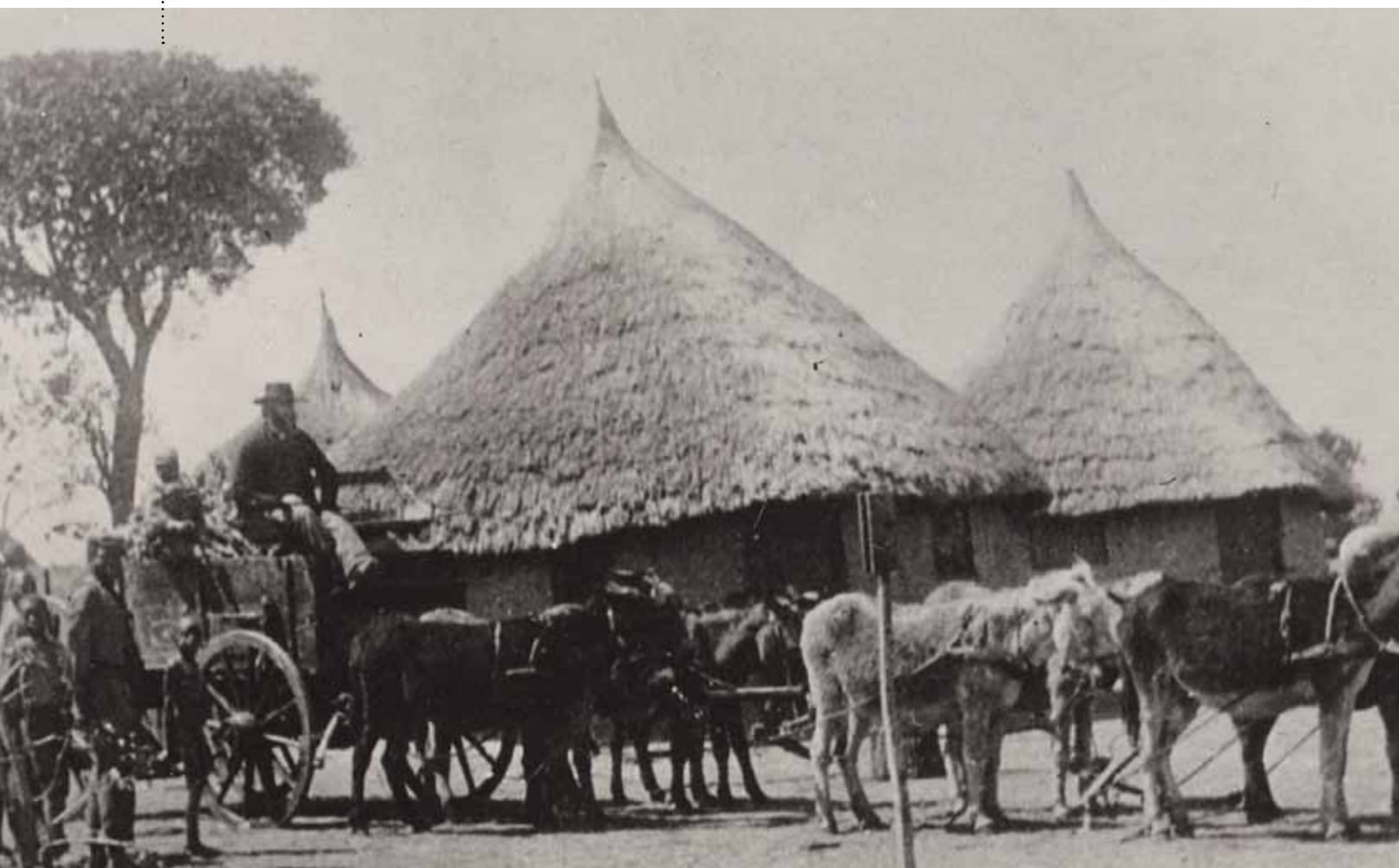
NOUN:

Something (such as an organization, belief, idea, or goal) that an individual or group supports or fights for

cause
| 'kôz |

USED IN A SENTENCE:

The Brethren in Christ fulfill their commitment to following Jesus by pursuing a variety of causes in ministry.



NO TURNING BACK

Pioneering the cause of foreign missions

Over one hundred years ago, an intrepid band of Brethren in Christ with a passion for spreading the Gospel set out from North America. Sailing from New York City in December 1897, they journeyed 3,000 miles across the Atlantic Ocean and eventually made their way to the Matopo Hills in Southern Rhodesia—a country now known as Zimbabwe—by summer 1898.

The arrival of these strange-looking white men and women by donkey-

drawn wagon (pictured above) must have sent waves of shock and confusion through the Ndebele people who had long occupied the land. Indeed, initially the missionaries struggled to communicate their message. But there was no turning back. Eventually, some young people responded, and the missionaries held the first baptism in August 1899.

The work of these early missionaries sparked a passion among Brethren in Christ for the cause of global

witness and service. Over the years North American missionaries have contributed to the establishment of 30 national BIC conferences, associations, or church clusters in places beyond North America, and the ministry of BIC World Missions continues today, with 69 cross-cultural workers engaged in 20 countries. As a result, today 80 percent of BIC congregations are outside North America.

SUSAN VIGLIANO

She ministers to women exploited in the commercial sex trade. Susan Vigliano will now take your questions.

What is Peace Promise?

Peace Promise is a non-profit ministry based at Mechanicsburg (Pa.) BIC Church. We focus on ministering to people being exploited in the commercial sex trade—a beautiful, painful, and fulfilling service to God.

What does Peace Promise do?

In the last year, we have been able to help several women leave a life in the commercial sex trade and begin again. Additionally, we educate high school students and youth groups on the grooming practices of sexual predators and the harmful effects of pornography. Also, in the not-too-distant future, we will launch a pornography addiction support program for churches and community groups, since we have discovered a strong link between pornography, sex addiction, and sex trafficking.

How and when did Peace Promise get its start?

Peace Promise began in 2008 when one of the founders watched a *Dateline* television program on the plight of sex slaves. She eventually shared her discovery with her small group. This group developed a strategic plan to capture seeds planted by God for ministry. We prayed together and invited God to lead the way. He has done just that!

How did you personally become involved in Peace Promise?

I signed on with Peace Promise to provide prayer support and to help with administrative details. When the

original founder stepped away from the ministry, I assumed it would dissolve; I certainly had no intention of picking up the leadership reigns. But God had other plans. One night, a still, small voice awakened me in a time of prayer: “What would you do if it were your daughter?” I answered, “I’d go get her.” And He responded, “They are all daughters to me.” Sadly, until that moment I had never thought of how deeply God’s heart breaks to see His beautiful daughters being sold for sex. That experience compelled me into a leadership role with the ministry.

What’s one thing most Christians don’t know about sex trafficking in the U.S.?

There are probably many things that Christians don’t know about sex trafficking. For instance, the average age at which individuals are forced into prostitution in the U.S. is 13, and the average life span for someone being exploited through prostitution is seven years. Sex trafficking is a growing, multi-billion-dollar-a-year industry, and only one percent of those involved are ever rescued.

One of the most staggering statistics is that a very high percentage of people being prostituted in the sex industry were at one time in the foster care system. That statistic points to the desperate need for God’s people to answer His call to care for the orphan and to seek justice for the oppressed (James 1:27; Isaiah 1:17).

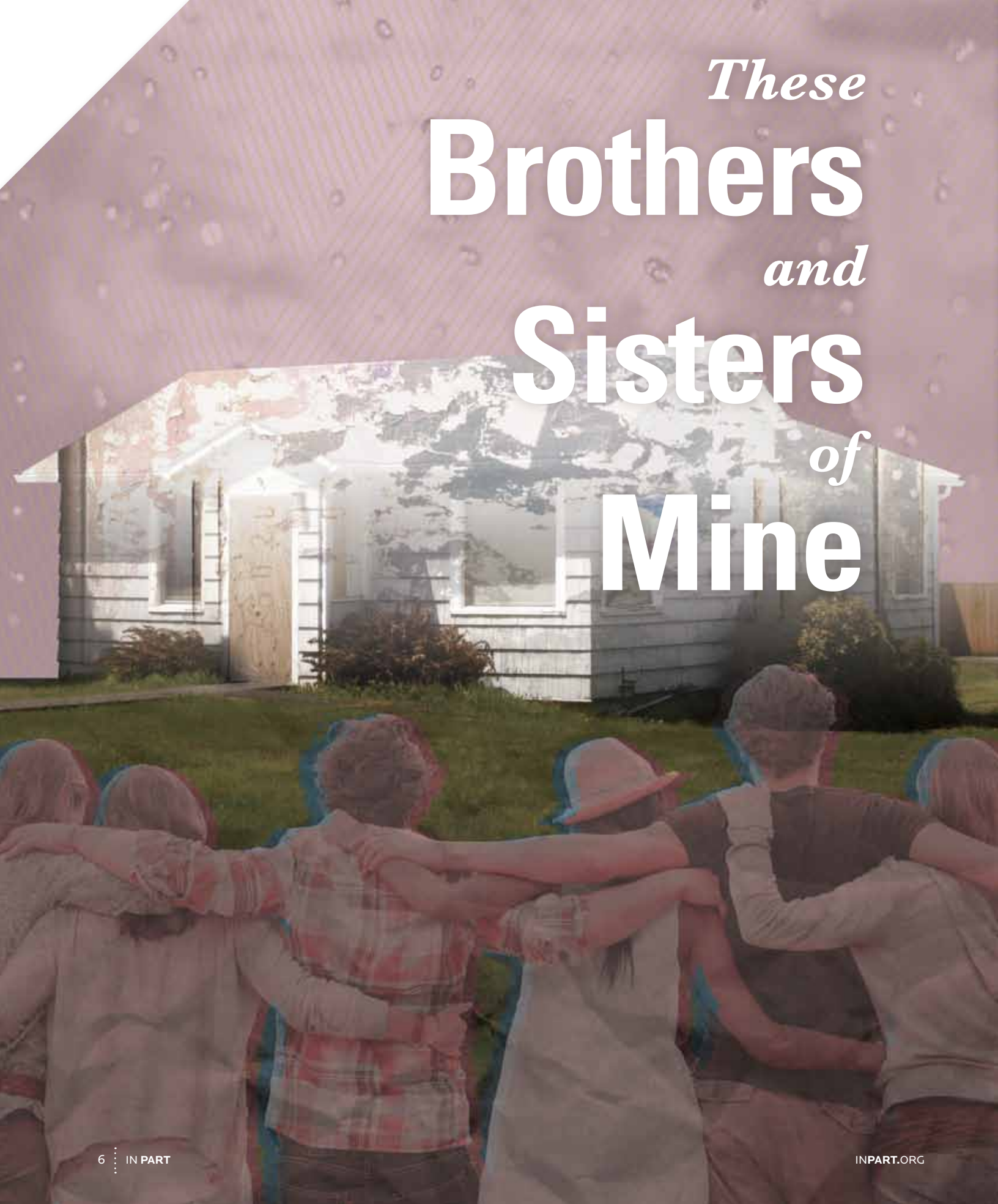


HOME CONGREGATION:
Mechanicsburg (Pa.) BIC Church

EDUCATION:
M.A. in Practical Theology and
Spiritual Formation, Ashland (Ohio)
Theological Seminary

FAVORITE MOVIE:
Amazing Grace

FAVORITE MUSICIAN:
Matt Gilman



These Brothers and Sisters of Mine

Following Jesus in ministry to those experiencing homelessness—and finding Him there, too

by Dulcimer Hope Brubaker

“Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’

“The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”

—MATTHEW 25:37–40

P **AUL BOWES NEVER THOUGHT** he’d be without a home. To look at him now, you’d never think it, either. In his early 60s,

Paul teaches Sunday school at Jemison Valley BIC Church (Westfield, Pa.) and volunteers his time with the Tioga County Homeless Initiative (TCHI), where he was president for two years. At the time we talked on the phone, he was packing up his kitchen in anticipation of a remodeling project. *His* kitchen. In his *home*.

But in the summer of 1986, Paul lived out of his car. He and his wife and two sons, age 10 and 6, had been living in Worcester, Mass., on the second floor of a three-story building, when a boy from the neighborhood set fire to their back porch. In a matter of hours, three families—including Paul’s—lost their homes. At first, the Boweses stayed with friends from church, and Paul went to work as usual. But after a few weeks, Paul sent his wife

and children to stay with her parents in Pennsylvania while he looked for a place to rent in Worcester. Out of options, he slept in his car.

NO PLACE TO GO

The fire couldn’t have come at a worse time. The “Massachusetts Miracle”—a tremendous economic boom—had come to Worcester, resulting in an unprecedented spike in rent and a severe housing shortage. Paul reflects, “I would call a realtor to say I would like to rent a house, and that I could pay \$900 a month, and be told I would qualify for housing under Section 8,” a low-income housing assistance program sponsored by the U.S. government. “And by the time you thought you had found an apartment it would be gone.”

After months of searching, Paul began to lose hope. “I didn’t see a way out,” he says. But he still had family. His wife’s parents suggested he move south and make a fresh start in Pennsylvania,

so he left his job in Massachusetts and accepted his in-laws’ hospitality. But Paul will never forget what it felt like to have nowhere to go at the end of the day. “A lot of people don’t have family,” Paul remarks. “Where do they go?”

In rural northern Pennsylvania, where Paul lives, they can fall back on the TCHI, which offers temporary food and shelter to families and individuals who find themselves out of a home. TCHI began in 2008 when an oil boom in the Marcellus Shale region in neighboring Bradford County caused housing costs to skyrocket, pricing people out of their homes. Thinking Tioga County was next, Jemison Valley BIC and 11 other congregations formed an alliance and prepared to meet the needs of the homeless. In the early days, TCHI used Jemison Valley’s building as its base. Guests in the program slept and ate at the church while they got on their feet. Today, TCHI rents a farmhouse on a local bus route. Each evening, volunteers from one of

the participating congregations bring dinner and fellowship, and later, the night shift arrives to see guests through to the morning. It takes a lot of dedication, a full measure of compassion, and countless volunteer hours, but when followers of Christ feel called to such a cause, God provides.

FRIENDS IN LOW PLACES

Jake Austin knows all about God's provision, having watched his parents run his hometown soup kitchen over the past 15 years. The founder of Shower to the People STL and a BIC church planter in St. Louis, Mo., Jake spent much of his young adulthood working at the soup kitchen. During his college years, he could often be found there, hanging out with his friends without homes. "Seeing the way my parents cared for the poor of our small town really inspired me to work with those on the margins," Jake says. "I spent a lot of time hanging out with homeless folks because I enjoyed their friendship. I listened to their stories and gained wisdom from their experiences."

Jake's friendships and intimate knowledge of the challenges of homelessness ultimately led him to start a new kind of ministry—a mobile shower. "When people think about homeless ministry they think about coats and sandwiches, soup and blankets, of which a large portion of people on the streets have a surplus. What's often overlooked is that our friends on the streets don't have regular access to showers for bathing or sinks for brushing their teeth," Jake explains. "Imagine not showering for months at a time and what that would do to your morale, your emotions, your self-esteem, and your health. There's an overwhelming hopelessness in living that way."

So Jake brings living water—literally—to the homeless of St. Louis via a shower truck stocked with towels, soap, and shampoo. Where there's a fire hydrant to connect to, Shower to the People STL can provide hot showers. When they're done showering, people leave with clean socks and underwear, a towel, and a hygiene kit. And in some cases, a friend or mentor, too.

The third component of Shower to the People STL, after showers and hygiene kits, is mentorship. Jake and his team hang out with the friends they make on the streets and provide assistance where they can. This comes with a unique challenge inherent to ministry with those experiencing homelessness: the transient nature of the population. "Not being able to know where our friends are at any given day makes for difficult discipleship," Jake admits. And even when they are able to establish consistent contact, Jake and his team often have a long road ahead of them. "The folks we serve are plagued by many demons both physical and spiritual. We need the armor and power of God to bring wholeness to their lives."

Sometimes Shower to the People STL only has one chance to serve an individual. But other times, it's the gateway to a long-term friendship—and even a chance to meet Jesus together. Jake speaks fondly of Will*, his formerly homeless friend of six years. They have been through a lot together—rehab, prison, drugs, church services, community meals, and prayers—but now, eight months sober, Will wants to talk about Jesus, to pray and study the Bible. He's getting healthy and whole, and even helping others. "It would have been easy to walk away from Will, and there were weeks when I wanted to, but it was in his mess, in his brokenness, his

sin, that I found my brokenness, my sin," Jake reflects. "We are both just beggars at the door of God's grace."

BIBLE, BED, AND BREAKFAST

"Beggars at the door of God's grace" isn't how most people—homeless or not—like to describe themselves. When Ashland (Ohio) BIC Church joined with other area churches to found Ashland Church Community Emergency Shelter (ACCESS), it wasn't received well at first. "People didn't want to stay in a church," remembers Keith Tyson, pastor at Ashland BIC. "They thought, 'Why would I go to the church? I already feel bad enough about myself.'" But word travels fast, and within a year, ACCESS and its member churches became known not for condemnation or self-righteousness but for acceptance, friendship, and for helping people get back on their feet.

And that isn't the only reputation that's changed since August 2009, when Ashland churches hosted the first 11 participants. After eating and hanging out with the homeless for several years, many volunteers find that homelessness looks very different from what they expected.

Lori Lewis, Ashland BIC's ACCESS coordinator, remembers how her picture of homelessness changed. "I don't see the bum with a bottle of alcohol. I don't see the prostitute. What I see are young parents with children in tow," she says. "People here end up homeless because of financial problems, lack of job opportunities, or broken families."

In fact, Lori and Keith both admit that they weren't even aware of homelessness in Ashland before getting involved with ACCESS. "I was shocked that we had a homeless problem within

Whether in small-town Ohio, or urban St. Louis, or rural Pennsylvania, ministry to people experiencing homelessness is complicated and time-consuming. But it's also a passion that God has planted deep in the hearts of His people.

middle America," says Lori. "We're not even close to any cities; we're very rural."

That's the tricky thing about homelessness, particularly in rural areas: You can't always see it. With a population of 23,000, Ashland doesn't have much of a visible homeless population. But that doesn't mean it isn't a problem. Keith explains, "It wasn't as much people sleeping on grates as it was sleeping in cars, staying in seedy hotels, or taking up residence with friends, sleeping on sofas—not having homes."

Like TCHI in Pennsylvania, ACCESS is one of a growing number of shelter programs in the nation that are hosted by local church or faith networks that take turns housing and feeding participants for one-week stints. Unlike TCHI, though, ACCESS has no dedicated shelter. Church volunteers transform fellowship halls and Sunday school classrooms into living rooms and bedrooms for one week at a time. "It's really moving to me how those Spartan classrooms can look homey and warm," Keith says.

During the day, program participants disperse, going to work, school, or the local Salvation Army Kroc Center, where they can shower, search for jobs and apartments, and get financial counseling. The Kroc Center also helps some people get their GEDs and teaches parenting skills where necessary.

Between the love and hospitality of churches and the concrete skills of the

Kroc Center, the ACCESS program has produced impressive results. "ACCESS is an integral part of helping the homeless out of homelessness," Lori says, citing a statistic that 85 percent of program participants are in permanent housing three years after graduating. But growth can also be seen in the friendships that have formed along the way. Stephanie*, one of Lori's go-to volunteers, is an ACCESS graduate—a woman who came through the program and now gives of her time and energy to help others walk the same path. Cindy*, who had for years been getting herself arrested just so that she could stay in a warm cell at the police station, went through the program in its first year. "She thought no one would ever come to her funeral," Keith recalls. "When she died a few years back from COPD, the place was packed."

Some people stay for as little as three days; others are in the program for eight months. No matter how great the need, the people of Ashland BIC mobilize to meet it—to be, as their church motto states, "the heart, hands, and feet of Jesus." For a church that only averages 85–90 people on a Sunday morning, this is no small feat. Lori estimates that 80 percent

of the congregation participates in some way—bringing a meal, being an evening host, providing transportation for guests, or sleeping at the church overnight. But they serve joyfully, confident that this is what Jesus would do.

EATING WITH SINNERS

Whether in small-town Ohio, or urban St. Louis, or rural Pennsylvania, ministry to people experiencing homelessness is complicated and messy and time-consuming. But it's worthwhile, and it's a passion that God has planted deep in the hearts of people like Jake Austin.

"After many years of spending time with people living on the streets, I am convinced that they are a group of people whom Jesus would hang out with," he says. "We strive to walk with our friends and neighbors through hard situations so that by it we are both transformed by being drawn to each other and to Christ Jesus." Because in the end, we are all just beggars at the door of God's grace.



Dulcimer Hope Brubaker writes from her home in Mechanicsburg, Pa., which she shares with her husband and three young children. She is a member of the Dillsburg (Pa.) BIC Church.



Rooted and thriving

SEEKING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE
FOR URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS

by Rachel Sensenig

I grew up in the beautiful Pocono Mountains of Pennsylvania, and now I live in urban Philadelphia. As the daughter of a park ranger, my childhood playground was a 2,000-acre landscape of lakes, streams, forest, and fields that inspired me to discover a relationship with the Creator. When I fell in love with the city and its people and was called by God to root myself among city-dwellers almost 20 years ago, I underestimated the environmental contrast I would experience.

In Philly, I was energized by the high concentration of diverse people and motivated by church-planting mission. But the concrete surroundings were challenging to me at times, especially as a parent. I saw kids cooped up indoors during long winters and sweating through summers without a lot of grass, cool breezes, and wide-open spaces to run. I interacted with many other families that experienced health problems such as asthma and allergies. I met mothers who worried about their children picking up used needles and condoms in concrete parks. I found that many of my neighbors lacked easy access to fresh fruits and vegetables, but had giant TVs in their living rooms. It seemed to me that the concrete jungle bred a hunger for instant gratification and reliance on technology more than on the organic processes of the earth.

Even though urban communities are more sustainable than rural and suburban settlements, urbanization takes a

toll on the environment. Concentrated amounts of industrial and household waste can pollute air, water, and soil, and the poor seem to bear the negative impact more than the wealthy. All over the world, it's the poor who live in the more environmentally dangerous areas: near the trash dump, on the unfarmable land, in the high-rise project, near the power plant, and in the disinvested neighborhoods. Meanwhile, the wealthy enjoy lush parks, efficient sanitation services, and the ability to buy organic produce and quality healthcare.

Philadelphia is no exception: In my city, there is less access to healthy food, medical care, open green spaces, and safe places to gather in areas where less-privileged families live, work, and worship. More than 44,000 abandoned and blighted properties increase a sense of hopelessness and attract crime in these neighborhoods. There seems to be a direct relationship between land degradation and high rates of violence, addiction, unemployment, disease, and other social ills.

When we love one another, as Jesus demonstrates, we see the interconnectedness of all of creation and God's longing to restore the broken relationships between us. Recently, the dual convictions to care for the poor and the earth have been called *environmental justice*, and in my faith community, Circle of Hope, I have learned that there is no real justice without love.

The cause of **environmental justice** is *important* to me because I want **more opportunities** for **all people** to know **the Creator** and respond to **His saving love**.

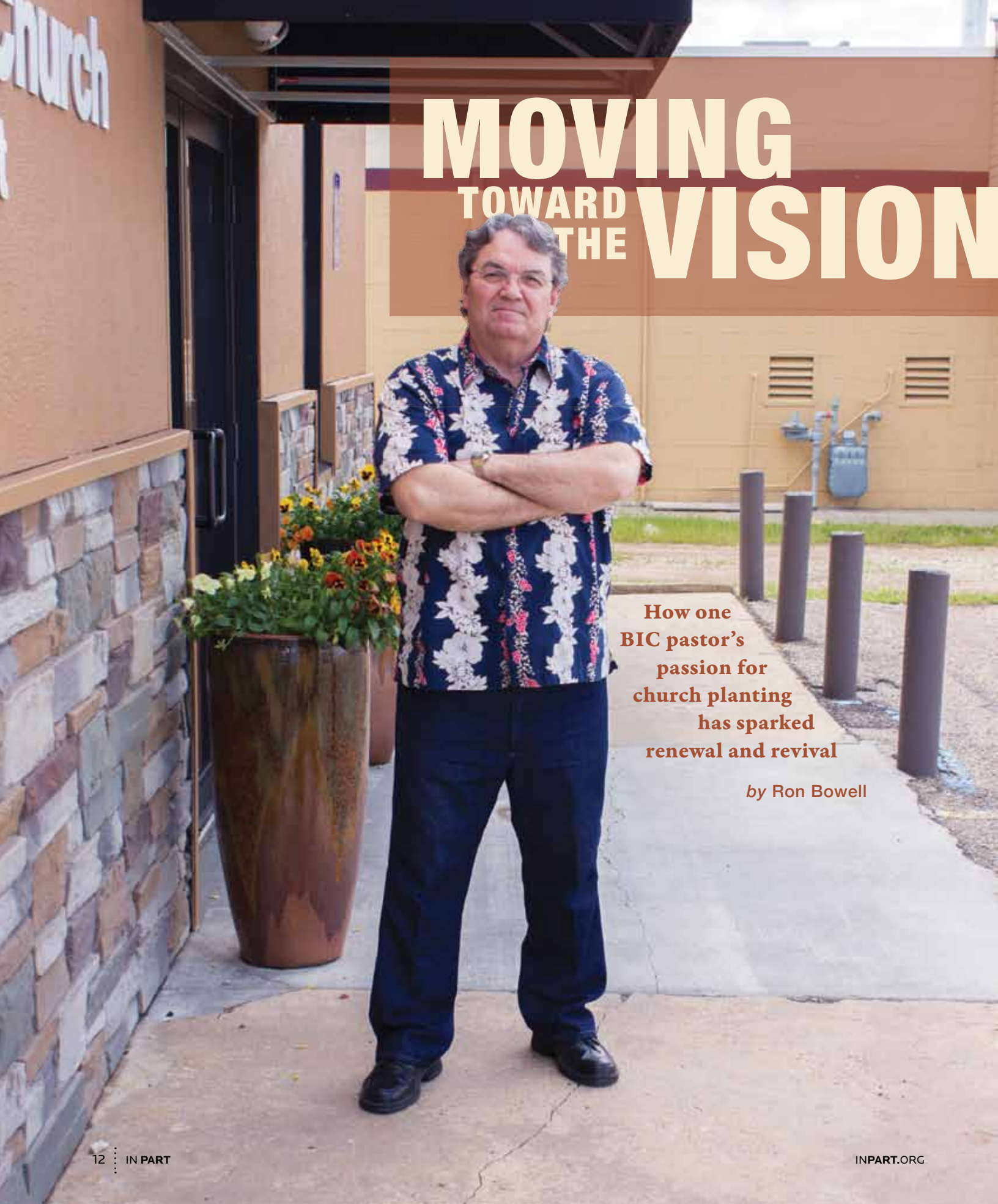
In this spirit, several Circle of Hope people—myself included—banded together a few years ago to form a compassion team called Take Back Vacant Land. Our goal was to help get abandoned properties into the hands of neighbors who wanted to create gardens, playgrounds, and affordable housing in their communities. We joined a strong coalition of other faith and community groups that raised awareness for environmental justice and proposed legislation for the creation of a land bank in Philadelphia. In December 2013, that legislation was passed by City Council, making Philadelphia the largest city in the country to create an entity whose main function is to facilitate the sale of vacant properties for positive development. Our hope is that the land bank will give Philadelphia some of the tools we need to reclaim our most vulnerable neighborhoods from blight.

The cause of environmental justice is important to me because I want more opportunities for all people to know the Creator and respond to His saving love. I want all people to have the chance to experience a restored relationship with God, among His people. Like Paul says in Romans 8:22, all

creation is groaning in eager expectation for the children of God to be revealed. Many Philadelphia neighborhoods are groaning for the children of God to be revealed, and we are taking that opportunity to reveal God's glory in the earth and provide for basic needs.

By following in the footsteps of the firstborn of all creation—Jesus—we demonstrate a restored relationship with God that flourishes around us in restored relationships with one another and with the rest of creation. By helping people stay rooted in their neighborhoods and enabling them to look beyond survival to caring for the next generation, we are empowering one another to get into a healed life with God and living the Gospel of redemption that comes through Christ. Filled with people whom God loves, the city really is a place of beauty, and the Holy Spirit keeps empowering us to be the people that Isaiah prophesied—people who “will be called repairers of broken walls and restorers of streets with dwellings” (58:12).

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Rachel Sensenig is a pastor with Circle of Hope (Broad & Washington). She lives in Philadelphia with her husband, Jeff, and two children, Zach and Cori Grace. She loves planting the church and being outdoors whenever possible.



MOVING TOWARD THE VISION

**How one
BIC pastor's
passion for
church planting
has sparked
renewal and revival**

by Ron Howell

In Acts 1:8, Jesus told His disciples that they were to be “witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

For Christ’s disciples today, “Jerusalem” refers to our local area—our people group. “The ends of the earth” refers to all the nations of the world. But where are our “Judea and Samaria”? They are the cities and states near us. We are to be witnesses there, as well as at home and abroad. This witness involves church planting, and church planting is my passion!

Church planting—the birthing of new Christian congregations—is essential to the cause of Christ. Existing churches must create new churches, so that the Gospel message can be spread. Church planting is also essential to the Brethren in Christ (BIC) Church. If we do not reproduce ourselves, our family name will eventually disappear.

The call to plant churches was far from my mind as I grew up in Kansas and got involved in the rock music scene. Playing in bars for close to 20 years brought with it an alcohol addiction that dominated my life. But through prayer and the faithful witness of my wife and some other local believers, I was saved around Christmas 1980 and started attending the Zion BIC Church near Abilene, Kans. Miraculously, in 1984, God called me to pastor that church.

In 1996 I began to feel a calling to plant a new church. Even though starting new churches always made sense to me, I did not want to hear this call. I was happy where I was and felt that I could support others from there. I resisted, but God was persistent.

During that time of struggle, I came across some old church records from the years 1912–1914. The records listed 11 BIC congregations in Kansas. I couldn’t shake off the faithfulness of

these BIC pioneers. Three hundred of them had made their way to Kansas by train in the 1880s, fanned out, and established new churches. By 1914 they numbered around 900, tripling their number in just 30 years. That’s what church planting can do. And almost a century later, God seemed to be telling me, “That’s what I want you to do.”

By that time, the BIC in Kansas had dwindled to just three churches with around 300 in attendance. Something about that fact just did not seem right to me. So in the fall of 1997, after much prayer, I decided to say yes to the call to plant a new church. The target

We must take the call to plant new churches seriously, investing significant prayer, personnel, and finances into the effort to be witnesses in the cities and states around us.

would be Salina, Kans., just 30 minutes down I-70 from the three remaining Kansas churches. I was 50 years old at the time. God has a sense of humor.

My wife and I moved to Salina in the fall of 1998 to begin planting what would become the CrossRoads Church. Taking a page from the Book of Joshua, we did seven Jericho Prayer Walks around the city, asking God to bring down its spiritual walls and to send us the people that the world had given up on. God answered both prayers. CrossRoads is now known as the “rock & roll rehab church” in Salina. The majority of our folks are recovering from addiction and co-dependency even as they are learning how to walk as Jesus did. Ironically, in 2001, we purchased Salina’s largest bar and nightclub and converted

it into a worship and ministry center. Again, God has a sense of humor.

Since we planted CrossRoads, five other churches have been birthed in Kansas: Rock Island in Herington, Life-House in Abilene, New Trail Fellowship near Abilene, along with Revolution BIC and La Mision El Camino of Salina. These last two churches both got their start in the CrossRoads Church “womb room,” a fellowship hall in our building where fledging congregations can grow and gain strength before establishing themselves in the community. In that sense, birthing new churches was built into the CrossRoads DNA.

On an average Sunday morning in 1998, attendance in the three surviving BIC churches in Kansas would have been around 300—the same number that came to the state in the 1880s. This coming Sunday morning, around 1,000 people will worship God and

hear the Gospel in seven Kansas BIC churches. Since the launch of CrossRoads, the BIC Church in Kansas has tripled in number.

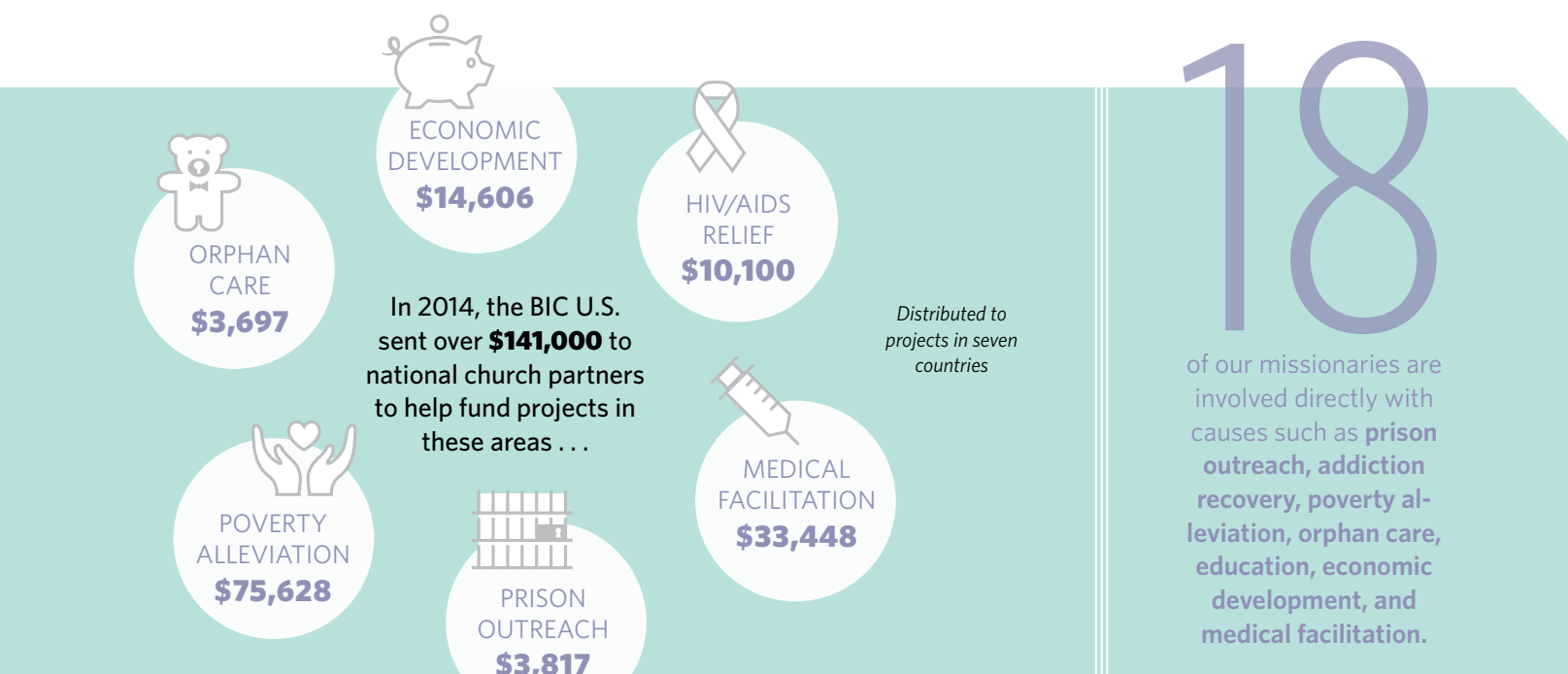
I believe God has given me a vision for 10 BIC churches in Kansas before I die. Today, we are moving toward that vision. But it’s not just my “Judea and Samaria” here in Kansas where such renewal must happen. During this next generation, we must take the call to plant new churches seriously. We must invest significant prayer, personnel, and finances into the effort to be witnesses in the cities and states around us. And as we do, God will do great things in us and around us.

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Ron Howell is a preacher, writer, and musician with roots deep in Kansas soil. He and his wife, Kerry, live in Salina, Kans., and have five grown children and 14 grandchildren.

BY THE NUMBERS

CARING FOR THE 'LEAST OF THESE'

Following Christ's call in Matthew 25:40, BIC in the U.S. serve compassionately and give generously to the "least of these brothers and sisters" at home and around the world. Here's a look at our global ministry—*by the numbers*.



Today, approximately

8500

youth (ages 5–18) are supported in **NINE SPICE HOSTELS** across **NEPAL** and **INDIA**

Over the past

FIVE YEARS,

the Global Compassion Fund has contributed over \$340,000 to relief and recovery efforts in eight countries, including: **Haiti, India, Japan, Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.**



TO THE POINT

What is one 'cause' or issue—spiritual, social, or otherwise—that animates or motivates your ministry?

At Lancaster, we want to help our people to focus on Jesus: to read the Bible through the lens of Jesus; to gather in corporate worship to encounter and experience the presence of Jesus; to go into the world embodying Jesus. Jesus is the cause of any of our causes.

—Josh Nolt,
Lancaster (Pa.) BIC

For LifePath, one of our causes is belonging, so we are motivated to create a family for people who need one. We find in our region a huge need for the extended family experience that Jesus people can create. When exhausted, disconnected families and individuals find a sense of belonging, they're much more able to both engage in the discipleship journey and become mobilized to join God's healing mission in the broken world around them.

—Keith Miller,
LifePath Church (Newark, Del.)

The cause to which God has called my attention is living in peace with all people as far as it depends on us. This commitment not only includes big-picture peacemaking in terms of war and military service, but also—and perhaps even more importantly—small-picture peacemaking in our homes, our churches, and our towns. Today, there seems to be a deep divide between declaring allegiance to the Prince of Peace and actually living peacefully.

—Craig Sipes,
Morrison (Ill.) BIC

At Hollowell, we are attempting to combat the social evil of human trafficking. Through active engagement, prayer networking, and hosting forums for educators and administrators on the front lines of this fight, we are seeking to inform our community, make it a safer place for children and youth, and serve notice to the darkness: "We as the people of God disagree."

—Blaine Loughheed,
Hollowell BIC (Waynesboro, Pa.)

Caring for orphans is close to the heart of God. In Ephesians, God's grand cosmic plan for human redemption is described as adoption: "In love, God predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ" (1:4). In much the same way, Romans 8:15 describes us calling out, "Abba, Father" (or, *Daddy*) through "the Spirit of adoption."

This is a spiritual reality, yet the physical reality for many children is that they have no earthly parent. Who will be their mommy and daddy? You could, if you choose to step in and adopt, as our Heavenly Father did for us.

—Jeff Piepho,
Revolution BIC (Salina, Kans.)

Passionate about these causes? Learn more about partnering with us by visiting BIC-CHURCH.ORG/WM.

POINTS OF VIEW

SHARING PERSPECTIVES ON A CHALLENGING ISSUE

ALLEVIATING POVERTY

Christians agree that Jesus taught his followers to care sacrificially for the poor. Yet those same believers sometimes come to different conclusions about the best methods for addressing the complex, thorny issue of domestic poverty. Two BIC leaders share their perspectives on how Christians ought to respond to this issue.

Is the Church enough to combat U.S. poverty?

The United States is often described as the richest country in the world. And yet according to World Hunger Education Services, almost 49 million people in the U.S. are considered “food insecure,” and one in seven people in the U.S. lives below the poverty line.

These stark facts about U.S. poverty are even more disturbing when you also consider that in 2007, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the top 10 percent of Americans earned 47 percent of the income and held 74 percent of the country’s wealth. And this gap has not shrunk in the years since 2007. This unequal distribution of wealth directly affects U.S. poverty.

Why is there increasing economic inequality and poverty in the United States? The issue is complex, but certain factors clearly contribute to the problem: corporate business interests that take precedence over public policies that would be more just for everyone; the belief that government should not provide a safety net; and an attitude that people are poor because they have made bad choices and are not taking personal responsibility, and not because the system is often stacked against them.

U.S. Christians have responded well to these problems through personal giving and congregational ministries, yet economic inequality continues. Generosity and charity are important scriptural imperatives to follow, but so are the injunctions to “do justice” and to create social systems—including government programs—that do not oppress the needy (Micah 6:8; Amos 2:6–7). In our current context of significant poverty, we need both church-based services and broader governmental programs in order to be “repairers of the breach” and “restorers of streets to live in” (Isaiah 58:12).



Harriet Sider Bickler is a member of Grantham BIC (Mechanicsburg, Pa.) and editor of *Shalom!*, a BIC U.S. publication on peace and justice issues.

The Church could do more to alleviate poverty.

Poverty has always been an issue in recorded biblical history. In the Old Testament God clearly instructed His people to be proactive towards poverty (Leviticus 19:9–10, 25:35–38). In the New Testament, Jesus said, “You will always have the poor among you, and you can help them whenever you want to” (Mark 14:7), insinuating that poverty would always be a problem for His people to address. The early Christians sold all their belongings and held everything in common, so that every need was met (Acts 2:44–45, 4:32–35).

Contrast these biblical visions with the history of the welfare state in modern America. In the 19th century, governments began providing relief in the form of poorhouses and orphanages. Later, during the devastating Great Depression of the 1930s, President Franklin D. Roosevelt focused on creating jobs but also established the first federal welfare system in American history.

Today the U.S. church continues to provide relief for the needy, but it relies too heavily on government programs to pick up the slack. I write these words not as an uninformed observer. I grew up poor in Philadelphia, because my father was an alcoholic before coming to Christ. I know firsthand the embarrassment of waiting in line for handouts of U.S. Army surplus food.

Maybe those living in poverty wouldn’t rely so heavily on governmental aid if the people of God would truly value others above themselves (Philippians 2:3), because that is the mind of Christ. And maybe we Christians would have more compassion for the underprivileged if we remember that Jesus said, “Whatever you do for one of the least of these, you do for me” (Matt. 26:40).



Jay Johnson is pastor of Zion BIC (Abilene, Kans.).

PARTING WORDS

PRAYING FOR RAIN IN LA-LA LAND

Followers of Jesus need to take seriously the stewarding of the resources entrusted to us by God

by PERRY ENGLE

When I travel away from my home state of California, I often hear the jokes about being from “the land of the fruits and nuts.” What people don’t realize is how much water it takes to keep all of our fruits and nuts alive.

California is in the midst of the worst drought in modern history, and it’s no laughing matter. For the first time in our state’s history, the governor recently ordered mandatory drought restrictions, which include a 25 percent reduction in urban water usage.

Since I was born and raised in SoCal, I’ve often thought that lack of water might be the pin that bursts the bubble of our consumeristic lifestyles. After all, we do live in a semi-arid climate, with over 22 million inhabitants vying for limited resources in a five-county area. I’ll leave the discussions on global warming to those smarter than me. What I do know is that it rains and snows far less in California than when I was a kid. And whether it is a cyclical pattern or fundamental climate change, the outcome is the same: God’s people need to lead the way in conserving God’s vital resources.

We often get hung up on the politics of conservation and resource management, and how all of this affects farmers and businesses. While these are weighty issues, we need to make sure they do not overshadow the importance of individual Christians and church communities doing what

they can when crises such as these arise. We do well to remember our biblical value of living simply and how it applies to the way we live our lives in a world of limited resources.

Some of the small ways our family is working to conserve water during the drought include capturing water in a bucket while the shower warms up, and then using it to water plants on the patio; setting automatic sprinklers to irrigate for less time; shortening our showers; turning off the spigot when lathering up; and generally viewing water as a valuable resource rather than just something to be poured thoughtlessly down the drain.

A bigger question is how I and local churches might change how we view the expansive lawns that tend to dominate our landscaping in Southern California—lawns kept alive by automatic sprinkler systems with water imported from the Colorado River. Would we be willing to expend the cost for a more reasonable, drought-tolerant design that, in the long run, would be more in keeping with the Mediterranean climate in which we live?



Illustration by Ammon Perry

These are immediate questions that face those of us here in the West. Yet each of us, no matter where we live, can set an example for a life of moderation—the kind of life that might, in turn, help strengthen the social fabric of our communities and regions. Of all people, followers of Jesus should take seriously the stewarding of the resources entrusted to us by God.

Join us here in the West in praying for rain, so that we might continue our grand tradition of exporting fruits and nuts to every corner of this magnificent world in which we live.



Perry Engle is a tree hugger and proud of it. When not carrying buckets of water from his shower to his garden, Perry serves as bishop of the Midwest and Pacific Conferences of the BIC U.S. He and his wife, Marta, and their family live in Ontario, Calif.



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GIVE GENEROUSLY

Contribute NOW to the BIC
Global Compassion Fund

*"... For I was hungry, and you fed me. I was thirsty, and you gave me a drink. I was a stranger, and you invited me into your home."
—Matthew 25:35 (NIV)*

Each year, the Brethren in Christ Church in the U.S. feeds, clothes, and houses those in need around the world. By contributing to the Global Compassion Fund, you can play a vital role in supporting these important relief and recovery projects.

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