

# MESSENGER STUDYGUIDE

*Food for thought, questions for discussion, and activities to help individuals, classes, and small groups use Messenger as a focus for study and reflection.*

April 2008

## **Food for Thought: An Overview of the Issue**

*Messenger's* series for the **300th Anniversary of the Church of the Brethren** continues with a look at the years 1858-1908. Articles tackle the subjects of "John Kline: A Beloved Man of God" (pp. 8-9) by Paul Roth, "James Quinter: Gentle, Persistent Progressive" (pp. 10-11) by J. Douglas Archer, "Polarization and Schism Among the Brethren" (pp. 12-13) by Kenneth M. Shaffer Jr., and "In Mission in India" (p. 14) by Pamela K. Brubaker.

An article by Theodore E. Long, "A Route to Renewal" (pp. 15-17) asserts that **Brethren colleges** may offer gifts for church renewal in the 21st century.

The Bible study on "**Luke: Jesus the Son of Man**" (pp. 20-21) is by Harold S. Martin.

## **Activities: Connecting with the Content**

**Read** John 7:43. **Research the main Brethren personalities** addressed in this issue, and their roles during the Civil War, and the divisions in the church in the early 1880s: John Kline, James Quinter, Henry Kurtz, and Henry R. Holsinger. Begin your research by reading about each person in the Brethren Encyclopedia. Then go to other source books on Brethren history available from Brethren Press or to be found in your church library or pastor's library.

**Read** Exodus 13:8-9. **Review the websites of the six colleges** or universities related to the Church of the Brethren—Bridgewater College, Elizabethtown College, Juniata College, Manchester College, McPherson College, and the University of La Verne. Go to [www.brethren.org](http://www.brethren.org), click on "related links" and then on the link to "Brethren Colleges" to find a link to each website. Take notes on what values you find expressed. Make a list for each college website. See if you can relate each of the values you found expressed on the websites with a traditional value of the Church of the Brethren such as discipleship, service, the ministry of all believers, peacemaking, community, simplicity, humility, etc. How do the college websites rate as expressions of Church of the Brethren values? How do you evaluate their expression of Christianity as a foundation for these institutions of higher education?

**Read** Luke 10:25-37. The parable of the Good Samaritan is an example of how "Luke's Gospel is filled with sympathy and tender appeals to outcasts and to the downtrodden," writes Martin. **Creatively retell the story of the Good Samaritan** (or another such story in Luke—the parable of the prodigal son, the friend asking for bread at midnight, etc.), such as by drawing it as a cartoon, painting it as a mural on a series of large posterboards, or writing a poem or song based on it. Share your creation with your pastor or deacons, or share it with your Sunday school class.

## Questions for Discussion

1. How would you characterize the life and mission of John Kline? And that of James Quinter? List the gifts for ministry that each man possessed and used in the church, according to the articles by Roth and Archer. What were each man's spiritual gifts? How did the using of those gifts in ministry lead him into conflict with the political and military authorities, in Kline's case, or into leadership during a time of division in the church, in Quinter's case?
2. Can Kline and Quinter be role models for Brethren today, during a time of war and political and economic instability in the nation, and disagreement over theological and social issues in the church? Why or why not?
3. How did the Brethren schism of the early 1880s happen? Carefully read Shaffer's article, and then make a list of the key events of the schism, in chronological order. Who were the key groups involved? Who were the key personalities? What decisions of Annual Meeting helped or hindered the divisions? What were the issues—theological and social—that led to schism?
4. Do you agree or disagree with Shaffer's answer to the question he poses toward the end of the article, "Why did the divisions of the early 1880s occur?" Were divisions in the church inevitable, given the change taking place in the larger society?
5. Long writes that Brethren colleges are flourishing at a time when the church is floundering, and that the colleges "can be a model and a resource for the renewal of the church's witness in the 21st century." Do you agree, and why or why not? Make a list of criteria Long uses to support his assertions, for example, growth of attendance at the colleges at a time of dwindling church membership, and the "market smart" nature of the colleges. For each item on the list, write a sentence explaining how the church may make use of that positive of the colleges.
6. Now discuss Long's questions on page 17 under the subtitle, "Charting a Course for Renewal." Are these questions helpful for renewal efforts in your congregation, and the Church of the Brethren as a whole? In what new directions could they point the church?
7. How does the gospel of Luke express compassion, especially for downtrodden people? Martin writes that Luke portrays Jesus as "a man with great compassion for all people." Cite examples, stories, and particular verses in Luke that support this portrayal of Jesus.
8. In what directions does this emphasis on Jesus's compassion lead us, as disciples of Christ? What should Jesus' followers be doing, and how should we be acting in this world, in light of stories such as the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, and the prominent place that women and children fill in the gospel accounts?

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