

## 2012 Annual Conference Theme:

### *“Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.”*

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The Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20 stands at an important intersection of New Testament faith. Jesus has just completed his earthly ministry, a time when his life and teaching gave evidence of another kingdom among us. This kingdom is hidden from those who will not see, and yet made clearly present through his life and ministry. Jesus taught, healed, felt deep sorrow at the suffering of others, confronted injustice, invited other persons into this kingdom life, and finally was crucified. Three days later, he was raised. And now, perhaps moments before his ascension into Heaven, Jesus gives the disciples this instruction, words that will serve the Brethren as the theme verses for the 2012 Annual Conference:

*Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matthew 28:19-20, NRSV).*

With these verses, I invite the Brethren to the 2012 Annual Conference, meeting in St. Louis, MO July 7-11, 2012 with the theme *Continuing the Work of Jesus, Peacefully, Simply, Together.*

What a magnificent calling this is! For over 300 years, Brethren have gathered in Spirit-filled community around the Bible, choosing to be the church described in the pages of the New Testament. Brethren chose this radical obedience to the Great Commission in the waters of the Eder River in Schwarzenau, being rebaptized as adult believers. Brethren have continued the work of Jesus by evangelizing neighborhoods around their meetinghouses; by being peacemakers at home and abroad; by responding to a massive earthquake in Haiti with disaster response teams, global mission, workcamps, ministry education and more; by caring for children in Brazil; by responding to natural disaster and human need around the United States. Along the way, Brethren have discovered that our calling is not to make the institutions of this world more holy and righteous; our calling is to be the Kingdom of God in the midst of the kingdoms of this world.

This is not often easy, because the kingdoms of the world have their own motivations and goals, and even followers of Jesus can get caught up in those.

- The kingdoms of this world choose the verbal violence of hateful words and stereotypes and the physical violence of fists, guns and bombs to advance their point of view and defend their faith. Followers of Jesus are not immune from the temptation of violence. In the midst of conflicts of all kinds, the Church of the Brethren chooses to *Continue the work of Jesus. Peacefully.*
- The values of consumerism give us an abundance of opportunity to spend our time, talent and money, often to the detriment of our faith practices and with unexpected impact on other persons around the world. In the midst of the idolatrous kingdoms of the world, the Church of the Brethren chooses to *Continue the work of Jesus. Simply.*
- Lust for power and security leaves the poor, minorities, immigrants and those of third-world nations behind, scrambling to find even “daily bread.” In the midst of unprecedented wealth, the United States is often seen as the “loneliest nation in the world.” In the midst of kingdoms which value self-reliance and individualism, the Church of the Brethren chooses to *Continue the work of Jesus. Together.*

As 2012 Annual Conference Moderator, I look forward to hearing stories of how the Brethren are *Continuing the Work of Jesus* in our congregations around the world. Along the way to St. Louis, we will be reminded of the way Brethren of years past continued the work of Jesus in their time. And I will strive to challenge all of us to greater faithfulness. The world needs the testimony of Jesus. Brothers and Sisters, let us dedicate ourselves to *Continuing the Work of Jesus. Peacefully. Simply. Together.*



Tim Harvey, 2012 Moderator

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