



Calvary MESSENGER

“... God forbid that I should glory, save in
the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...”

Galatians 6:14

FEBRUARY 2018

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Calvary Messenger

February 2018

Purpose of Calvary Messenger is:

- To propagate sound Biblical doctrine;
- To stimulate a deeper study of God's Word;
- To anchor and fortify the faith of Christians;
- To point lost and dying souls to Christ the Savior;
- To welcome prodigals back to the fold and family of God;
- And to help defeated Christians find victory in Christ Jesus.

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Denial

Author unknown

It's hard to make children behave,
It's hard to make children obey,
It's a difficult thing to be grave,
There are some strong words we must say;
Yet sooner or later we find
We must be stern to be kind.

It's hard to refuse when they plead,
It's always much easier to give,
But children ask more than they need,
And will just as long as they live;
And the parent is worse than the child,
Who permits little feet to run wild.

It takes courage and strength to say, "No,"
When "Yes" is the pleasanter word;
But to give what we shouldn't bestow,
Is wicked as well as absurd.
Far better a few tears today,
Than many to shed when we're gray.

We're not good to the child when we give
What we know is not good for his years;
If we've thought of the life we must live,
We must sprinkle our love with the tears.
To our task we must be reconciled;
It's not easy to bring up a child.

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A “Lively” Hope

Peter describes Christians as persons possessing “a lively hope.” (See 1 Peter 1:3-7) He further links the Christian’s hope to “the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”

Let’s think about this important question about our future: “Why is Jesus’ resurrection linked to our prospects for heaven?” I Peter 1:2 supports this confident hope by describing the Christian’s inheritance as a reality that is “undefiled and that fadeth not away.” Peter adds further assurance that it is “reserved in heaven for you who are kept by the power of God.” What wonderful words of life! Sing them over again!

The Resurrection of Jesus—and ours

The enemies of Jesus did their level best to discredit Him. Soon after his death they recalled that before his death He had said He would rise from the dead after three days (Matthew 12:40). So Pilate set a guard at Jesus’ grave to make sure that doesn’t happen. But Jesus rose from the grave anyway! The disciples were sure that their Hero was alive. In spite of

the measures taken by Pilate, Jesus had risen from the dead! Then the enemies of Jesus paid men to spread a report that while the guards slept Jesus’ disciples came and took Jesus’ body away (Matthew 27:62-66 and 28:11-15). In the opening section of 1 Corinthians 15, Paul affirms that Jesus’ followers and more than 500 other people saw Jesus after his resurrection. All the strong measures taken to discredit Jesus did not change the facts. As always, God got the last word!

Paul makes a direct connection between Jesus’ resurrection and ours after we die. In 1 Corinthians 15:12-22, are some of Paul’s statements: “If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.” (17) “If the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.” (16) “If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable [to be pitied].” (19) “As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.” (22)

In the early church the apostles emphasized the resurrection of Jesus as a major pillar of historical fact for followers of The Way. For example,

note the martyrdom of Stephen. Added to Stephen's work of helping the poor in Jerusalem, God gave Stephen a gift of healing, described as doing "wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8). Stephen's ministry so strongly resembled the ministry of Jesus that Stephen was taken to court. When he was given opportunity to speak, he gave a history of God's dealings with His people, Stephen made a direct link between God's plan for his people in the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. His interpretation of history coupled with a strong rebuke for their unbelief unleashed a wave of stone-throwing fury that snuffed out Stephen's life.

Thus Stephen was the first Christian martyr to die for his faith in and testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. In his last lucid moments Stephen saw the Savior standing at God's right hand. Thus if anyone thought that Jesus' death signaled the end of His influence on earth, when Stephen saw Jesus they could surely surmise that Jesus was very much alive

No, Jesus' teachings of life after death were not extinguished at Calvary. Jesus' resurrection also provides victory over sinful habits for you and me! Everyone exists beyond the grave!

Revered teacher Gamaliel (Acts

5:34-42) was wise when he urged caution to the men who proclaimed the message of Jesus' resurrection as untrue. He said, "Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel be of men, it will come to naught, But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found to fight even against God." Thus these evangelists' lives were spared, even though they were first given a vicious flogging. After that, they were released.

Several high points of early church history

- Close to the hinge point in history (B.C. and A. D.), Jesus died and three days later came back from the dead, never to face death again!

- After Jesus' death, Jesus' disciples were changed from hesitant cowards to courageous witnesses. When the Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, fisherman Peter spoke confidently with Holy Spirit unction inviting repentance and faith in Christ. The result: 3,000 hearts turned to Christ for salvation. (Acts 2)

- Ananias and Sapphira were removed from the church by sudden death by God for knowingly giving a false impression about their gifts to charity. (Acts 5)

- The enemies of Jesus mounted a strong persecution against the

church of Jesus Christ. Herod had James (brother of John) killed with the sword. (Acts 12)

- Peter was taken into custody and placed very securely under guard, but was delivered by an angel. Clearly, God still had work for Peter to do. (Acts 12)

All these incidents confirmed what Jesus said earlier in Matthew 16:18, “I will build my church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The Power of the Lively Hope

The power of this hope in Jesus still provides what you and I need for “laying aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us” (Hebrews 12:1). Paul referred to God’s power for us as “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 1:19, 20).

Jesus, shortly before He died, spoke clearly and confidently about the Christian’s birthright hope of heaven. He said, “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe

also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you...whither I go ye know, and the way ye know” (From John 14:1-4)

Thomas was unsure of what Jesus meant and asked for clarification. Jesus added clarity by saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father but by me.” A Bible school song gave the meaning of that three-fold statement this way, “Without the way, there is no *going*; without the truth there is no *knowing*, without the life there is no *living*...I am the way, the truth and the life, that’s what Jesus said.” Here is further comment on this statement: “He is the way—everything else is a *dead-end street*. He is the Truth—everything else is a *lie*. He is the life—everything else *leads to death without hope*.” This certainly does not support pluralism which says more than one pathway leads to heaven.

We surely need no further word to the Christian’s prospect as “a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” Hallelujah!

-PLM 

For the Christian, death is the last shadow before heaven’s dawn.

Announcement

2018 Marriage Enrichment Seminar

To be held at:

Deeper Life Ministries
Plain City, OH
March 23-25, 2018

Topics:

The Gift of Marriage – Ben Waldner, Plain City, OH.
Qualities of a Godly Husband – Dave Snyder, Plain City, OH
Qualities of a Godly Wife – Ben Waldner
Clean Heart, Clean Hands – Dave Snyder
Cultivating Friendship – Denver Yoder, Plain City, OH
The Art of Forgiveness – Dave Snyder
A Three-Fold Cord Ben Waaldner

For more information or to register, please call 614-873-1199 or email info@dlmohio.org

This seminar with the same topics and speakers will also be held Arthur Mennonite Fellowship, Arthur, Ontario, on April 13-15, 2018.

To register for the Ontario seminar, please contact Willis and Erma Horst at 519-502-3610 or 519-848-6971 or email williserma@gmail.com.

Both seminars are sponsored by:

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A Modern-Day Dorcas

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

The history of our churches is not complete without some positive mention made of the Sister's Sewing Circle. This one-day-per-month activity (usually at the church) has been very significant in its accomplishments over the years. These women are champions of the destitute, especially as it pertains to physical warmth by day, in having sufficient clothing, coats and headgear, and by night, in having adequate blankets and comforters in dwellings that are insufficiently heated.

Dorcas is the subject of interest in Acts 9:32-43. She was an industrious woman who was continually doing things for others. She was a believer, and had a significant ministry of making garments. She could have had a thriving business, but instead she had her own "sewing circle" of donating coats and garments to the poor and to the widows.

The death of Dorcas was a shock to the city, for they very much needed her. The request came to Peter to come immediately. Did they have in mind for him to preach the funeral sermon?

The attending people had washed the body, and laid her in an upper room for the viewing. Everything was

ready for the funeral, the march to the grave, and the burial.

The typical wake paid mourners to bewail the loss, which could include musicians who would play doleful music for people to express sadness of such a great loss. We can expect they did not do such hypocrisies at this Christian woman's passing, but rather, they had exhibits there of the garments she had made.

This was not one who bought ready-made fabric at a discount store, and sewed dresses and coats with an electric sewing machine to make clothing such as we wear today. This was not like a modern-day seamstress who can make two or three dresses a day with plenty of fabric and supplies on hand. She was possibly even making the garments by weaving the fabric itself. That was a very time-consuming work which required great skill as she worked long hours at the loom.

For instance, Jesus' garments were made in four parts and stitched together for a good fit around the body, but his coat was without seam, and was "woven from the top throughout" (John 19:23). Therefore the soldiers could part his garments,

to each soldier a part. For the coat they threw the dice of chance to see who gets to claim it. Why would a mindless Roman soldier concern himself about a one-fourth piece of a garment? Because they knew the great amount of work that went into making it, likely having seen their mothers work many long hours to make just one piece for a garment.

Dorcas did this kind of work for days on end, and then gave them to the poor and to widows. This was no small Christian service. Everyone felt the loss of Dorcas for her needed ministry, and for her devotion to Christ. Likely, many of them had relatives or close friends who were poor or widowed, so nearly everyone in town was benefiting either directly or indirectly from her work. Besides her alms giving of these much sought after goods, was her love for Christ and doing this practical work in His name. It was a strong faith with works that had a special testimony for the whole town.

The poor in our world number in the millions, besides hundreds of thousands who are refugees and displaced persons because of war or marauding mobs who kill, maim, rape, and rob with impunity, without conscience, and without regard for human decency. Consequently, the masses flee and become refugees in order to survive and to maintain some dignity.

At a time when the numbers in our churches are increasing, it is a grief of heart to me to hear that the oncoming generation of younger women and some not so young, can be content to be absent from the monthly sewing circle at the church.

The example of Dorcas forcefully illustrates the impact of one lone seamstress (more likely a worker at the loom) who was diligent to provide a needed service for as far as her hands could reach.

Reputable foreign service agencies make it possible for our arms and hands to reach around the world. This "Bottom Line" is to encourage the faithful sisters who have been very diligent in providing clothing and bedding of all kinds, to keep up the good work under the blessing and support of the men of the church who serve Christ in more noticed and talked about ways. God is blessing you, too.

Records from the monthly Sewing Circle at Weavertown Church show that there were 603 finished products in the last year. The average attendance is twenty five sisters from our large congregation. The young mothers have their own separate sewing circle the day previous to the regular sewing circle.

More and more women are employed, or even have a business. Perhaps they are giving to the destitute of the world in other ways.

The future scene Jesus gave of the final judgment indicates reward for those who gave to the poor and needy. Jesus said of one woman, “She hath done what she could.” What are you doing relative to what you could do? I could also improve on doing good to others. Everyone should have a substation of Christian witness and service in or from his own home.

There are older men among us who cut quilt patches for the women to use at the monthly sewing circle, and have done so for many years. Men of the church should see to it that the church women have the funds needed to maximize their work. Some churches allocate a Sunday morning offering for the ladies’ sewing efforts every year.

The sisters of the church could consider attendance at the sewing circle as the one way they have to tithe of their time for the Lord. Is this a far-out thought? What would happen if for every time the monthly sewing circle meets the sisters who could go but don’t, would either as a reminder or a penalty, set their home’s

thermostat at 70 degrees in November, and then turn it back one degree for each time the sewing circle was missed, when Mom could have been present! My guess is that the whole family would be in support and help Mom not to forget to attend!

Dorcas! She being dead yet speaketh!

The Bottom Line about attendance at the monthly sewing circle: is a thank offering to God by skilled hands and ready feet—a wonderful way to interact with the sisters in the church one day a month. It contributes in practical and needed ways to the poor of the world who shiver in the cold. Yes, they are within our reach as world neighbors

Here is a spin-off of great importance: Giving a one-day-a-month priority to being at the “sewing” will be a powerful model to Mom’s daughters!

P.S. Pardon my tears as I think of the poor who need another blanket tonight, with two or three little ones under a blanket that is too light for the cold of winter.



Leaning on a Broken Staff

Harold S. Martin, Lititz, PA

Some years ago I had a very sore foot, and had to walk with great pain. Many times during that period of time, I was grateful for the person who invented the crutch (or cane)—something to lean on.

Isaiah the prophet **tells about a cane**—a cane that was splintered and broken. It was still hanging together, but it had been cracked—and if anyone put weight on it—it would easily break apart, and the sharp splintered end of

the cane would pierce the hand that's leaning on it. Isaiah 36:6 says, "*Lo, [you are trusting] in the staff of this broken reed, on Egypt; [on which] if a man lean, it will go into his hand and pierce it; so is Pharaoh, king of Egypt to all who trust in him.*"

An enemy nation (Assyria) was making plans to invade Israel. The Assyrian king had sent his chief army officer up to Jerusalem ahead of time, to make a speech to the people—hoping to get them to surrender. The people of Israel had depended on Egypt for weapons and horses, and during the course of his speech, the Syrian army captain made a reference to *Israel's reliance on Egypt* for military assistance—and in essence said, "**Folks—you are leaning on a broken staff!**" In other words, if you keep on putting your trust in the Egyptians, it's going to be like a man leaning on a cane. But the cane is splintered and cracked, so that when he leans on it, the sharp end of the cane would go up through his hand! "If you go to Egypt for help, you're leaning on a broken cane—and in the end you are going to suffer injury." The Lord himself says the same thing in Isaiah 31:1, "*Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help.*"

If you ask *the average person* in our communities, what he wants *above all in life*—a common answer will be something like this: "*I want to be happy*" or "*I want life to be meaningful.*" Most of us might say the

same thing. We wish our friends "*a Happy New Year.*" We congratulate a newly married couple with the words, "*May you have a long and happy life together.*" The thing we must keep in mind however—is that God *has a plan for happiness*, and Satan has a counterfeit plan. Those folks who follow the devil's suggestions for happiness will find that *each of his suggestions* is like leaning on a broken staff—and soon the sharp, splintered, broken end will pierce the hand—and will leave a trail of misery and sorrow and bitterness in our lives.

There are a number of splintered canes upon which people tend to put their weight—hoping to find support and bring them happiness.

Riches and Material Things

In the realm of material things, many of us never had it so good. I was born in 1930 and grew up in America during the years of the Great Depression. Money was not plentiful (I was given one penny every Wednesday noon to stop at the store on the way back to school to buy a piece of candy). Mother washed our clothes on a scrub-board. We didn't have a refrigerator or an indoor bathroom. Our 1928 Chevrolet did not have a heater. We had to crank it to start it. We wrapped blankets around our feet and legs to keep warm in winter time, when making the eight-mile journey to church services on a Sunday morning.

Today, most families in America have freezers with food in them, clothes that are warm, and automobiles with heaters. Most people in the western world have much more than the mere, bare necessities of life. There are all kinds of gadgets and trinkets and vehicles—snowmobiles, mini bikes, calculators, I-phones, digital watches, laptop computers, and dozens of other toys. If an abundance of things brings happiness and contentment, then our generation should be among the most contented people in all human history! But one of the most deceptive philosophies in all the world is the idea that riches and things will bring everything your heart longs for.

Solomon (in Old Testament times) was a man of great material wealth. He purchased possessions, built houses, planted trees, constructed pools of water, and had servants and maidens. Ecclesiastes 2:4-10 describes all that—and then Solomon says in essence, “*I had great possessions of cattle above all who were in Jerusalem; I gathered silver and gold, and bought musical instruments...and what ever my eyes desired, I did not withhold from them.*”

Solomon’s wealth was immense! His palace was magnificent! His household was huge! If he wanted to do anything, he did it! If he wanted to buy anything, he bought it!

Solomon’s wealth was so great that it became headline news all over the world. The Queen of Sheba came up

to Palestine (from down in Arabia) to verify the claims she had heard about this fabulous Jewish king. She heard about Solomon, but she thought that perhaps the reports were exaggerated (as reports often are), but she was amazed when she came to see for herself. The reports had actually been *understated*. Solomon was much wealthier than the reports had made him out to be. And when she saw all of Solomon’s riches (the houses, the trees, the pools of water, the magnificent palace)—*she was so stunned by his achievements*—that she exclaimed, “*the half has not been told me!*”

Did all this material wealth make Solomon happy? Did it fill the emptiness of his human heart? Listen to his words in Ecclesiastes 2:11, “*Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on [what] I labored to do; and behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.*”

Some of the most miserable people we meet are those who have every luxury this life could offer. I talked with a man some years ago who lived near the city of Philadelphia. He was wealthy. He showed the trophies he had received for all his accomplishments—and then as we were about to part—when confronted with the need to get ready for the life to come—he said: “*I’m sick within and I’m sick without.*” (I will never forget

those words).

If you put the treasures of earth, and material things before the things of God—you are going to wake up some day finding your life void and empty. The person whose happiness depends upon material things here on earth is like a man who leans on a broken staff!

Foolishness and Illicit Pleasures

Today the affections of multitudes are on dancing and races and bowling and football and watching movies and playing with the computer. Some say, “*I’m only going to live once, so I may as well have a good time while I’m living!*”

Some expect happiness to come through feasting and reveling and card-playing—and in attending circuses and races, in crowds and laughter and noise and merry-making. The little poem says:

*I’m gonna live before I die,
I’m gonna laugh instead of cry,
I’m gonna have my fling, before the
angels sing;
I’m not gonna miss a thing!
I’m gonna fill my cup, before my
number’s up,
I’m gonna live like the devil, until I’m
an angel;
I’m gonna live, live, live!*

But the people who drink and dance and enjoy worldly pleasures soon find out that there is no real and lasting peace in those things at all. The end of that kind of foolishness is heaviness. Proverbs 13:14 says, “*Even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of*

that mirth is heaviness.”

Perhaps the most common sinful pleasure in our society today centers on illicit sexual activity. Books and magazines—and, most of all, the internet—are filled with pornographic materials that tell all about the pleasures of sex—and how to have freedom without being bound by marriage or biblical morals. Many consider marriage only a joke! There are fewer and fewer people who regard the sacredness of marriage vows—as God intended the vows should be regarded. Multitudes seem to think that illicit relationships with persons of the opposite sex (or today, even with the same sex)—will bring happiness.

But the Bible says that “*the lips of a strange woman (literally, “of another man’s wife”) drop as honeycomb, and her mouth is smoother than oil, but her end is bitter as wormwood, [and] sharp as a two-edged sword*” (Proverbs 5:3-4). The married woman who flirts with (and becomes familiar with)—a man other than her own husband—is a dangerous woman. Any woman who can be enticed away from her husband (in the first place) toward another man, can also be enticed away from the foolish man who won her affection from her original husband! If the man who attracted the woman away from her true husband really stopped to think seriously, he would conclude like this, “*If I can get this woman away*

from her husband, then certainly some other person can come along and get her away from me.”

The man who becomes infatuated with another man’s wife, and runs away with her—will find himself eventually pierced through with many sorrows! Cheating on your spouse is a violation of God’s law! Illicit affections never bring happiness. It is like a splintered cane that will pierce your heart in the end!

There is pleasure in noise and laughter and in illicit sexual activity. When the lights are on, and the music plays, and the alcoholic beverages flow—laughter comes easily. Yet, when the frolic is over, and the lights go out, and the crowd goes home—life remains empty! Those who seek happiness in illicit pleasures are leaning on a broken staff, and the sharp points of the cane will pierce the hand in the end.

Alcohol and Harmful Drugs

Drugs are substances which by their nature have an effect on the mind and on the body; By the age of 17, 70% of all young people in the USA have sampled harmful drugs. Drugs are primarily of two kinds:

Amphetamines are stimulants—drugs which tend to give energy, wake a person up, and make the user feel like doing things!

Barbiturates are sedatives—drugs that depress the mind and the action of the nerves, thus leading to

sluggishness, difficulty in thinking, and faulty judgment.

One of the most powerful stimulant drugs is cocaine—and there are hundreds of kinds of barbiturates. The most common barbiturate is marijuana. However, the number one most dangerous drug in our communities today is alcohol. It alters the mood, depresses the central nervous system, and eventually causes physical dependence.

Those who become addicted to alcohol, find that it’s difficult to relax in the evening without a glass of wine or a shot of whiskey. At first, a few ounces of wine help to reduce tensions, but as time goes on, additional quantities are required in order to ease the anxieties, and all too soon one can become addicted. Liquor never brings permanent satisfaction.

A friend told me one time that he drinks to drown his troubles—but you can’t drown troubles. Troubles know how to swim—and when the drinking is all over, you’re going to be facing the same old problems all over again. One who is under the influence of alcohol—for a short time is transported out of the land of hard reality into the land of make-believe—and there, for a while, he can laugh at his problems, and shrug his shoulders at life. But when the drug wears off, he who uses drugs is right back where he started! Drinking is not the answer

to happiness in life. It never drowns troubles—it only prolongs them—and then it adds new problems to those that already exist. Satan offers many attractions in alcoholic drink; people seem friendlier, life seems more cheerful, and responsibilities lose their hold on the mind.

Morality and Good Deeds

We want to consider an additional way by which we can be leaning on a broken staff. Many Christians would fully agree that wine is a mocker and strong drink is raging, and whosoever is deceived by them is not wise. Some persons, however, count on church membership, and being a good neighbor, and hope that by these things they can make it to heaven.

The Pharisees (you may remember) *fasted and tithed and made long prayers*, but they still were outside of God's will. An individual must humbly acknowledge his sinful nature, and believe the message that Jesus Christ is the only Mediator between God and man—the only means by which we can become reconciled to a holy God. Until one takes those steps—there is no hope!

It's easy to attend Sunday morning church services—and even be actively engaged in the work of the church—but at the same time, proudly expect to be saved by the person's own good deeds. Some are inclined to say:

-I try to be a Good Samaritan

-I make an effort to live by the

Golden Rule

-I'm not really a bad person

-I don't abuse my wife.

-I don't booze and get drunk

-I've been baptized and confirmed.

-I don't need to hear all these words about repentance and the new birth

All this may sound impressive—but the fact is, that deep down within, there are times when you have drives and goals and attitudes which you know are not pleasing to God. And until you acknowledge your need of forgiveness, you'll never find peace with God! Frankly, you are leaning on a broken staff!

Real peace and happiness don't come from wealth and material goods. They don't come from alcohol and material goods. They don't come from alcohol and drugs. Peace doesn't come from engaging in worldly pleasures, but neither does it come from participating in religious formalism.

In the book of Ecclesiastes, Solomon tried all the things the world could offer, and concluded with the words, "*Vanity of vanities...all is vanity*" (Eccl. 1:1). However, when Solomon turned to the Lord, (8:12), he said, "*Surely I know that it shall be well with those who fear God.*"

Jesus is the strong solid cane that we can safely lean upon. He says, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life*" (John 14:6). Jesus is the way—everything else is a dead-end street. Jesus is the truth—everything else is a lie (Buddha,

Vishnu, and Allah are imaginary gods). Jesus is the life—everything else is the way of eternal death.

Jesus will save you for eternity, and forgive every sin you've ever committed, if you will accept Him as the king of your life.

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marriages

May the homes established by these marriages be little substations of heaven, where God reigns and His blessings flow.

Brechbill-Miller

Bro. Malcom, son of Ed and Joan Brechbill, Chambersburg, PA, and Sis. Caitlin, daughter of Jason and Ruth Miller, Floral, AR, on Nov. 18, 2017, at Floral Baptist Church for Shady Lawn Mennonite Church by Carl Gingerich.

Eby-Beachy

Bro. Arnold, son of Donald and Linda Eby, Centerville, PA, and Sis. Janet, daughter of Perry and Judy Beachy, Winfield, PA, at Shady Grove Christian Fellowship, on July 15, 2017, by Simon Bender.

Kauffman-Hochstedler

Bro. Kevin, son of Herman and Christina Kauffman, Fredonia, KY, and Sis. Martha, daughter of Lloyd and Miriam Hochstedler, Kalona, IA, at Fairview Mennonite Church, on Nov. 3, 2017, by Daryl Kropf.

Schrock-Mast

Bro. Jason Schrock, Halsey, OR, and Sis. Elsie Mast, wife of the late Lowell Mast, at Arbana Baptist Church for Shady Lawn Mennonite Church on Sept. 30, 2017, by Elmer Gingerich.

Shetler-Miller

Bro. Anthony, son of James and Janet Shetler, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Norma, daughter of Edward and Alma Miller, Partridge, KS, at Center A.M. Church on Dec. 30, 2017, by David Yoder.

Troyer-Smoker

Bro. Jeremiah Jesse, son of Hosea and Bernice Troyer, Free Union, VA, and Sis. Rose Anne, daughter of John and Naomi Smoker, Belleville, PA, at Valley View A.M. Church on Nov. 18, 2017, by Eli B. King, Jr.

Yoder-Bontrager

Bro. Jason, son of Reuben and Martha Yoder, Monterrey, TN, and Sis. Donna, daughter of Mervin and Lois Bontrager, Middlebury, IN, at Pleasant View Mennonite Church for Woodlawn Church, on Nov. 11, 2017, by Dean Miller.

Yoder-Coblentz


Bro. Ethan, son of Jim and Rose Yoder, Clarkson, KY, and Sis. Melanie, daughter of Vernon and Susan Coblentz, Millwood, KY, at Church of Joy, Nov. 10, 2017, by Jim Yoder.

Yoder-Kauffman

Bro. James, son of Ed and Lavina Yoder, Mifflinburg, PA, and Sis. Elizabeth, daughter of Leroy and Irene Kauffman,

Allensville, PA, at Shady Grove Christian Fellowship, on July 15, 2017, by Simon Bender.

Yoder-Martin

Bro. Jason, son of Ed and Lavina Yoder, Mifflinburg, PA, and Sis. Elaine, daughter of Paul and Susan Martin, New Paris, IN, at Pleasant Grove Conservative Mennonite Church on April 1, 2017, by Randall Riegsecker. 

cradle roll

The children which the Lord hath graciously given . . . Genesis 33:5

Beachy, Kendall and Jeanette (Bender), Winfield, PA, third child and daughter, Aleah Grace, June 11, 2017.

Coblentz, Marlin and Cheryl (Nissley), Hiddenite, NC, second child, first daughter, Lindsay Jolee, Dec. 16, 2017.

Eash, Gabriel and Heidi (Wadel), Plain City, OH, fourth child, third daughter, Illana Jewel, Oct. 25, 2017.

Esh, John and Dorothy (Stoltzfus), Cochranville, PA, fifth child, third daughter, Alison Hope, Nov. 13, 2017.

Eicher, Philip and Velda (Stutzman), Fredonia, KY, ninth child, fourth daughter, (one daughter deceased), Glenda Grace, Nov. 7, 2017.

Kurtz, Michael and Elizabeth (Brubaker), Henderson, NY, seventh child, fourth son, Stefan Charles, Sept. 20, 2017.

Kurtz, Mark and Maria (Stoltzfus), Belleville, PA, fourth child, first daughter, Rachel Lucy, Nov. 30, 2017.

Lengacher, Marcus and Glenda (Coblentz), Torrington, WY, fifth child, third son, Tyler Evan, Oct. 10, 2017.

Mast, Ben and Lori (Kropf), Torrington, WY, fifth child, third son, Ryan Douglas, April 26, 2017.

Mast, Quinton and Crystal (King), Torrington, WY, third child, first daughter, Elena Rose, August 18, 2017.

Miller, Jethro and Sherri (Hershberger), Melvern, KS, first child and son, Winston Lavon, Nov. 22, 2017.

Miller, Matt and Laurita (Lima), Sugarcreek, OH, third child, second son, Andres Ruben, Sept. 6, 2017.

Miller, Ronnie and Beulah (Graber), Scranton, KS, first child and son, Seth Carston, Dec. 15, 2017.

Mullet, Cristen and Laurie (Mast), Dundee, OH, first child and son, Winston Christopher, Aug. 19, 2017.

Nisly, Mark and Esther (Weaver), Paradise, PA, third child, first daughter, Adrielle Kate, Nov. 18, 2017.


Stoltzfus, Joe and Anita (King), Parkesburg, PA, second child and son, Caleb Daniel, Nov. 25, 2017.

Stoltzfus, John and Melody (Ebersole), Parkesburg, PA, first child and daughter, Josephine Dawn, Nov. 24, 2017.

Troyer, Merlin and Amy (Gingerich), Garden Grove, IA, third child and son, Nicholas Shawn, Nov. 11, 2017.

Yoder, Justin and Melissa (Good), Mannsville, NY, third child, second son, Kowan Grant, Nov. 11, 2017

Yoder, Steve and Deborah (Kauffman), Sugarcreek, OH, fifth child, fourth son, Elliot Luke, Sept. 9, 2017.

Zimmerman, Antony and La Tasha (Goodman), Goshen, IN, first child and son, Achilles Darryn Lee, Oct. 27, 2017. 

ordinations


May the grace of God be upon our brothers as they minister faithfully. Let us pray for them.

Bro. Simon Bender, 65, (wife Vivian King), of Mifflinburg, PA, was ordained as bishop of Christian Fellowship on Oct. 2, 2016. Preordination messages were given by Daniel Fisher, Mifflin, PA. The charge was given by Perry Troyer, assisted by Dave Beiler and Daniel Fisher.

Bro. Leon Delagrang, 35, (wife Joanna Nolt), New Haven, IN, was chosen by voice of the church and ordained as deacon at Fellowship Haven Church, Woodburn, IN, on Oct. 15, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Gary Raber, Clarkson, KY. The charge was given by Roman Miller, assisted by Gary Raber and Thomas Mast.

Bro. Floyd King, 43, (wife Wilma Petersheim), Gap, PA, was ordained as bishop at Mine Road A.M. Church on Dec. 3, 2017. Dave Stoltzfoos gave preordination messages. The charge was given by Alvin Stoltzfus, assisted by John U. Glick and Dave Stoltzfoos. Two others shared the lot: Jason Smoker and Marcus Beiler.

Bro. Lawrence Overholt, 44, (wife Beth Blank), of Lyndon, KS, was ordained as bishop at Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church on Dec. 17, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Lee Stoltzfus. The charge was given by Rudy Overholt, assisted by Mervin Graber and Lee Stoltzfus.

Bro. Matthew Yutz, 40, (wife Mary Esther Schlabach), of Plain City, OH, was ordained as minister at Canaan Fellowship Church on Oct. 3, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Paul Overholt, Charlotte, TN. The charge was given by Robert Beachy. Sharing the lot were Dave Snyder, Carl Miller, and Darren Beiler. 

Kuepfer, Willis John, 79, of Milverton, ON, died November 11, 2017. He was born Nov. 20, 1937, son of the late Benjamin and Marion (Gerber) Kuepfer.

He was baptized on Oct. 17, 1954, and was a member of Cedar Grove A.M. Church, Wellesley.

On May 4, 1960, he was married to Kathryn Gerber. She died Dec. 28, 2009. Survivors include four sons: Wesley (Lynda) Kuepfer, Milverton; Clifford (Beatrice) Kuepfer, Teeswater; Dennis (Josephine) Kuepfer, Millbank; and Calvin (Martha) Kuepfer, Gadshill; 19 grandchildren and eight great grandchildren. Also surviving are his siblings: Ivan (Anna Mae) Kuepfer, Nelson (Elaine) Kuepfer, Irene Kuepfer; Merrill (Laverne) Zehr; Verna (Nelson) Jantzi; brothers- and sisters-in-law, Enos (Reta) Gerber; Arthur (Laurene) Gerber; Nicholas (Emma) Gerber; Stanley (Erma) Gerber; David (Marilyn) Gerber; Amy (Melvin) Kuepfer; Margaret Wagler; Shirley (Larry) Gerber; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death also by a son, Russell Benjamin. (born May 22, 1967; died April 19, 2008)

The funeral was held on Nov. 14, with Timothy Gerber and John Gerber serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Miller, Andrew A. (“Andy”), 86, died Dec. 14, 2017, at his home near Leon, Iowa. He was born Dec. 22, 1930, near Yoder, KS, son of the late Andrew M. and Gertrude (Miller) Miller.

Andy was a member of Salem Mennonite Church, where he served in various positions. He had a strong faith in Jesus Christ and prayed daily for his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He will long be remembered for integrity and honesty. His friendliness and wonderful sense of humor endeared him to many. He was a friend to children and they, in turn, loved him.

On Oct. 26, 1950, he was married to Fannie Chupp. They farmed in Yoder, KS, until 1956, when they moved to Chouteau, OK. In 1962, they moved to Leon, Iowa, where Andy farmed until 2011. They were blessed with four children: Earl, Omar, Carol, and Darla.

Preceding him in death were a son, Earl; three sisters: Polly, Elizabeth, and Lydia; and four brothers: William, Samuel, Moses, and Ervin. Cherishing his memory are his wife of 67 years, Fannie; children: Omar and Rose Miller, Carol and Noah Yoder, Darla and Ivan Stoltzfus, all from Leon, IA, 16 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren, four step great grandchildren, and many nieces, nephews and friends.

The funeral was held on Dec. 18, with

L. J. Helmuth, TN; Daniel Yoder, MI; and Norman Troyer serving. Monroe Gingerich officiated at the committal at Leon Salem Church cemetery.

Miller, Lena (Shetler), 86, of Hutchinson, KS, died at her home December 16, 2017. She was born October 7, 1931, in Kalona, Iowa, to the late Jesse and Anna (Hershberger) Shetler.

She was a faithful member of Cedar Crest A.M. Church, Hutchinson.

On October 7, 1962, she was married to Vernon J. Miller. He survives. Also surviving are two children JoAnn (Lowell) Brenneman, Falkville, AL, and Conrad (Arlene, nee Weaver) Miller; 12 grandchildren; sisters, Alta Yutzzy, Hutchinson, KS; Mary Jane (Ed) Miller, Clara Shetler, and Ruth Ann Shetler, all of Kalona, IA; brothers, Dennis (Katie Ann) Shetler, Kalona, IA; and Phil (Janet) Shetler, Irwin, OH.

She was preceded in death by brothers Paul, John, Harley, and Albert Shetler.

The funeral was held on Dec. 19, at Cedar Crest Church, with Lee Nisly, Donald Miller and Paul Miller serving. James Shetler conducted the committal at West Center Cemetery.

Schmidt, Ralph Peter, 71, of Millbank, ON, at his residence on Dec. 1, 2017, after a struggle with cancer. He was born July 5, 1946, son of the late Lorne and Mary (Spenler) Schmidt,

He was a member of Fair Haven A.M. Church.

On Sept. 14, 1968, he was married to Kathryn E. Steckly. She survives. Also surviving are children: Peter (Tabitha Beachy) Schmidt, Baltic, OH; Janette (Steven) Gerber, Brunner, ON; Timothy (Elizabeth Jantzi) Schmidt, Poole, ON; Christine (Conrad) Jantzi, Wellesley, ON; and James (Joanne Gerber), Millbank, ON; 17 grandchildren; siblings: Anna Mae (Ivan) Kuepfer, Reta Steckly, Ronald (Elizabeth) Schmidt; Lloyd (Sharon) Schmidt; Sharon (Joe) Gerber; and David (Norma) Schmidt.

We wish to express appreciation to Sanatani and Julie at London Regional Cancer Clinic and the palliative care team: Lynn, Joanne, Linda, and Anna.

The funeral was held at Faith Mennonite Church on Dec. 4. Interment at Mornington A.M. Cemetery.

Stoltzfus, Lily (Chupp), 66, of Paradise, PA, died Nov. 23, 2017. She was born Oct. 30, 1951, at Bremen, IN, to the late William and Esther (Smoker) Chupp.

She was a member of Mine Road A.M. Church, where she loyally supported her husband in his role as bishop.

On August 23, 1975, she was married to Alvin S. Stoltzfus. He survives. Also surviving are five children: Rosalyn (Lamar) Stoltzfus, Lititz, PA; Dwayne (Lois Troyer) Stoltzfus, Millersburg, OH; Arlin (Charissa Barkman) Stoltzfus, Oxford, PA; Stephen (Kendra Barkman) Stoltzfus, Berlin, OH; and Nathan Stoltzfus of the home; eleven grandchildren; six siblings: William

Chupp, Jr., New Holland, PA; Mary Ann (Reuben) Yoder, Rural Retreat, VA; Martha (John) Ramos, Sarasota, FL; Harvey Chupp, Narvon, PA; Wanda (Norman) Kauffman, Bird-in-Hand, and Wilma (Jerry) Byers, Campbell, TX.

The funeral was held on Nov. 26, with Johnny Miller, Jason Smoker, John U. Glick, Marcus Beiler, Floyd King, and Norman Kauffman serving. Burial was in the Mine Road Church Cemetery.


Zehr, Jacob L., 89, of Millbank, Ontario, died Sept. 7, 2017. He was born in Wellesley Twp. Nov. 23, 1927, son of the late Moses and Fannie (Lichty) Zehr.

He was a member of Cedar Grove A. M. Church, Wellesley.

On June 10, 1952, he was married to Alma (nee Jantzi). She survives. Also surviving are one son, Vernon (Marion Kuepfer), Millbank; three daughters, Doris (Nathan) Yoder, Free

Union, VA; Dianne (Elroy) Wagler, Newton; Darlene (Mark) Wagler, Milverton; 25 grandchildren, and 31 great grandchildren. Other survivors include sisters, Mary Gerber; Esther (Ohmer) Jantzi; brothers Norman (Amy) Zehr, Elmer (Ethel) Zehr, brothers- and sisters-in-law: Delmar and Eleanor Jantzi, Katie and Eldon Swartzentruber, and Edna Jantzi, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Jacob was predeceased by grandsons, Nathaniel Wagler and Timothy Wagler; brothers John Zehr and his wives Esther and Mary Anne; his sisters, Emma and husband Allan Wagler; Laura and husband Elmer Jantzi; his brothers- and sisters-in-law, Amos Gerber, Raymond Jantzi, David Jantzi, and wife Annie, and Madeline and husband Roy Gerber.

The funeral was held Sept. 10, with Jeff Kuepfer and Timothy Gerber serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

On a flight this past September that I took from Dallas-Fort Worth to Joplin, Missouri I had an interesting conversation with my seat mate, a man in his upper 20's who was married but without children. Our conversation ranged from our vocations, to our churches, to America's moral and political disarray, to our upbringing

and even the books we are currently reading. I'll share a few nuggets from this conversation.

He is a youth soccer coach who works with children beginning at second grade and progressing through high school. The soccer program he oversees is not a part of any school system. This allows them to operate for most of the calendar

year, rather than only a few months during part of the school term. The program has been franchised and he oversees operations in northwest Arkansas, Springfield, Missouri and Nashville, Tennessee. He sees this effort as an important service to children because of the values that are instilled. He cited the physical rigor, the importance of the children being occupied rather than idle, the value of teamwork, and the camaraderie of peers striving toward a common goal as important lessons for today's children.

He grew up the son of a strict Baptist preacher. He reacted to his Dad's way of doing things. With time he mellowed and moved back closer to his faith moorings. The church he belongs to currently has preaching very similar to what he grew up with, but the music is much more contemporary. He isn't sure he could go back to the boring music of his childhood anymore.

Our conversation went to how we interact with and handle technology. I mentioned that we don't use TV nor radio in our home, but do use the internet. I began explaining how this might seem like a fine line to some people, but... He interrupted me and said something to the effect that there is a clear difference between those for him. He sees the internet

as a tool that we are in charge of. But with radio and TV we are consumers, and the tool is in someone else's hand. They have a TV, but have chosen to put it in an upstairs room away from the normal living area. They need to make an effort to go there to watch TV, hence the consumption happens when he and his wife decide to watch. He thinks it is important to "be present" when we are with someone else. TV seriously erodes that in families when it is in the center of a home.

When I talked about the value I see in living a life separate from the world and unto God, as a scriptural principle, he referenced to a book he started reading. His friend recommended that he read, *The Benedict Option* by Rod Dreher. My seat mate wondered what I thought of Dreher's ideas of separation from the world. I haven't read the book, so I could only comment on my impression of what others had said, and my understanding of the concept of separation. I pointed out that seclusion from society, for seclusion's sake, is an incomplete way to understand separation from the world. A life that is separated from the world and unto God, is a credible and compelling posture from which we engage the world, rather than a means to disregard it.

Furthermore, separation as taught in the New Testament is not for a select few, but should be lived by all of God's children.

While we obviously differed on many areas of practice, I was impressed that many of the values that are important to my people are shared with others. It's very helpful that our children learn at a young age that they constitute part of a much bigger picture. It's also really important that our children don't have a lot of idle time on their hands. That's why the idea of engaging them in meaningful and age-appropriate work, that benefits them and others, resonates deeply with us. Careful and active education constitutes a large time investment for a child, but it also occupies the mind and prepares him or her for God's service. This young man was promoting organized play as one way to address the problem of idle time. I was also reminded that even when people react against the lessons of faith and practice of their upbringing, those embedded lessons still have the potential to exert a profound influence later in life. A mindful, as opposed to mindless, approach to media use means we will exercise discernment. A purposeful life separated from the world unto God is a testimony that shines brighter and brighter among

the dross of today's malaise.

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Medical researchers have isolated a genetic mutation among an extended family group of Amish in Berne, Indiana, that is generating a lot of interest and scrutiny. Presence of one of these mutated genes seems to inhibit several physical processes associated with normal aging as well as the development of diabetes. Persons with two of these mutated genes had a form of hemophilia, a dangerous condition that inhibits blood clot formation. Another apparent undesirable effect of having two of these mutated genes is a cardiac disorder that scars heart tissue, reducing the elasticity needed for heart function. But those who possess only one of these mutated genes lived to an average age of 85, compared with age 71 for Amish unaffected by this gene. The researchers pointed out that the longer life-span seemed to be expressed as longer health-span. In other words, the years that were added were the healthy years of life, before the onset of accelerated aging symptoms.

There are about 10,000 people in this family tree with the potential for this mutation. As of November 2017, 96 people were identified with a single mutation and 12 with

the double mutation. While the relationship between the presence of this mutation and its effects is exciting for researchers, they hasten to point out that it's too early to draw firm conclusions from these preliminary observations and limited numbers. But, it's not too early to work on the development of medications that mimic the result that has been observed between this mutation and longevity. In one early trial with rodents, the mice that were treated with the experimental drug lived three or four times longer than those that didn't receive the drug. Human trials are just around the corner.

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Jack Philips is the owner of Masterpiece Cake Shop in Lakewood Colorado. Two of his clients had purchased various items from him in the past, but when they walked in to order a wedding cake for their same-gender wedding, he said he must decline that request due to his understanding of God's plan for marriage. He offered that he'd be happy to bake them a birthday cake or any baked goods, but that he could not condone this activity with his artwork, as he defines his craft. Philips' defense goes a step beyond merely objection on the basis of conscience this way. In an interview

he said, "I didn't want to use my artistic talents to create something that went against my Christian faith." He went on to point out that he has also declined to make cakes to celebrate Halloween. By referring to his cakes as artwork, he calls to attention his freedom of personal artistic expression.

The legal challenge to his stance wound its way through the courts and has now been heard by the Supreme Court. After hearing the case last fall, they are expected to render a decision sometime this spring. Indeed, the court's willingness to hear the case has many gay-rights advocates feeling nervous, because a ruling in favor of Masterpiece Cake Shop would feel like a huge erosion of their legal gains of recent years.

•••••

This past October 19-22 at the National World War I Museum and Memorial in Kansas City, a conference was held to honor those who objected to that war. Many of us are aware that two Hutterite brothers, Joseph and Michael Hofer died as a result of the treatment they received because they were unwilling to participate in taking another person's life, nor in wearing the clothes of those who do. While the Anabaptists were not alone, they were well represented in this broad

coalition who objected to the war for religious, pragmatic and ideological reasons. John D. Roth helped plan the event and chaired a panel discussion on which he was joined by fellow Mennonite historian, James Juhnke.

One attendee I spoke with came away impressed by the courteous, respectful and warm reception that the custodians of the war memorial extended to those who gathered there to honor those who objected to the war.

We have historically understood that Christ clearly teaches that loving our enemies and loving our brothers

must be part of who we are as Christ-followers. But nationalism keeps trying to push its way into Christ's church. Is it fair to say that we won't be more successful at keeping a clear vision of non-violence and sacrificial love to all, than we are at rejecting the cancer of nationalism in our midst? Some of the comments and sentiments I perceived among us – not out there, but among us – during the most recent presidential election and since, have not been as encouraging as I wish, that we're doing a good job in this regard.

-RJM 

A Breath of Fresh Air & R. E. Lee

James D. Hershberger, Stuarts Draft, Virginia

Is there a breath of fresh air blowing on the back of the neck of the Robert E. Lee Statue? After 152 years of intimidation of African Americans and Lost Cause Propaganda, New Orleans has removed four Confederate monuments. The first memorial removed celebrated a bigoted white rebellion against the legitimate bi-racial Reconstruction Era government. The other memorials were of the Confederacy's president

and Generals Robert E. Lee and P. G.T. Beauregard.

It is refreshing to note the people of South Carolina's sensitivity in removing the Confederate battle flag from the State House Grounds after Dylann Roof's notorious killing of nine African-American church attendees. White supremacist Roof had been photographed holding a Confederate flag and a gun.

More recently the march by the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and white

supremacists in Charlottesville, Virginia, purportedly to protest the removal of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee statue has been a part of worldwide news. This racist group likes to be called the Alt-right group or white nationalists. A more apt description would seem to be the Alt-wrong group for those who spout anti-Semitic chants such as “you/Jew will not replace us” and racial slurs. These white supremacists carried Confederate battle flags and Nazi swastikas (of interest: the carrying of Nazi swastikas is not permitted in Germany). The “Alt-wrongs” were confronted by a voluntary larger group designated as protestors to blunt the “Alt-wrongs” hate-filled rhetoric. One of the white supremacist terrorist attackers rammed his car into a group of protestors killing Heather Heyer who had said her goal was “to help all people to be treated humanely” and injuring more than 19 others.

Amidst all the hatred and violence where is the breath of fresh air in all of this? There is now even more interest in the removal of Confederate statues from public property and placing them in museums. Kentucky has removed at least three Confederate statues. The concern has also led to the removal of Confederate statues in Baltimore, Maryland; Durham,


North Carolina; and other cities.

Some people would say one should not remove statues but honor history. Consider the fact that most of these Confederate statues were not erected immediately following the fall of the Confederacy, but many years later during the repressive “Jim Crow” era. Perhaps it helps to reflect on that history. Should the event of one people group thinking of themselves as being superior to others and holding them as slaves, terrorizing them, breaking families apart, and stealing another person’s labor be considered “honoring”? What about performing treasonous acts and fighting to break up the union of the United States? And for what purpose? Instead of the U.S. position that “all men are created equal,” Vice President Alexander Stephens of the Confederate States of America said, the Confederacy “is founded upon exactly the opposite idea: its foundations are laid, its cornerstone rests, upon the great truth that the Negro is not equal to the white man: that slavery, subordination to the superior race, is his natural and moral condition. This, our new Government, is the first, in the history of the world, based on this great physical, philosophical, and moral truth.”

What a tragedy! Careful historians

conclude slavery was the cause of the fight, the horrible, bloody Civil War that resulted in more than 600,000 deaths! Perhaps to help put this “honoring” in perspective, should those who presently capture and hold sex slaves have statues erected to them simply because it is actually something that is happening in today’s world? Surely no one would say we should honor that “history.”

In spite of the despicable arrogance and violence, there is a gentle breeze wafting across the country. There is the idea that Jesus taught, “Do unto others as you would want them to do unto you” (Matt. 7:12), which resonates with all people of

sound ethics and good will. There is the noble idea that all peoples of the earth are God’s loved children. People do well not to have things such as Confederate statues on public property that are offensive to African Americans, to those who have been held in slavery, as well as to those who are compassionately natured. We as Mennonites have a long history of being sensitive to and being supportive of the idea of Christian community and reaching out to all people of the world with compassion and God’s love. For this and more we are thankful. May the soft breeze of good will and compassion continue to touch many lives. 

Before We Take the Emblems of Communion and Wash Each Other’s Feet

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX

I submit this poem with the hope that it could help someone who is struggling in a strained relationship to seek reconciliation. The Bible teaches us that the “Offended” is just as responsible to initiate reconciliation as is the “Offender.” Let us not simply wait it out, for life is too short to carry and nurse a grudge. A. M.

Brother, I know we have hurt each other deeply,
For I sense there is a spirit between us so aloof.
Oh yes, we still address each other superficially
When we come to worship under the same roof.
I have nursed this grudge against you long enough,
Thus, I am quite ready to rid myself of this burden.

I admit, these years of bitterness have been rough,
So please let us settle this rift between us as men.
I am willing to do for you whatever it will take,
If only you will lay everything out on the table.
I promise I will not resort to the former mistake
Of using intimidation to make you feel vulnerable.
The Lord has been working within me recently,
Exposing the unrighteousness of my own heart.
Since he brought your name to mind so quickly,
I feel this resentment toward you is where to start.
I see now that my primary concern was to prove
That you were wrong and I was in the right.
This is why I selfishly refused to initiate the move
Necessary to once and for all end this awful fight.
But today I want to clear my wrestling conscience
By seeking reconciliation with you, oh dear brother.
For I long for sweet fellowship in God's presence
As we commune and wash the feet of one another!

[Author's note: Traditionally, our Conservative Mennonite Churches commemorate communion and feet-washing around Easter. Beforehand, we have a preparatory service in an effort to clear ourselves of any problems that would stand in the way of participation with the brotherhood.]



Where Are the Fathers?

Josh McClung

Oh, where are the fathers in our day and time
Who shine as examples midst the darkness and crime?
Who teach their young children to do as they should—
To flee from the evil and cleave to the good?

Oh, where are the fathers who once did prepare;
Who thought of the future and bathed it in prayer;
Who chose God's great Word for the guide of their life,
And sought for true virtue when choosing a wife?

Oh, where is the father whose manner of life
Security gives to his children and wife—
Whose life is a pattern that others may see,
And follow that pathway, like Jesus to be?

Oh, where are the fathers who, tender and true,
Will show to the world in all that they do
That they've been with Jesus and His image bear;
Who tend to their families with kind, loving care?

Oh, where are the fathers who have Jesus' mind,
Who, through prayer and study, life's pathway define;
Who, with a clear vision, their children will guide—
In every decision will stand by their side?

Oh, where are the fathers who, loving, but strong,
Will discipline children when they have done wrong?
Who will not let pity their vision derail—
Who can say, "I'm sorry for where I have failed"?

Oh, where are the fathers who shed tender tears
With the child who is hurting or facing some fears;
Who point them to Jesus, Who willingly bears
The weight of our griefs and the load of our cares?

Oh, where are the fathers who pass on the flame
Of desire to follow and honor God's name;
Who, when they have passed from the scenes of this earth,
Have helped their dear children to find the New Birth?

Oh, where are the fathers? 'Tis here they are found,
In brethren who know and repeat joy's sweet sound,
Who, in dedication, by night and by day,
Command their dear families to follow Christ's way.

Yes, they are fathers, 'tis here they are found—
Not in men so lofty or in things so profound—
But in humble servants and followers of them
Who through faith won the victory, with vision undimmed.

Here are the fathers, the ones who can show
The fruits of God's Spirit, as through life they go.
Who, by the world's vanity cannot be bought,
But live in the way that God's people have taught.

Let us be the fathers who, grounded in truth,
Will live in a manner beyond all reproof;
Who lean on the strength of the Savior each day,
And midst life's confusion just humbly obey.

[From The Timely Truth, December, 2017. Used by permission.] 

***When we forget ourselves we
are more likely to do things
that are remembered.***

Take Your Pen and Write

Floyd Stoltzfus, New Holland, PA

I sit at my desk in a quiet spot. I take my pen. I ponder. I pray. What shall I write? To whom shall I write? How shall I write it? When shall I write? Here's good advice: Get started. Do not postpone.

Think of our missionaries in lonely fields of service. Oh, there may be lots of noise like loud ungodly music where earplugs are a comfort at night when you are trying to sleep. Constant door callers may eventually drain your emotions. Gamblers might be shouting at each other just outside your kitchen window when they lose a deal in the game. There is a Sunday morning message to prepare. A baby dies in the community and you are called upon to conduct the funeral service. There are people in the community or hospital who enjoy your friendship and visit along with a devotional and prayer. Someone asks to borrow an important tool. Later some girls visit the mission after school needing loving assistance in homework assignments. So life goes on day after day. The mailbox is emptied but no letters from home. However, let me quickly add, it is not always so dry. Letters from home

are placed into the box. These are welcomed and gratefully received.

Perhaps your station of service is too quiet. Nights are long and painful with depressing feelings. These might take root and slither their way through the dark soil of your aching heart to find some water for your thirsty soul. Sometimes it is called homesickness. Share your feelings with a confidential friend. Take a vacation. Write letters to folks in the homeland and humbly plea for a few notes of encouragement. Make your prayer requests known.

A missionary from a foreign land writes in an update, "Vacation Bible School [in a certain community] has been difficult in the past, but this year's was the worst ever. The church was still reeling in shock because a member fell into sin, left her husband, and moved in with another man. Then when VBS classes began, unruly young people came to church to disrupt classes. Worst of all, one of the teachers had to be dismissed for misconduct.

"Half way through the Bible School, one of the girls causing disturbances was involved in a bad traffic accident.

By the mercy of God, she wasn't seriously injured. We visited her and thanked God for sparing her life. To our surprise, she returned to Bible School more defiant than ever.

"We trust, in spite of the difficulties, that good seed was planted in some receptive hearts. May it sprout, grow, and yield fruit."

However, mission life has many bright spots and rewarding experiences that far outweigh the turbulent seasons. Letters of encouragement are like a refreshing stream in the desert to bolster vitality to weary laborers through difficult times. Whether sent electronically or by paper and envelopes, a word from a friend is deeply cherished and will energize a servant to faithfully labor until God calls elsewhere.

The World Book Encyclopedia describes seven "C" words that comprise a good letter: : "clear, correct, complete, courteous, concise, conversational, and considerate." A letter often has a heading which includes the writer's address and date. It may have an inside address which shows the address of the recipient. It needs a salutation; then the main part of the letter called the body, a complimentary closing, and a signature.

Meaningful letters reflect words of appreciation. Share how your friend has blessed you in years gone by. Maybe this person has encouraged

you as a Sunday school teacher or in Summer Bible School inspiring you to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. I received such a letter yesterday by a dear brother. He asked about my well-being and adjustment since we are back in Pennsylvania. The tone of his letter was with tender words of encouragement. He shared some of his struggles but included the vital ingredient of a deep, unchanging faith in God.

Write how a nugget of truth from a message at church inspired you or how you have been blessed in your Bible reading and prayer time. Maybe there was an accident in the community, a death, or a birth of a baby that this person would not find out about if you would not inform him. Share about a most recent announcement of a couple's engagement. Tell about your family, your garden and flower bed, or plans for a vacation. Be open to share a few of your trials, tests, or difficulties on life's pathway.

Set a goal to write one, two, or three letters a month. It costs so little. "As cold waters are to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country" (Prov. 25:25).

[Excerpts taken from the update in this article were written by Verda Glick. Eli and Verda Glick have been missionaries in El Salvador for more than fifty years. The Glicks still appreciate letters from home. Quotes used by permission].



Longings

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH

As children, we expect a parent's love. If we're single, we expect to get married. If we're married, we expect an understanding spouse. We also expect to bear children. If we're dating, we expect loyalty. As church members, we expect trust. If we're ill, we expect healing. If we work, we expect praise, or at least recognition.

But I propose that every one of us ladies grapples from time to time with the ache that spans the gap between our expectations and everyday reality. On this side of Eden, I don't have to tell you that our stories hold unsightly holes. Our life reveals blemishes and imperfections. Our sister's stories of empty spaces touch a mutual chord and our eyes brim with just the hearing. Can we walk together in the tunnel toward light?

* * * *

"O, Father God, what am I to do with my longings?"

- I am six years old. I cry into my pillow at night, possessed with

longing for my real mama. Trapped in my tearful longings, I weep quietly so as not to disturb my stepmother, afraid that she will be hurt by my tears.

- I qualify to attend the "older singles retreat." My siblings all live in homes of their own, cherished by loving spouses. My only certainty is that the school or mission board will surface yearly to see if I'll stick with them one more year. I long for life's question to be answered.

- As a young mother, I long for a tiny piece of quiet. To reconnect with whom I used to be and with whom my Master is, but I can hardly find my way through the screaming demands and sleepless nights. I dream of falling asleep and waking up where babies don't cry at night and I will know Rest.

- My married friend is wrenched with longing to give birth, to feel unborn life stirring within. To fill her husband's arms with the product of their love. Baby shaped longings

threaten to wreck her life. What if she turns 40 and there is still no baby? How is she to live with the longing?

- My sister walks out of the oncologist's office with a positive diagnosis. Positive, that is, for cancer. Negative, it seems, for wholeness.

- He wooed her and won her gallantly. But now in marriage, she feels emotional separation and she wonders what happened. The flower in courtship has turned into a cactus of harsh words. A lifetime together stretches out like a very long time.

- The church sent them to the mission field, or so they thought. Judging by the scarcity of letters or visits, they're beginning to wonder if they're on their own in the midst of all the strangeness.

- From our children's first breath, we ponder the question of their destiny. Will they make good choices? We saturate them with prayer and our best efforts. Then they walk away from it all and our broken hearts.

- Life in the church family feels disappointing. We lay down our lives as food committee, deacon's wife or Sunday school teacher, but few recognize. Our compensation seems to be misunderstanding, criticism, and fatigue. We wonder if this is how church life is meant to be lived.

What am I to do with my longings?

I pause to hear my Father respond,

“Come with Abraham and Me.” I trudge beside them—up to Mt. Moriah. Isaac, the son of Abraham's longing, skips eagerly beside us. Abraham's hand slips to the sheath at his side, touching the cold blade. A knife and a rope wreak stark despair in his heart. The knife, in the air, is poised to slay.

“And now come with Me to Gethsemane. My love relationship with humanity began in a garden. It climaxes in this one. Here the Son of My longing lies prostrate, face to the ground soaked in blood. He longs for another way, an easier road, not this cup of suffering. Yet He labors to say, ‘I will—to drink this cup.’”

•••••

“Father God, I am moved to see that cancer, misplaced trust, barrenness, and aloneness was not Your plan in that first garden. But because of Adam and Eve's choice, and my choice, unfulfilled longings twist daggers into my heart. My friends' hearts. You really do walk with me to Moriah and Gethsemane. You show me what to do with my longings. You extend Your hand to consume these longings with Yourself. I weakly offer all and relinquish them into Your scarred hands. My hand is poised to slay. You embrace my fears. I glimpse the ram and I know that You are enough. You will always be my first love.”

“But Father, what if I stumble again? What if I weep with longing and cutting and parting and pain? Each time I trudge to Moriah and Gethsemane to give my longings to You—will You always fill me with your All in All? Will You not tire of the ceaseless exchange?”

“My precious, precious child—it is in the act of giving those longings

to Me that you honor me most. You worship Me when you long for Me. In your pain and loss, I observe worship in your practice of surrender. And yes, beloved one, I will always be enough.”

**“Eternal God, faithful and true,
All of our longings come home
to You.”**

-James Croegaert 

junior messages

A Suitcase Full of Crayons

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

How could I show love and kindness to my lively African neighbor children? How could I touch their hearts for God? I wanted to plant seeds to influence and help them.

On Sunday evenings the eager children came to our compound to play games, sing and have a Bible Story. I used colorful picture cards to illustrate the story. Bright neighbor girls Whinney or Irene would interpret for me. Markus would lead out in enthusiastic singing.

Was there anything else I could

do?

God gave the idea for a Bible Memory program. Mark printed copies of Scripture passages. The small ones learned them in Luo; the older children memorized verses in English.

Jane, my motherless neighbor girl, did not have work to do. She wanted to learn the verses quickly in one day and receive a prize. I told the children they need to study the passage for one week, recite it well, and then they can receive a small gift.

My favorite prize to give was an

attractive, affordable coloring book from MZL. If they memorized Psalm 23, it was great to give them an illustrated Psalm 23 coloring book and a pack of crayons. The children were so pleased! Lois Mast brought 16 boxes of crayons when they came to Africa. Church children were memorizing passages too. Finally only one box of crayons remained.

Exercise books and pencils from the market were practical, affordable prizes. Some thoughtful visitors brought small soaps, lotions and candy.

Whinney stopped by one day and recited Eph. 4:25-28. I gave her a bar of soap and lotion (she already had crayons and a coloring book). Oh, the children were thrilled with any small prize.

One day Jennifer tried reciting the verses. She had to go home and study more.

I really wished for more crayons. God knew all about it, though I had not prayed.

One day in Ohio the principal of a Christian day school was at a yard sale. He saw a huge pile of crayons for a low price. He thought maybe the crayons could be used in their school, so he bought them.


The school staff decided they would rather have better quality

crayons, so when some youth flew to Africa, the crayons, many packs of crayons were packed into a suitcase, protected among some clothes and other things. I can still see that suitcase, opened up on our table. What a sweet surprise to get all those boxes of useful prizes! The crayons were a blessing, a gift prompted by God!

I had more surprises. Shelton, a smart neighbor boy memorized easily, his sister, Valery had to work harder, but she learned God's Word as well. Their mother was in polygamy (her husband had two wives). I visited their *dalla*. There were two neat, tidy houses with cement floors, side by side. The children recited the verses and were happy with a prize. What surprised me was that the two co-wives asked if they could memorize verses and receive a coloring book and crayons too. That is just how special it was!

What an opportunity for Cristobell and Lucy to study verses. Could God's Word help them? Cristobell struggled with ill health. She was another victim of HIV.

I gave them copies of Luo verses. I was blessed the day they nervously recited Psalm 23.

The mothers were pleased that their children could learn Scriptures and recite them in church. 

Spiraling Upward

Gideon Yutzy, Dunmore East, Ireland

One Sunday after church, my wife and I found ourselves talking with a counselor friend. As the conversation progressed, we began growing introspective—as one does when talking with a counselor.

We were telling her about a painful relationship we had removed ourselves from a year or two earlier. “Shouldn’t we get involved with those people again,” we asked, “so we can prove we’re capable of getting along as Christians should?”

“No,” said our counselor friend. “You patched things up the best you could and parted. And it’s not as if walking out of strained relationships is a pattern for you, is it?”

Her words hit me with the force of conviction. *Is it a pattern?* Since then, the question has haunted me, not only in connection with interpersonal relationships, but also with numerous other issues. And I am concluding I’m not as free of negative patterns as I wish.

But I do know one thing: If Jesus is our master, long-term negative patterns are unnecessary—even wrong.

Negative patterns happen, to give you my clinical, boring definition, when we respond badly to recurring stimuli more often than we respond well. Life is one long series of stimuli and responses. The stimuli are beyond our control and are never wrong in and of themselves; it’s the responses that can be spiritually harmful, even deadly if we persist in them.

A man gets lonely (stimulus) and falls into the habit of viewing pornography (response). A mother gets maxed out with her duties (stimulus) and deals with it by regularly snapping at her children (response). Or, returning to the conversation with our counselor friend, someone gets bogged down in difficult relationships (stimulus) and, time and again, walks away (response).

Let me be the first to say, we will all

bungle our responses to stimuli. It's called sin. We all commit it—and will continue until we die. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (1 John 1:8). A few years ago, several of my acquaintances met a man named Tom who claimed not to have sinned in 14 years. They soon decided to join Tom in this challenge. Though quite exuberant at first, their enthusiasm soon faded and then died out, and I heard no more about their noble, but unrealistic, experiment. We *will* sin. It's the lot of all of us recovering sinners.

So I am pointing out the impossibility of sinless perfection, but this coin does nonetheless have another side. Consider this statement, also from 1 John: "He that commits sin is of the devil" (1 John 3: 8). How does one explain the apparent contradiction?

A phrase from the first of Martin Luther's *95 Theses* offers some clarity. Writing about the folly of indulgences, Luther stated that "the entire life of believers should be repentance." How should we interpret this phrase? We should not take it to mean that, since constant repentance is already a prerequisite, we can sin as often as we wish. (Although it's interesting that more than a few people have applied Luther's ideas this way).

Rather it means that even by using all resources at our disposal, by fighting sin tenaciously, we will still need constant repentance. We are that profoundly fallen. Even if we would be free of all sins of commission, as Tom allegedly was, that still doesn't even begin to address the sins of omission.

Thus the answer is a lifestyle of repentance, true repentance. And true repentance includes not only a keen awareness of one's shortcomings, but also a habitual turning from it. "To turn, turn, will be our delight, till by turning, turning, we come round right," to quote the wonderful Shaker hymn. As we turn, our negative patterns will start to crack and—praise our mighty King—to crumble. "The weapons of our warfare are...mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

The first step is to identify the negative patterns in our lives, to lay them out in the open and deal with them. We might even write them down: *I have a negative pattern of labeling a person a failure when I see just one weakness in his life. I have a negative pattern of calling attention to my accomplishments. I tend to use people.* The list goes on. The list will go on as long as we live. And that's okay. It's part of being human.

What's not okay is to have the same list year after year after year. God is patient, but He does expect growth. It's fine to make mistakes in 2018, but it's not fine to make the exact same mistakes we were making in 2008. Granted, we may fight the same sin for a lifetime. It is not uncommon for certain sins to afflict certain personalities, whether lust, anger, slander, or whatever it may be. Our spiritual enemies may well hound us until we are dead. But by God's grace we will grow our arsenal each year, so that we can fight our "besetting sin" more effectively.

Growth then, is not so much the absence of mistakes as it is variedness in those mistakes—think of it as a forward progression of mistakes. Both a pilot with ten hours of flying experience and a pilot with 10,000 hours of flying experience will make mistakes. But I should hope they aren't the same ones.

"Therefore we must progress beyond the elementary instructions about Christ and move on to maturity" (Hebrews 6:1). Our task,

though all-consuming, can be stated quite simply: we are to have a pattern of overcoming negative patterns. We must combat any wrong responses to recurring stimuli with prayerful, thoughtful living—the antithesis to negative patterns if there ever was one. It can seem as if the Digital Age was tailor-made to suppress thoughtfulness and reflection, but as Christians we must insist on doing it anyway. Observe life, interpret life, and apply what we learn to our own lives: that is thoughtful living in a nutshell.

And always, whatever we do, we must follow the words of the old African spiritual and "keep climbin' up the mountain, children. Didn't come here for to stay!"

I hope to see everyone at the top.

Writers for Thinking Generation wish to generate, above all else, greater involvement in God's Kingdom—especially among today's generation of thoughtful young Anabaptists. Did this month's column evoke a response from you? Contact the writer at gideonuyutzy@gmail.com



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A stubborn person thinks he can take all the time
he wants to make a decision.

• • • • •

Take courage to let go of the things that are not worth hanging onto.

• • • • •

It's not the *minutes* at the table that make us fat—it's the *seconds*.

• • • • •

The Christian who is careless in Bible reading
will be careless in Christian living.

• • • • •

Let's not only *believe* the Gospel, let's *behave* it.

• • • • •

On the road or in a discussion, if you see red—STOP!

• • • • •

The child who has learned to *think*, *pray*,
and *work* is already half educated.

• • • • •

Something truly great is worth doing with enthusiasm.

• • • • •

Failure often comes from those who
spend their energy in making excuses.

• • • • •

Faith shines most clearly from a childlike heart.

• • • • •

Thank God for fathers who not only gave us life,
but also taught us how to live.