



Calvary messenger

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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2012

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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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He Knows


Kristina Byler, Dickson, TN

I'm not sure what tomorrow
May hold in store for me;
But I know He knows my sorrow,
My joy and all my grief.

He holds the vast future
In the hollow of His hand.
And I know that we, His people,
Are the sheep of His pasture land.

He'll never, ever let us down.
He's faithful, tried, and true.
He'll always take us by the hand
To lead us safely through.

He never closes His eyes in sleep,
He's always watching o'er
His lonely, seeking children
That struggle toward that shore.

My God is very, very real.
I sense He's here today.
He's my Help to guide me through
To that eternal day. 

God Manifest in the Flesh

Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory. (1 Timothy 3:16)

Is there enough that's worthwhile in a western Christmas to join in the celebration? I think so. I realize that some Christian believers are so grieved at the wrong ways Christmas is celebrated that they take the stand to avoid all special celebration.

Let's be selective. Let's not dump everything (from Thanksgiving Day till January 6) into the same basket: Black Friday shopping, tinsel, Christmas caroling, wreaths, family gatherings, decorated trees, the star of Bethlehem, Nativity scenes, holly, special cards and annual letters, gift exchanges, the mixture of secular and sacred music that comes to our ears, and all the lights that are meant to *delight* us, but often *dazzle* us.

Not everything "Christmasy" points to Christ. I propose that some of the activities listed above bring out the true meaning of Christ's coming to earth, and some detract from it. Which ones, pray tell, are neutral?

Let us refrain from activities that take away from a God-honoring observance of the birth of Christ.

Our salvation seems most closely associated with the *end* of Jesus' earthly life, but I think the *beginning* of His earthly sojourn deserves notice. Christ-honoring faith need not skip the manger of Bethlehem on its way to Gethsemane, Mt. Calvary, the Garden Tomb and the Mount of Olives.

How shall we appropriately observe Christmas?

- *We can meditate on Jesus' decision to come to earth.* In so doing, we follow Mary's example at Jesus' birth when she observed the shepherds' excitement. "Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart" (Luke 2:19). More than a decade later when the 12-year-old Jesus' spoke about the purpose of His life to her (after she and Joseph had found Him in the temple), once again, Mary "kept all these sayings in her heart" (Luke 2:51).

- *We can thank God for His "unspeakable gift"* (2 Corinthians 9:15). A sacrifice costs something. In God's first covenant, sincerity was to be shown by offering an unblemished

animal. Now we are to “...offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name” (Hebrews 13:15). Honest, enthusiastic praise to God honors Him!

• *We can give witness to our faith in Christ.* When our activities are specifically related to the coming of Christ to earth, we cast our vote for God-honoring observance. When we sing true Christmas carols, when we go beyond decking the halls with boughs of holly, or of dreaming of a white Christmas, or of Santa Claus coming to town—that’s when we cast a vote for meaningful Christmas observance.

• *We can reap the benefits of Christian fellowship.* While not every conversation needs to include the reason for the season, references to the angels, the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, the Wise Men—and others, are most helpful. In our local churches we like to look upon December 25 as a good day to gather for a special worship service. Several hundred voices lifted in well-known carols is exhilarating! An extra blessing it offers is that folks who have moved away and come back home can attend

the Christmas gathering and bring earlier friendships up to date.

• *We can finish the year by catching up on our giving.* With the needs in the world so severe, let us not forget “to do good and to communicate... for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). Is there a better way to express sincere gratitude to God than by giving to missions and to charity?

Count me in for making more of the birth of Christ than that of gorging on rich foods, spending extravagantly, tipping a bottle of good cheer or other self-focused merry-making. We naturally think of ourselves “more highly than we ought to think.” The Good News of the Gospel includes the fact that Jesus came to earth to deal with our inborn preoccupation with ourselves.

Biblically-based reminders of the advent season have the potential of drawing our thoughts and spirits heavenward. Christmas is a good time to think soberly and joyfully about the “mystery of godliness,” with the first chapter entitled: “God Manifest in the Flesh” Let this be a special time of honoring God, worshiping Jesus, and blessing others!

—PLM 

A red-letter Bible is good; a well-read Bible is even better.

Dear Editor,

I liked your story about “Little Teddy Stoddard.” (Sept., p. 4) Very

good! Too bad that is not practiced more often in church life....

Daniel Z. Stoltzfus, Bird-in-Hand, PA



2013 MINISTERS' MEETING ANNOUNCEMENT

The 2013 Annual Beachy Ministers' Meeting will be held April 2 – 4, 2013, in Holmes County, Ohio.

- Those wishing for time during business sessions, contact **Phil Miller – 330-495-9704.**
- Those needing areas for displays and book sales, contact **Joe Miller – 330-495-2152.**

Philip Beachy — Deacon, Messiah A.M. Church



NEW RESOURCE MAP OF ALL PLAIN CHURCHES IN THE U. S. AND CANADA

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Send order request to Cory Anderson, 28539 SR-751, Newcomerstown, OH 43832. Include your name, church membership, (must be “plain”), and either e-mail for electronic delivery (\$26) or postal address for a CD (\$29). Requires Microsoft Streets and Trips map program (2007 or later). If requested, include \$40 for latest version. Windows XP or later only.



FAITH BUILDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

Faith Builders Educational Programs and Anabaptist Foundation are hosting a ministry convention at Manor Church in Lancaster, PA. Thirty-nine ministries are currently registered to attend.

- March 14, 2013, 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM: Seminar for nonprofit organizations. A full day of workshops, fellowship, and inspiration.
- March 15, 2013, 9:00 – 5:00 PM: A day of workshops, ministry presentations, and inspirational assemblies to equip communities for ministry.
- March 14 & 15, 7:00 PM: Times of worship, inspiration, and information to cultivate a vision for ministry.

The public is welcome to attend any component of the convention. Registration is requested for the workshop portions of this event.

For more information or a registration form, please contact:

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*If you're too small for criticism, you're
not big enough for praise.*

Fire on the Family Altar - Part 4

I very much appreciate that you have brought attention to this need. I believe fire on the family altar is extremely important. Matthew 6:33 tells us “Seek ye first the kingdom of God.” Am I as a father truly seeking first God’s kingdom? How can my children tell? There are many ways. One is when our children know that Dad gets up and spends time with God and then leads his family in worship. By this they realize that living for God is our highest goal.

There are many benefits of a family altar:

Stability: a family goes through many changes and seasons as the years pass by. Our children learn that at home or on vacation we spend time together with God. I believe it teaches our children that God is a Constant Being. He is our Creator who is always worthy of worship.

Familiarity with God’s Word: When our children were young we read Bible story books. As they grew older, we read through different books of the Bible with everyone who could read taking turns two verses at a time. For the past number of years we have been using “Beside the Still Waters” during the week. With a daily diet from God’s Word, our children learn to believe the many stories and to find the books and verses in a proficient manner. On

Saturdays we read a Bible story book. In Sundays, I share a verse or two with the family.

Teaches prayer: Our children began taking their turns praying at a very young age. As our family grew to six children, it took a while for everyone to pray. At my wife’s suggestion, we split it up. Three of the children would pray along with me one day and the next day the other three would pray with my wife. Presently our youngest is 11 years old and we only have two to pray. Usually my wife or I pray and one of the children but sometimes just two of the children.

Bonds the family: We usually have our family altar first thing in the morning in the living room right before breakfast. Sometimes we become distracted but we are all together. We normally also sing a song by memory. I feel I have been weak in this area in singing songs from books and teaching them new songs. I am blessed in that all of our family loves to sing. On Saturdays we stand, join hands, and we take turns praying sentence prayers.

Some obstacles that we face is having everyone alert first thing in the morning or having the time when we travel. At times we have our altar in the van as we travel. I fear at times I do it out of duty rather than love and

devotion to God.

This spring we used Howard Bean's *Fruitful Families* book. It was just what we needed as we studied each Spirit fruit and lessons from gardening. We hope to use it again in a few years. I would also like to have our family read through the Bible together.

James L. Gingerich, Greenfield, OH

• • • • •

My first experience with a family altar was in the summer of 1967. We were on a trip, from northern Minnesota to New Hampshire and from there on to Montreal to see Expo '67. Our first overnight was in Rockford, Illinois, at Dad's Uncle Frank's place. Before we left in the morning, Frank asked if he could read a few Scriptures for us and pray. Dad said that was okay, so he did. It seemed rather odd to me.

We children went to Sunday School. The first reason for going was because we are Americans. The second and third reasons were a bit more lofty for our young minds: You need a place to go to get married and a place to go before you get buried.

Dad brought home our first TV in 1959. We had three television sets in our home. One was in the living room, one was in the kitchen on the wall above the table, and the third was in my sister's bedroom. She had certain programs she insisted on watching. I also had a steady diet of TV programs and commercials for 13 years until I

was sick of it. TV mentality is stupid!

In January, 1970, I surrendered my life to the Lord Jesus Christ. The steps I followed were, first a fundamental belief in the Word of God. Then I followed the steps outlined in James 4:3-10. My testimony could be titled, "My trail to the family altar."

Turning away includes turning to something. We are not called to live in a vacuum. That danger is explained in Matthew 12:44. so we ask, "Lord, what should I do?" Wait on the Lord and He will show you what you should do. Don't run ahead of Him. Neither should you dawdle and fall behind. Walk in step with Him.

We learn to trust Jesus and to rest in Him. I asked where this separation and drawing away to a new life is going to take me. I didn't know. "Trust Me," was all He said.

About three months later, in a history course [at Bemidji College], the trial of Michael Sattler was given as an example of the Radical Reformation. The response of Sattler resonated soundly in my head. My innermost being said, "Yes, this is it!"

This discovery then led me to fellowship at Kitchi Pines in Northern Minnesota. Here were families with no TV. Instead, there was the family altar: singing, Bible reading, instruction, and prayer. The longing in my heart was being fulfilled.

Eventually, I was led to Believers Fellowship in Grove City, MN, where

I was married. We've had a family altar following this pattern: singing, Bible reading, instruction, and prayer since October, 1973. It has been a stabilizing factor in a somewhat turbulent life. We praise God for His goodness to us. I also want to honor my father-in-law [John C. Yoder] for his patient and godly example. Yes, in his conviction to maintain a family altar and in relating to me as his son-in-law.

Richard Thayer, Tyron, OK



I am gratified with your responses about how you have tried to keep fire on the family altar. My sincere thanks to all of you!

I said I would also give our experience in maintaining a meaningful family altar. While we almost always had daily family devotions, we could have done much better in making it meaningful.

Martha and I were married in June, 1959, so we've had 53 good years together. From the first, we have had a time of special family worship at the beginning of the day. When the children were young, we typically read from a Bible story book, such as Egermeier's. As they got older, and somewhere along the way, we were introduced to *Our Daily Bread*. It includes a daily Scripture selection with a meditation, usually with an illustration from everyday life. We always read both the Scripture and the meditation and followed that with family prayer.

Let me also add this: Personal devotions are very important. For that, we got started reading a one year Bible through each year, one day at a time. We also like to supplement this by reading other inspiring writings. Both Martha and I have been doing this every year for the last several decades and would miss it very much.

In 1996, *Beside the Still Waters* started their publication, which was structured much like *Our Daily Bread*. With *Still Waters'* first booklet, we left *Our Daily Bread* and have been using *Still Waters* ever since. We really like it.

In early years, we sang as a family and enjoyed it. Perhaps to our shame, but since the "nest is empty," and our aging morning voices are less supple, we have not kept on with singing every day. We still find enjoyment in singing praises to the Lord. Singing, after all, fits with and enhances a grateful outlook.

We realize that some families find evening devotions better, but in our experience, if we don't take time for family devotions early, it is more readily neglected. We all believe it is wrong to come to mealtime without prayer and start right in eating like animals do, don't we? While starting the day's work is different, it has its similarities. We like to start the day stoking the family altar.

However it is done, let us set aside a special time of every day for "the pause that refreshes." The song writer,

William Longstaff, said it well:

Take time to be holy; speak oft with
thy Lord.

Abide in Him always and feed on
His Word.

Make friends of God's children; help
those who are weak

Forgetting in nothing His blessing
to seek.

This song speaks most directly to
private prayer, but it also fits with
having the head of the home taking

time to lead his family meaningfully
and regularly to the Word of God and
to the throne of grace.

God bless you for writing and may
all who read these contributions be
drawn closer to God by them! I sense
the fond hope in all who wrote that in
every reader's home daily inspiration
is derived from fanning the flame on
the family altar.

*Paul and Martha Miller,
Partridge, KS*



Ache of Jealousy

Kristina Miller, age 13, Wellman, IA

There've been times when I've wept in the shadows,
For my heart was so filled with greed
That whenever I thought of Christ Jesus,
My heart said, "For You, I've no need."

There've been times when I've longed for possessions,
And I hoped for much money to gain.
But I've found through the course of my living,
At the end of such "getting," there's pain.

Ache of jealousy! You'd never let go of me!
Though I spend all my soul for your "getting,"
In the end, there's just heartache for me,
In the end, there's just heartache for me!

The only way to get rid of this soul blot,
The truest cure of what I really need
Is a love for the Savior within me--
That will replace the ache of my greed.

Love of Jesus within me!
You purify all my thoughts and my dreams.
Though I wanted so much before I met You,
You're the only One I'll ever need;
You're the only One I'll ever need!



marriages

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

Glick-Stoltzfus

Bro. John Anthony, son of John E. and Barbara Glick, Gap, Pa, and Sis. Jessica Sue, daughter of Ben B. and Lois Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, PA, on Oct. 20, 2012, at Narvon, PA, by Ben A. Stoltzfus.

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Jesse, La Monte, MO, son of Daniel and Katie Miller, Leon, IA, and Sis. Janice Yoder, Partridge, KS, daughter of the late Edward and Laura Yoder, at Cedar Crest A.M. Church for Center A.M. Church, on Oct. 6, 2012, by David M. Yoder.

Overholt-Burkholder

Bro. Patrick, son of Philip and Sara Overholt, Etna Green, IN, and Sis. Britany, daughter of Wade and Miriam Burkholder, Nappanee, IN, at Clay Street Amish Mennonite Church on June 23, 2012, by Wade Burkholder.

Ramos-Fisher

Bro. Patrick, son of Alonso and Pauline Ramos, El Salvador, and Rhoda Sue, daughter of Levi and Naomi Fisher, Honey Grove, PA, at Richfield Mennonite Church for Shade Mountain Christian Fellowship on Sept 28, 2012, by Daniel Fisher.

Stoltzfoos-King

Bro. Ivan Jay, son of Benuel and the late Mary Stoltzfoos, Gordonville, PA, and Sis. Ann Merlene, daughter of Merv and Anna Ruth King, Port Royal, PA, at Bunkertown Church of the Brethren for Shade Mountain Christian Fellowship, on Oct. 6, 2012, by Daniel Fisher.

Yoder-Bender

Bro. Joe Allen, son of Irvin and Beulah Yoder, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Glenda, daughter of Jake and Fannie Bender, Rural Retreat, VA, at Chilhowie Christian Fellowship Church for Light of Hope Christian Fellowship on Oct. 27, 2012, by John Beiler.

Yutzyn-Nissley

Bro. Douglas, son of Phil and Lois Yutzyn, Hutchinson, KS, and Sis. Elizabeth, daughter of Dale and Anna Frances Nissley, Middletown, PA, at Weavertown Church for Marietta Mennonite on Sept. 29, 2012, by Bob Keller.

Zook-Stoltzfus

Bro. Nathan, son of Mark and Fannie Zook, Burgettstown, PA, and Sis. Karida, daughter of Philip and Ida Stoltzfus, Standardsville, VA, at Bible Holiness Church for Faith Mission Fellowship, on May 5, 2012, by Ivan Beachy.

cradle roll

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

Detweiler, Marvin and Marlene (Knepp), Lexington, IN, tenth child, eighth son, (one deceased), Justin Lavon, Oct. 3, 2012.

Eash, Brian and Kimberly (Yoder), Vanleer, TN, second child and son, Shawn Eli, June 16, 2012.

Eicher, Michael and Rachel (Eicher), Millersburg, OH, eighth child, third son, Randall, Oct. 7, 2012.

Eicher, Reuben and Rosina (Miller), Huntland, TN, fourth child, second son, Randall Tyrell, Sept. 28, 2012.

Farmwald, Daniel and Doris (Yoder), Lexington, IN, seventh child, third son, Kylan Tyrell, Oct. 29, 2012.

Fisher, Samuel and Christina (Miller), Russellville, KY, fifth child, third son, Logan Chadwick, Sept. 22, 2012.

Gerber, Collin and Becky (Ropp), Gadshill, ON, second child, first son, Jared Collin, July 31, 2012.

Gingerich, Derek and Debbie (Wagler), Montgomery, IN, first child and son, Josiah Grant, August 26, 2012.

Graber, Laban and Regina (Miller), Bloomfield, MO, seventh child, fifth daughter, Kendra Elizabeth, Sept. 30, 2012.

Hershberger, Joseph and Leanna (Miller), Nickerson, KS, sixth child, third son, Roland Marc, Oct. 13, 2012.

Ical, Calvin and Zenya (Ysaguirre), Isabella Bank, Belize, first child and dau., Zachaya Jemeka, Oct. 14, 2012.

Jantzi, Charles and Melanie (Ropp), Lucknow, ON, second and third children and daughters, twins, Madison Lynn and Mackenzie Sue, Sept. 12, 2012.

Jantzi, Michael and Twila Carol (Yoder), Stanardsville, VA, (serving with Grace Press in Chernovtsi, Ukraine), fourth child, second son, Elliot David, Oct. 7, 2012.

King, Allan and Elizabeth (Schwartz), East Waterford, PA, second child and son, Brayden Matthew, Sept. 28, 2012.

Kuepfer, Jeff and Rhoda (Wagler), Lucknow, ON, ninth child, sixth son, Zachary James, Oct. 8, 2012.

Miller, Brian and Sherilyn (Miller), Hutchinson, KS, fifth child, second son, Scott Benson, Oct. 16, 2012.

Overholt, James and LaDonna (Baer), Auburn, KY, fifth child, second dau., Madalyn Hope, Oct. 20, 2012.

Perdomo, Elgar and Paula (Hulse), Isabella Bank, Belize, second child and dau., Diana Nicole, Sept. 23, 2012.

Schrock, Eli and Carolyn Miller, Huntsville, AR, seventh child and dau., Starla Jo, Aug. 11, 2012.

Stoltzfus, Jay Ivan and Ruth Ann (Stoltzfus), Narvon, PA, eleventh child, third dau., Katrina Beth, Sept. 15, 2012.

Yoder, Verlynn and Laurel (Martin), Grove City, MN, sixth child, second dau., Katrina Grace, Sept. 21, 2012.

ordinations

May the grace of God be upon our brother as he ministers faithfully. Let us pray for him.

Bro. Dave Wittmer, 53, was ordained to the office of bishop at Mt. Olive Mennonite Church, Montgomery, IN, on August 12, 2012. Preordination messages were given by Jonathan Overholt, Auburn, KY. The charge was given by Homer Zook, assisted by Dannie Diener and Jonathan Overholt. Kevin Graber was also in the lot.

obituaries

Stoltzfus, Barbara M., 72, died at her home at Gordonville, PA, on July 31, 2012. She was born Oct. 27, 1939, at Plain City, Ohio, daughter of the late Monroe and Lizzie Ann (Mullet) Kurtz.

She was a member of Pequea Amish Mennonite Church, Narvon, PA.

On Oct. 27, 1962, she was married to Jonathan S. Stoltzfus. He survives. Six children also survive: Bethany, wife of Lloyd Beiler, Leola, PA; Philip, husband of Norma, Amanda, OH; Regina, wife of Ben A. Stoltzfus, Morgantown, PA; Timothy, husband of Sara, Harrison, AR; Dorcas wife of Joe Kurtz, Laurelville, OH; Karen wife of Mark Stoltzfus,

Seneca, SC; 34 grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Preceding her in death were two sisters, Bertha and Esther and three stillborn brothers.

The funeral was held on August 3, with Mel Zook, Floyd Stoltzfus, Ben A. Stoltzfus, and Lloyd Beiler serving. Burial was in the Pequea A. M. Cemetery

Stoltzfus, Janelle Fern, 17, of Honey Brook, PA, died Sept. 2, 2012, at home due to congestive heart failure. She was born August 22, 1995, a daughter of Mervin and Nancy (King) Stoltzfus.

She was a member of Summitview

Christian Fellowship, New Holland.

Surviving are her parents, brothers and sisters: Duane, Floyd, Conrad, Beverly, Kendall, Linford, Kaylene, Judy, and Jeffrey. Paternal grandparents are Stevie S. and Annie Stoltzfus. Maternal grandparents are Amos and Rachel King. Also surviving are many cousins and friends whom she loved to be with.

The funeral was held at Summitview Christian Fellowship on Sept. 5, with Dave Stoltzfus, Leroy Lapp, and Reuben Beiler serving. J. Ivan Stoltzfus conducted the committal at the church cemetery.


Wagler, Joel Edward, 76, of Cross Hill, SC, died at Self Memorial Hospital, Greenwood, SC. He was born March 30, 1936, in Washington, IN, son of the late Harvey and Susanna (Wagler) Wagler.

He was a member and deacon of Cross Hill Mennonite Church.

On August 26, 1956, he was married

to Mary Graber. She survives. Their children are: Cynthia (John) Miller, Martinsburg, OH; Titus (Donna) Wagler, Cross Hill, SC; Charles (Donna) Wagler, Cross Hill, SC; Marta Wagler, Cross Hill, SC; Connie Schrock Wagler, Cross Hill, SC; a brother, Roman Wagler, Cross Hill, SC; two sisters: Keturah Miller, Hartsville, OH; Esther Gingerich, Odon, IN; 23 grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by sons: Wendell J.; Paul J.; and Nathan J. Wagler, a grandson, Trevor Wagler; brothers: Vernon, Eli, Elmer; Raymond, and Ben Wagler; and a sister, Laurie Wagler Schrock.

The funeral was held on Sept. 19, at Laurel Baptist Church in Waterloo, SC, with Titus Overholt, Virgil Kanagy, Sam Petersheim, and Ernest Hochstetler serving. Burial was at Cross Hill Mennonite Church cemetery. 

observations

Christianity Today (10-12) has an article on true freedom that strikes me as being very insightful. The following thoughts are selected from this article by Roger Alson: A train is free only so long as it stays on the tracks. A train that jumps the tracks is “free” from the rails. It is a free wreck that can’t go anywhere. “True freedom is found not in insisting on one’s own rights, but in freely giving them up by

being a servant of Jesus Christ first and the people of God second.” No truth is more pervasive in Scripture and Christian tradition than this one—that real freedom is found in obedience and servanthood. This is altogether different than modern culture whose ideal is self-creative autonomy and living “my way.”

“The implication of Adam and Eve in Genesis is unavoidable. True freedom is found only in obedience

to God and the fellowship that comes with it. Loss of true freedom comes with self-assertion, the idolatrous desire to rule my own tiny turf rather than enjoy the blessings of God's favor."

I find these quotes and thoughts consistent with the Word that tells us that if the Son makes us free, we are free indeed (truly free). (John 8:32) We cannot afford to settle for a counterfeit freedom.



Benjamin Franklin didn't think public servants should be paid. But in 1789, lawmakers began to receive some compensation. In 1955, annual congressional pay was \$12,500. Today that figure is \$174,000, while party leaders get \$193,400. This does not include additional generous benefits. Based on eight-hour work days, elected leaders get \$163.54 per hour. (*World*, 10-6-12)



According to Natural Resources Defense Council waste of food is a significant problem in this country. It is reported that there has been a 50% jump in food waste since the 1970's. Waste food is the largest component of solid waste in U.S. landfills. They further report that retailers discard large quantities of produce that is no longer fresh. The average family also wastes a surprising amount of food. Altogether, it is estimated that up to 40% of our food supply is wasted.

(*High Plains Journal*) The number of hungry people that could be fed and the dollar value of this loss is a vivid reminder that food is a gift from God over which Christians should want to exercise responsible stewardship.



Proving all things and holding fast to that which is good is a divine imperative. To prove something we must have a reliable standard by which to measure what is good. God's Word is that standard.

Our Anabaptist heritage is not something to be taken lightly. But Anabaptist authors and teachers are subject to God's Word of truth. To assume that just because one is Anabaptist he is predictably sound is erroneous. Or to assume that only Anabaptists are able to teach helpful truth seems misguided. An incident reported to me which occurred to a man in a non-local setting has planted the seed for this observation. An Anabaptist church leader was visiting a fellow Anabaptist who was disabled and therefore had much time to read. The visitor asked how many books he had that were written by non-Anabaptist authors. The person being visited later regretted that he failed to mention King James and Martin Luther and their respective translations of the Scriptures.

It is important to be careful what we read. But to prove all things assumes that there are some things to be

learned from persons who may not hold to all of the truths that we see in the Scriptures. Spiritual sanitation need not become isolationist and self-centered.



Another Election Day will be history when you read this. We may not have had decided preferences for who should be elected. The voting booth is an important feature of a democratic system of government. We can understand why citizens are urged to exercise this privilege that is sometimes presented as a patriotic duty.

Christians have every right to be seriously interested in government. We should respectfully support and obey them as much as our Christian conscience permits. But the Church is part of a different kingdom. It is non-partisan, neither Democrat nor Republican. Many church members who vote will, in effect, invalidate others who vote differently. To resort to the prayer closet and pray that our sovereign Lord's will be done by believers is more effective and also more scriptural.

Voting is sometimes seen as placing the voter under obligation to support the person for whom he voted. According to Michael Smith in *Eastern Mennonite Testimony*, in Ontario in World War I, persons who had a history of voting or were active in any other influence toward

governmental policy, were refused CO status. To help to decide who should be Commander-in-Chief of our national military seems out of place for people who don't fight, since their Kingdom is not of this world.



Romans 12:1 and 2 are deeply imbedded in most of us who are identified with conservative Anabaptism. Verse 3 is not so well-known, but it addresses a subject that is so important that Paul through the grace given unto him, says it to everyone of us. It is an appeal that we should not over-rate our own importance, "not to think of ourselves more highly than we ought to think," but "to think soberly according as God has dealt to every man the measure of faith." To me, to think soberly means simply that we are not intoxicated by an inflated view of our own importance. Intoxication has a negative effect on clear thinking, clear speech, and manner of walking. To be spiritually sober is not to retreat into passivity, but rather to realize that the measure of faith and usefulness which God gives us is to be incorporated or blended with the faith and gifts of other members of the body. To understand and practice this important principle will go a long way toward unity and blessing in the body of believers.



Alliance of Mennonite Evangelical

Congregations was founded on September 28, 2002. The 42 pastors and leaders represented roughly 2,000 persons from 12 congregations. After 10 years, there are now 23 congregations and about 2,500 members. Most of these congregations came from Mennonite Church USA. A 1995 Confession of Faith that dropped the term “infallible” from its description of the Word of God caused concern on the part of some pastors and other members. These churches are mostly in southeast Pennsylvania, but there is interest in this development as far away as Kansas and Oklahoma. The Alliance encourages to maintain fraternal relationships where possible. Many of these churches continue to support MCC, thrift shops, prison ministries, and retirement communities that are supported by several congregations. (*Mennonite World Review*, 10-15-12)

• • • • •

Roger Hertzler from Corvallis, Oregon, sometimes stands on busy street corners holding signs reminding people that they need God. The car that he drives includes an appeal to be ready to meet God.

This attracted the attention of a person who edits a newsletter

for an atheistic organization. This person was surprised to find that Mr. Hertzler was an extremely calm, friendly, quiet, and even slightly shy person. But Hertzler does not evade his persuasion that the Bible must be taken seriously or face the prospect of spending eternity in hell.

Roger invited the atheist and his wife to their house for a meal. The atheist reports that they spent many hours in spirited discussion. After the atheist e-mailed a long list of questions about Roger’s education, his faith, and the Anabaptists, Roger answered his questions ably. The atheist responded with an essay to refute all things supernatural. To him, science was all that mattered. Roger responded with another essay, pointing out that this self-proclaimed free thinking ideal is in fact self-limiting, because they limit themselves to naturalism. Roger points out that a Christian could more accurately be called a free thinker.

We do not know how all this will turn out. But the atheist showed more than casual interest. He encouraged Roger to feel free to use as much space as it takes to clarify his thinking. The entire 10-page, single-spaced, newsletter is on this subject.

—DLM 

***Take no special privileges—
be what you want others to be!***

Peace on Earth

L. E. Maxwell

(former principal of Prairie Bible Institute)

He had seen abundant fruit among the many islanders of his Pacific mission field. But there was one unreached island with a tribe so fierce that he had never ventured to that coast. At length, moved with compassion for that untouched people, he and his wife and baby dared to approach those fierce folk on yonder shore.

As they drew near, they beheld the warlike men all armed with instruments of death. Turning to his wife, the missionary asked, “Will you trust the little one to me?” She replied, “The child is yours as much as it is mine.” With the baby in his outstretched arms he proceeded to wade toward shore. The brutal warriors laid down their weapons. They knew that any man without a weapon and only a little babe in his arms—well, his very approach spoke peace.

In Bethlehem’s manger God came to our shores holding forth a Babe in His outstretched arms: “Peace on earth, good will toward men.” Peace implies a previous condition of war. But Heavens’s intent is peace. Bethlehem’s

Babe proclaims the real purpose of God—to plant peace in our hearts through the operation of God by the Holy Spirit, and to promote peace.


Do the Gospel expressions of peace seem inconsistent in our warring world? Is peace only an ideal, a beautiful dream? Battles are waged in many parts of the world. James speaks of the poisonous springs that kill peace: “From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members? Ye lust, and have not; ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:1,2). So we could have personal peace, peace in our churches, and peace in communities if we only ask and meet the conditions. There have been places where the gospel ideal of peace has been glimpsed. In a large church in New Hebrides appears this inscription in memory of Missionary John Geddie: “When he landed in 1848, there were no Christians; when he left in 1872, there were no heathen.”

Come to the battle front in World War I. The day was dawning on the

battle field in northern France. The fog was heavy. During the night, the Germans had drawn back a bit. The French had inched forward. But between the battle lines there stood a lonely little little farm house. Both sides had been hurling shot and shell, when suddenly all firing ceased and there was a strange silence. Out there in the midst of the green meadow, crawling on its hands and knees, merrily contented, was a little baby. Its laugh could be heard as it clutched a dandelion. Not another

shot was fired. There crept over that battle front a temporary truce, an interlude, creating hope for the day of the coming of the Prince of Peace.

On Christmas Day most fighting men lay down arms. They long for peace. They become battle weary. The pity is that they are not sufficiently sin weary to receive God's offer of real peace, peace through the blood of the cross.

(Selected and edited from *The Prairie Overcomer*, December, 1972. Used by permission.) 

helpers at home

Christmas Meditations of Grace

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

The story of Christmas is a story of God's grace. Grace is undeserved assistance, approval, favor; an act or instance of kindness...and more. First, as I look at the Christmas story, I want to look at ways that God showed His grace to the characters in this familiar story.

Take Mary. She was a young virgin anticipating marriage to her beloved Joseph. Imagine with me Mary's fear when the angel appeared to her. The angel immediately calmed her fears, told Mary that she has found favor with God. What a beautiful commendation for this young Jewish

girl. The angel did not stop there, but went on to tell Mary that she will give birth to a child and will call His name Jesus, and that He is the Son of God. The angel graciously explained to Mary how this would come about and gave her the news that her cousin Elizabeth was also going to have a child in her old age. Then, God in His love and grace, prepared Elizabeth to affirm Mary's baby as the Son of God.

Next, God's grace arranged for an angel to go to Joseph and tell him the plan He has for Mary. Because of the angel's words, Joseph lovingly accepted Mary as his wife and helped

her care for the baby.

God's grace brought the good news of Jesus' birth to the humble shepherds who were out on the hillside watching their sheep. Again, an angel brought the message of the birth of the Messiah. God's grace also reached to the educated Wise Men through their study of a star, giving them knowledge of a ruler's birth.

Today God's grace reaches each of us, not only through Christ's birth, but also through His death and resurrection. As we accept God's grace personally in our lives, He enables us to be gracious and share His grace with those around us.

Let us look at the dictionary's definition of grace, in particular practical terms relating to us today: Here are a few: favor or good will, kindness, love, showing a favor to someone, forgiveness, charity, mercy. I believe this gives us an idea of what God expects of His children.

Christmas is a good time to demonstrate a touch of God's grace to humanity. I can show grace to others by my words, my attitudes, and my actions.

By My Words

Words speak loudly. We can apologize for hastily spoken words, but we can never completely retrieve them. However, we can also use words to bring love, comfort and kindness to people. Christmas is a good time to share pleasant, encouraging words to

the frustrated woman at the checkout, letting her know you appreciate her services. A kind word will brighten her day. Are there lonely people in your church who need someone to listen, to really hear their hearts and hear a kind word from you? Do your words bring peace and joy to the shut-ins, the elderly, the lonely. Written words can be read many times, so make sure your words are cheerful and reassuring. The angel's words were full of grace. God expects the same of His children.

By My Attitudes

Grace in our attitudes toward other people shows in our words and actions. What is my reaction to those who look, act, dress or perform differently than I do? I have been challenged many times to remember that God created each person in His own image and loves each person individually. As we learn to know people or walk in their shoes, we are amazed—to see that we are not so different—just all people in need of grace.

By My Actions

Actions speak louder than words. There are many ways of demonstrating grace at Christmas and all through the year. Women have many opportunities to reach out in the community through gifts from our kitchen—cookies and other goodies are enjoyed by neighbors and the elderly. Gifts of appreciation to schoolteachers, doctors, the mail

carrier, local police officers, and others, can be a gift of grace. Take your family to work at a local food kitchen, sing at a nursing home or visit the elderly. Become involved as a family

in gifts to missions or remember a missionary family at Christmas.

Give a gift of grace by word, attitude and action to those who are longing for a touch of love.



junior messages

Wreaths of Straw—Their All for Jesus

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

The *Martyr's Mirror* is a large, heavy book of over 1,000 pages. I have never read it all, but one day I came across a story (pages 500-501) of two girls, in the long ago year of 1550 that touched my heart. These girls, who lived in Bamberg, gave the very best they had to offer to God. They truly gave their all.

One day they heard the wonderful story of love, of how Jesus was sent from above, then Who suffered and died so that they could have eternal life. They heard how He loved them and went back to heaven to prepare a place for all His children who love and obey him.

God spoke to their hearts; they knelt and confessed their sins and were washed clean by Jesus' blood. They they desired baptism according to the command of God. So they were baptized. They

rejoiced because they knew that their names had been written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

The hearts and lives of these girls were changed. It could not be hid. They walked daily with Jesus, though in those days true Christians were despised, were often cast into jail, or in other ways were persecuted when they simply lived for the Lord. The authorities of their town tried to discourage these girls from living for Jesus. They could not make them give up their faith, so they cast these "two dear little lambs" into prison. There they were cruelly tortured. They were begged to turn back from the Lord, but they would not give up their dear Lord Jesus!

They prayed earnestly for God's help and strength to be faithful. God gave them the strength to endure. The authorities then condemned them to death, at which they were joyful, for

they longed for their heavenly home, where they could be with their Savior.

While they were being led away to their death, men, women and children mocked them. They made rough wreaths of straw and put those on their heads. The one girl said to the other, "Since the Lord Jesus wore a crown of thorns for us, why should not we wear these crowns of straw in honor of Him? Our faithful God will place a beautiful golden crown and glorious wreath upon our heads for this mockery and shame which we endure."

So, mocked, despised, and laughed upon, they followed the example of their Captain Jesus, who was faithful unto death. They died steadfastly and obtained through grace, the glorious crown which God has prepared for His children in His wonderful, heavenly home.

The young girls left a powerful testimony for the Lord. When their enemies saw how they called upon Jesus, openly confessed Him in all their trials, and died so courageously, doubts entered their minds as to whether they themselves were in error before God.

Naturally, we wonder how old these girls were. When the girls were baptized they knew they may be called upon to seal their vows with their blood. The very next story in *The Martyr's Mirror* tells of a lad who was only 15, who also suffered and

remained faithful till he too was put to death. So perhaps they too were in their mid-teens.

Girls love to look pretty. They like to be attractive and beautiful. Think about the girls from so many years ago who were willing to be mocked and wear ugly wreaths of straw for Jesus. If we were persecuted for serving Jesus, would the temptations of modern styles and fashions and all the immodesty be something we would follow?

At this Christmas season may each one of us remember that the gift that pleases God the most is a heart of love and obedience, a living sacrifice, a life for Him.

What will you do for Jesus? What will you give Him this Christmas? Matthew 25:40 says, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

When our children were small, they sang this lovely little song, entitled: "What Can I Give Him?" at Christmas time:

"What can I give Him, poor as I am?

If I were a shepherd I would bring a lamb,

If I were a wise man I would do my part.

But what can I give Him? I'll give Him my heart."

That is something we all can do for Jesus!



Menno en Mass – Part two

Rose Fisher, Mifflin, PA

From that first obscure Anabaptist beginning several subgroups arose, including Spiritualists, Rationalists, Libertines, and Revolutionaries. The ones that remained closest to the original biblical interpretations of Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock were called Mennists after Menno Simons became their leader.

In their adamant persuasion that biblical truth was worth living and dying for, this new sect called Anabaptists aroused much hatred and suspicion from both the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Reformers. As the movement gained popularity, strong opposition arose. One British historian described the Anabaptist movement as a “violent phenomenon borne out of irrational and psychologically unbalanced dreams, resting on a denial of reason and the elevation of that belief in direct inspiration which enables men to do as they please.” Calvin called them “fanatics, deluded, scatter-brains, scoundrels, mad dogs.” And Balthasar Hubmaier labeled them

“mud holes and cesspools of human dogma” (George 254-255). The Church believed that the mouths of these heretics must be stopped and their violent influence halted and worked in tandem with the state government to convict them of “damnable heresies.” Blaurock was imprisoned; Grebel was sent into exile, and Manz was drowned in the icy Limmat River while his believing mother shouted encouragement to him from the river bank. Strange as it may seem, these examples of early martyrs did not slow the rise or spread of Anabaptism.

George details some of the revolutionary and fanatical Anabaptist movements which caused great consternation for the Church, the Reformers, and the peaceable Anabaptists. Hans Hut believed in the imminent return of Christ and set the date for Pentecost Sunday, 1528. He gathered what he believed were the 144,000 elect, sealed them with the sign of baptism on their foreheads, and waited for the fulfillment of his prophecy. Christ did not return and

Hut was imprisoned, then burned in his cell. Irrespective of his dire fate, others after him proclaimed similar messages.

Melchoir Hoffman brought Anabaptism to the Netherlands and after Hut's fate, he reset the date of the Lord's return to 1534. He proclaimed himself to be the Elijah who was preparing the way for the second coming of Jesus to Strassbourg. In his ardent zeal, he baptized many and commissioned preachers to spread the word while his disciples gathered in Strassbourg to await the coming kingdom. In 1533, he committed himself to prison where he remained, disillusioned, in his prison cell until he died a natural death ten years later.

At the imprisonment of Hoffman, Jan Mathijs, one of his disciples, declared himself the prophet Enoch sent by the Holy Spirit and ordained by the twelve apostles. He proclaimed that the city of Munster was to be the location of the coming kingdom, forcefully seized it and killed or drove out anyone who refused to be baptized. On Easter Sunday, 1534, Mathijs was killed and one of the twelve apostles who had ordained him, Jan of Leyden, was crowned "king of righteousness over all." He corrupted the Anabaptist city of Munster by endorsing the polygamy of the Old Testament. Catholic and

Protestant troops finally besieged and overthrew Munster, tortured Jan of Leyden and two of his followers with red-hot tongs, then displayed their dead bodies in iron cages atop the tower of St. Lambert's Church as an example to all (256-257).

Four years after Columbus discovered America, a squalling baby was born to devout Catholic parents in the small town of Witmarsum in the Netherlands. They were delighted with their child, Menno, and like Hannah in the Bible, dedicated him to the service of the Lord and sent him off to learn the ways of service to the church. He learned to read both Greek and Latin, enabling him to study the works of the early church fathers like Tertullian, Cyprian, and Eusebius.

Anabaptist historian Harold Bender reports that when Menno Simons reached 28 years of age, he was ordained to the priesthood. He served in the village of Pingjum from 1524 to 1531, then transferred back to his home town of Witmarsum as parish pastor until 1536 (1-2). He enjoyed having a high place in the worship service, baptizing infants, performing marriage ceremonies, conducting mass, offering prayers, and hearing confessions. His life was an easy, luxurious one, and he whiled away his leisure in drinking

and playing cards. One day as he was saying mass, however, he was overtaken with a preposterous doubt. In his own words he described what he believed was the whispering of Satan in his ear: "It occurred to me, as often as I handled the bread and wine in the mass, that they were not the flesh and blood of the Lord" (Simons 668).

The influence of men such as Erasmus, Luther, Zwingli, and the Anabaptists on Menno's doubts is unknown. For two years he was tormented with this ludicrous idea and found no relief even though he confessed it often. He wrote that finally, in extreme desperation, he turned to the forbidden Bible. His anxious search yielded no support for the position that the bread and wine of communion became the literal body and blood of Christ and he became firmly convinced of its symbolic nature. Remarkably, in spite of his radical new belief, he continued celebrating mass as always.

Through the Reformers, Menno was introduced to the idea of adult baptism as opposed to the Catholic practice of infant baptism. In 1531, he was horrified when he heard of a man named Sicke Freerks who had been beheaded on the charge of rebaptism and recounted, "It sounded very strange to me to hear of a

second baptism." This time he turned directly to the Bible: "I examined the Scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report of infant baptism" (668). He also turned to the writings of the early church fathers and reformers, such as Luther and Zwingli, and to a fellow priest. He was persuaded that baptism was only for truly converted believers and even though his own heart remained unconverted, he began openly preaching this along with other Bible truths while retaining his prominent position.

By this time the revolutionary activities of Melchoir Hoffman and the Munsterites had been rumored about everywhere. Menno boldly condemned these heretics from his parish pulpit and became a reputable evangelical preacher with much persuasive power. He describes his fame: "Everyone desired me and sought me. The world loved me and I it" (71).

On March 20, 1535, life-changing tragedy struck. Menno's own brother, Peter, was part of a group of 300 fanatical, revolutionary Munsterite Anabaptists that captured an old cloister. Peter was mercilessly slaughtered by the government (George 260). Menno, struck with the irony of the situation, fell under heavy conviction of his own personal

cowardice. While these errant radicals willingly gave up their life blood for the cause of a devastating heresy, he, though adamant in his persuasion of truth, was loathe to vacate his lofty position. In his “Reply to Gellius Faber” he poignantly describes his inner turmoil:

The blood of these people, although misled, fell so hot upon my heart that I could not stand it, nor find rest in my soul...I saw that these zealous children, although in error, willingly gave their lives...for their doctrine and their faith. ...But I continued in my comfortable life and acknowledged abominations simply in order that I might enjoy physical comfort and escape the Cross of Christ. (671)

Finally the soil of his heart was prepared and his stubborn spirit broken. He could no longer constrain himself and vividly portrayed his experience:

My heart trembled within me. I prayed to God with sighs and tears that He would give to me, a sorrowing sinner, the gift of His grace, create within me a clean heart,

and graciously through the merits of the crimson blood of Christ forgive my unclean walk and frivolous easy life and bestow upon me wisdom, Spirit, courage, and a manly spirit so that I might preach His exalted and adorable name and holy Word in purity, and make known His truth to His glory. (671)

Menno remained in the parish pulpit at Witmarsum for about nine months after his conversion. In 1536, he finally laid down his easy life and took up the cross of his beloved Jesus with a small, scattered band of hunted, hated, persecuted Anabaptists. For another year after his life-changing decision he earnestly pored over the Scriptures in a zealous attempt to develop and strengthen his convictions. The Anabaptists recognized Menno as a potential leader for their scattered flock and begged him to be their shepherd. He feared the attendant dangers and his own inadequacies but after heart-felt prayer and fasting, he gave up his cowardice and consented (Bender 22).

[to be continued]



Character is not an inheritance; each one must earn it himself.

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Abbreviations used: P=poem; M=meditation; MM=ministers' meeting message; Y=youth, H=helpers at home; JM=junior messages; RR=reader response.

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*Let us build
the characters of boys;
it is easier to build boys
than to repair men.*



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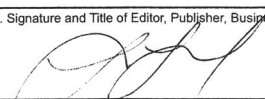
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