



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2017

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Calvary Messenger

March 2017

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.

Calvary Publications, Inc., is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Ohio, for the purpose of sponsoring, publishing, and distributing Christian literature. The board is elected, one member annually, by the ministers of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, at their annual spring meeting.

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Material for *Calvary Messenger*, marriages, births, ordinations, obituaries, and general articles—send to the **Editor**. Other Material—mail to their respective **Editors**.

Subscriptions, renewals, changes of address, etc.—mail to **Circulation Manager**.

When you move, please notify the Circulation Manager one month in advance, giving your old and new address in full, so that your mailing label can be properly corrected and your credit be kept in order.

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Calvary Messenger (USPS 767-160) is published monthly by Calvary Publications, 2673 TR 421, Sugarcreek, Ohio 44681. Subscription rates are: 1 year (U.S.) \$8.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$24.00. For congregations using the every-home-plan, \$7.00 per year to individual addresses. Renewal \$4.25 when you also give a 1-year gift subscription at \$4.25. Second class postage at Sugarcreek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 7498 Woods West Ave., London, OH 43140.

Free

Alaina Lee, Mooringsport, LA

It is Friday and the air is tense, for 'neath the sky,
The crowd is angry, crying for the innocent to die.
As lightning flashes, thunder rolls, one voice alone is clear—
“It is finished!” and the earth resounds, setting sinners far and near

Free!

The earth lies fast asleep, clothed with the ugly morning down,
And in His tomb the Son of God lies still in death, alone.
But as we speak, the sky is lit; the stone is rolled away—
He stands triumphant, defeating death, so I can face each day

Free!

A silhouette kneels underneath a rugged, ugly cross—
Weighed with sin, his body shakes in silent broken sobs.
The gathering dusk is shattered by a brilliant glowing light,
His burden rolls away; he stands to live a brand new life,

Free!

A home is filled with grief, the loving family gathers 'round,
The child lies, and drawing near, the minutes counting down.
A look of joy lights the pale, wan face—eyes gazing straight above,
Peace fills the room; the child runs into the Father's arms of love—

Free!

Oh, may I let my thoughts remain on why I'm here today,
On why we even celebrate a Resurrection Day.
The precious blood that Jesus shed, and when He rose again,
Was divinely planned by God Himself, to truly set all men

Free!



Steadfast

A certain Harry Truman was not president of the United States. Although he had the same given name and surname of Harry S Truman, (the 33rd American president), Harry R. Truman lived on Mount Saint Helens, near Olympia, Washington, all the way across the nation from Washington, D.C. I assume he thought of himself as steadfast, but history renders a different verdict.

Harry R. Truman was stubborn. In him was fulfilled the Scripture in Proverbs 29:1, **“He, that being often reproved hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.”** His commitment was to stay put on his side of the mountain that was rumbling with ominous sounds of “a horrible mountain bellyache.” These noises made most people want to get off the mountain, but Mr. Truman stayed put, thus earning the reputation of stubborn persistence that he thought was steadfast wisdom.

The year was 1980. Mr. Truman, at 83 (my present age—I also know something about 83-year-old tenacity), he was comfortably

situated by Spirit Lake. He owned and operated a sportsman’s lodge, which provided his livelihood. Naturally, he didn’t want to lose his business.

By March, that volcano (which had been inactive for more than a century) was threatening to become very active. It was rumbling with ever greater growls. This buildup had been increasing for several months. Seismologists agreed that it could erupt at any time. Although they did not agree on all the details, there was full agreement that staying on the mountainside was risky. With each passing day, it seemed surer that something catastrophic would come. So, except for Harry Truman, everyone moved off the mountain to wait and watch from a safe distance.

But old man Truman defiantly stayed put. “Maybe if I left,” he explained, “the lodge would be looted and vandalized.” He stood his ground with, “If this place is gonna’ go, I wanna’ go with it, ‘cause if I lost it, it would kill me in a week, anyway.” He told a neighbor, “If I die tomorrow, I’ve had a d___ good life. I’ve done everything I could do, and I’ve done everything I ever wanted to do. Period!”

Thus it was that on May 18, at 8:40 A. M., in what would later be described as the most destructive volcanic blast in recorded United States history, Mount Saint Helens blew up with a deafening blast that had the force of a nuclear bomb. In its wake all of Spirit Lake disappeared under a massive lava flow, burying many trees, as well as Mr. Truman and his lodge.

While Harry R. Truman thought he was sagely steadfast, history shows him as stupidly stubborn.

Steadfastness is definitely good. After all, to change with every wind of doctrine is very unwise. Paul encouraged the Ephesians to steadfastness with this, **“That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ”** (Eph. 4:14,15). Steadfastness gives us staying power in the midst of life’s ever-changing scenes.

The lack of steadfastness is seen in heedless enjoyment of popular entertainment and in living for ourselves instead of sacrificial devotion to Jesus Christ and service to others. We show steadfastness by

how we treat our bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit. We show it by paying thoughtful attention when our brothers speak the truth in love into our lives.

God has another event scheduled that can disturb the doubtful mind into a state of stubborn stupidity. It is the second coming of Christ. People tend to live in denial, thinking and saying things like: *It has never happened before. These are the fears of people who believe the Bible and are narrowly religious. They even seem to think we should prepare for that event with a new birth from Jesus. Such people are distrustful of the pleasures of a high time. They settle for lives that are drab and dull. They seem to enjoy worshiping God more than being entertained or even eating and drinking whatever the flesh desires. They’re really out of it. They are stubborn. They miss a lot of fun by their dim view of a good time.*

But, pray tell, who is being scripturally steadfast? And who is being stupidly stubborn?

When Jesus returns, things will happen that have never happened before. These final events will come to pass in the twinkling of an eye, leaving no time for last-minute changes. Jesus spoke of that suddenness when He said, **“For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even**

unto the west; so shall the coming of the Son of man be” (Matt. 24:27).

Peter admonishes us to be looking “for and hastening unto the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat.” Peter proceeds to offer comfort to those who don’t doubt and resist Jesus’ loving call, but who humbly believe God’s Word which further states, “Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein

dwell eth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:12, 13). And so the prospect of those whose hope is in God is reserved for those who have actually been steadfast.

May we all be able to discern situations in life when resistance to changing our minds comes from stubbornness rather than steadfastness. May the Lord give us steadfast wisdom that guides us safely through the perplexities we face these days—the last days!

-PLM 

Announcements

The Anabaptist Identity conference is to be held in Hurricane Mills, TN, on Thursday, March 16 through Saturday, March 18, 2017. The facility is called *The Well*. Their address is: 462 Barren Hollow Rd., Hurricane Mills, TN 37078.

Directions: Exit 143 off 140, 1.5 hours W of Nashville. Go one block N of 140 on Hwy. 13, then turn right onto Barren Hollow Rd. (across from Pilot service station). Go ¼ mile to the building on the left (*The Well*), across from the KOA campground.

Registration to attend the conference is required. Please provide your name, phone number, and how many people will be with you attending the conference. You may do this by calling 941-822-3282 and leaving a voice message or e-mailing it to hsofgrace6550@yahoo.com.

There is no registration fee. Free-will offerings will be taken at the conference. If you have any further questions, please call Nathan at 941-954-2399.

There are hotels, cabins, and RV hookups available within ¼ mile, seven miles from the location of the conference. There will also be homes available to stay in, within 15 – 20 miles away. We will have lodging information, as well as the program, available by the middle of February.

Speakers at the conference will include: David Bercot, PA; John D. Martin, PA; Chester Weaver, TX; Roman Stoltzfoos, PA; Andrew St. Marie, MI; Kevin Fall, IA; Ray Miller, OH, and David Martin, OH.

We appreciate your prayers.

-Nathan Overholt & Matthias Overholt 

2017 Ministers' Meetings

to be held in Arthur, Illinois on Tuesday—Thursday, March 27-30, 2017.

For further information contact:

Wilbur Gingerich

Phone: 217-543-3570

Cell: 217-273- 4549

E-mail: wilburleann@consolidated.net 

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Soldiers of the Cross

A week of evangelism teaching and training that includes going out into the community and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ

Date: May 26 to June 4, 2017

Place: Holmes County, Ohio

For more information call Jay Stoltzfus at 330-473-5145.

E-mail: soldiersofthecross2@gmail.com 

the bottom line

The First Communion Service

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

The first communion service was prophetic and unprecedented in prior practice, yet powerful and persuasive for future participants.

- This was not a party, and all were given equal portions.
- This was not a time for pretense according to the footwashing.
- None was privileged above the other, for it pertained the same to all.
- It was private, and none of the

disciples were uninvited.

- All were told to participate and the effect was meant to be personal.
- The occasion would have been problematic, since it involved imperfect people.
- The whole procedure seems to be without script, yet it was predicted in Scripture.

Please allow me the privilege of imagination.

Judas was there. He was known to be

a thief, which he sometimes practiced when acting as treasurer for the disciplined dozen men. He apparently took coins, here and there, for himself.

At this time, who was to be the greatest was not yet resolved. Peter was top man with words, clearly ahead of the pack for prime minister. Bartholomew still had high hopes for that position, too, because Jesus seemed to elevate the lowest and the least esteemed. James and John shared their interest with their mother, and so Mrs. Zebedee approached Jesus with a request for her sons at the best possible time for their promotion. There is nothing like striking the iron when it is hot.

The 12-some party was disintegrating very fast at the very time when Jesus needed solidarity and support.

In the present day, some have had the problem of someone saying he/she wouldn't participate in communion if so-and-so is allowed to participate. Such grief should be resolved before communion and then freely sharing joyously with everyone at communion time.

Let us further imagine the disciples' situation as they are invited to this very special first communion service. The carnal, fleshly, selfish, unbrotherly, and irresponsible action of blame and censure from this sort of inappropriate behavior can still happen in Christ's

church. Here's an imaginary scene among Jesus' disciples:

- Andrew says he would not participate with John because John suggested to Jesus that He should call down fire from heaven on some unbelieving people.

- Philip says he won't take part because Judas pilfered some money.

- Thomas says Jesus could count him out because John has a grudge against him.

- Bartholomew says he is skipping communion because Matthew collaborated with the Romans in collecting taxes.

- James says he won't commune if Thomas does since Thomas has a grudge against Andrew.

- John says he won't participate because of something James did to him when they were boys and he never did make it right.

- Judas says Philip is wrong for never talking to him about the money. He won't share because of Philip's failure to do so.

- Thaddeus complains against Peter for always being first, outspoken, and proud.

- Simon, the Canaanite, says all the others are wrong for their judgmental attitudes, so Jesus needs to count him out.

In the midst of this select group of undisciplined disciples, Jesus takes a loaf of bread and lifts it up in blessing.


Then He takes that consecrated bread, breaks off some of it, piece by piece and says, “Take, eat: this is my body which is given for you; this do in remembrance of me.” “All of you take a piece.”

In the midst of this in-house finger-pointing and tongue-wagging, Jesus says, “This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you. This do in remembrance of me.” and then He said “All of you shall drink of it.”

“In remembrance of me?” Ah, those words—what a response at the very time when they were remembering each others’ shortcomings!

But Jesus didn’t cancel the communion since none of the disciples were perfect. They had all failed They all had hang-ups. They had put-downs for each other. There was a lot of deacon work here. Jesus had had a 3-year council meeting with them prior to the first communion service!

Apparently this was not a time to cancel everyone’s membership and put everyone on proving, because Jesus went ahead and offered the emblems of communion. Nor was it a time for even one of them to refrain from taking the precious and sacred emblems of the body and blood of the Lord because of a gripe against a brother. It was a time for all of them to repent! [*Editor’s note: We believe that God has given a shared responsibility to qualify for communion. Both the individual and the larger body share in that responsibility.*]

The Bottom Line this time comes from Brother Jude and Brother Paul. Jude warns against tolerance for those who “are spots in your feasts of charity” (v. 12). On the other hand, let us not forget Paul’s words: “But let a man *examine himself*, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” (1 Corinthians 11:29, emphasis added). 

In Defense of Plainness

Chester Weaver, Grandview, TX

What is *plainness*? Frankly it means different things to different people. Not even the *Mennonite Encyclopedia* attempts a definition. But even so it is a very live, emotional issue in our day.

Let me attempt one definition.

Perhaps the best definition of *plainness* is a non-vain attitude about oneself. But to some people *plainness* stinks. To them it smacks of stagnation, hypocrisy, unenlightenment, a mere cultural expression, a vestige of the past. This definition of *plainness* is

a reaction to something gone wrong. What to do?

The new “cool” among some conservative Anabaptists is to discard *plainness*. Of course the discarding is a little at a time so that not much fuss happens as a result. For example, first the plain suit is not worn in any formal setting outside of church, then it is not worn to church, next it is replaced by a conventional suit, and finally a necktie finishes the process. Presto! No reproach from the world anymore because assimilation has happened! The American melting pot system has worked once again!

Once the male plain boundaries are down the female plain boundaries begin to melt as well. Covering size shrinks, hair becomes a display item, cape dresses become unnecessary, and cosmetics become important.

Actually, the children’s plainness is the first test point. If little girls are permitted ribbons and bows in their hair and nobody makes a fuss, then bigger girls can make the same kind of hair forays. If little boys may wear cowboy boots and nobody objects, then bigger boys can make cowboy forays as well. The process of discarding plainness for older people is safest when the children make it through safely. They actually look so cute in less than plain attire.

At sixty-three years of age this is the second time I am witnessing this process. Once again I am hearing

words which are echoes of fifty years ago. Once again I am watching plainness disappear. Once again young people are so sure they have better attire answers than their elders. And once again the older generation is making quiet accommodation a little at a time.

For evidence of this process read *God and Uncle Dale* and watch the CBS News documentary *Mennonites: A Peaceful Revolution*. Or read *Passing On the Faith* or *The Earth is the Lords*, both books with pictures which document the process. Or take a class in recent Mennonite history. Or visit with old timers who have roots in Mennonite Church USA. The evidence is in.

My roots and my wife’s roots sink into the soil of what conservatives label as “liberal Mennonites.” By the grace of God we had parents who helped us with better alternatives to what was happening around us back then. We watched church leaders pay high prices to preserve a historic Anabaptist heritage, including plainness. We experienced the leadership of clear-eyed men who provided compelling answers, answers which included preserving plainness as valid applications of Biblical and sociological principles. Somehow, the Biblical principles of non-conformity to the world, non-adornment (simplicity), non-costly apparel, as well as other Biblical principles, needed to find

practical application. If application did not follow the principles, the principles themselves would be lost. Those answers were compelling because they provided the solid Biblical and sociological foundations which undergird a living plainness, a plainness personally chosen by those who desired to be faithful to Christ, not a plainness simply mandated by church standards.

The Amish Mennonite people have not experienced the above story. Their story is happening at this very moment. One hundred years ago two-thirds of the Amish people joined the Old Mennonite conferences which have now become Mennonite Church USA. That story, which includes the loss of plainness, is available for us to read. Fifty years ago we (liberal Mennonites) all distained the Old Orders because of their strict plainness, believing we were the enlightened ones. We thought that if we left them alone, they would dry up and blow away. But the reverse is happening. Mennonite Church USA is crumbling. Why?

The Old Orders deserve more credit than they have received. They know some things we are ignorant of in our arrogance. That is a discussion all of its own.

One hundred years ago Old Mennonite leaders made a proactive and winning decision to deal with the pressures of assimilation in their day. They introduced the plain suit

for laymen, an innovation modeled by some of the most respected leaders of that day such as John S. Coffman and John F. Funk. The idea caught on and a surge of plain suits swept into the church at large. Head coverings, instead of hats, became the issue for women. The idea caught on there too. But the reproach which accompanies non-assimilation was too much for many and the conferences decided they needed to force the idea with church rules, a borrowed Fundamentalist concept. The pressure created a backlash led by liberal church leaders which eventually resulted in the wholesale loss of plainness in the fifties and sixties. The conservative Old Mennonites of today are survivors of that incredible, leadership-led departure from their historic legacy.

The liberal church leaders of fifty years ago chose to lose plainness as a sociological boundary. Once the plainness boundary was weakened, other more serious doctrinal weakness followed, such as allowance for divorce and remarriage. Today Mennonite Church USA is being torn apart by dissension over homosexuality issues. Fifty years ago, those same liberal leaders would have never sanctioned homosexual practice in the church. Homosexual practice was simply a serious sin issue. Today few sociological boundaries exist for Mennonite Church USA since plainness has completely deserted the

picture. Now theological boundaries are in flux. Mennonite Church USA has almost completely assimilated into American society. And for the most part they feel good about their accomplishment!

Now a new generation is struggling with the same issues all over again. Did we fail to tell the story? Did we fail to tell the story well? Did we think that such would never happen again? Why would anyone want to repeat such a story? Has the world actually beguiled us with its wiles? Is Christ less precious than the world? Or is it OK to sit back and watch history repeat itself once again while we wring our hands and cry?

Plainness has been a winning, proactive sociological principle through the years. Yes, some hypocrites have hidden behind plainness to indulge in their carnality. Yes, some Anabaptists have made plainness an end in itself. Yes, plainness has been abused by leadership control freaks. But what of the reverse? Why did John Wesley wake up too late to the issue and lament its absence among his people? Why did John Oberholtzer's General Conference Mennonites who piously proclaimed "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, diversity; in all things charity" voluntarily lose plainness long before the Old Mennonites? Is intentional loss of plainness progress? Why do those who lose plainness very seldom ever re-adopt it? Why do those

without the boundary of plainness often resort to various un-Biblical theologies, usually theologies which require little lifestyle discipline? Why do those who lose plainness under the banner of relevance soon operate under a bland religious platform that appeals to few serious-minded people? Why has the salt lost its savor?

On the other hand *plainness* has flourished among those non-progressive groups which are increasing in numbers today. These people carry the traditional identification marks of the Swiss Brethren people and are known far and wide as the Plain People.

For myself, I am not interested in joining the growing number of losers. If I would, I would be doubly accountable for what I know. How could I hold my face up to Christ on that Great Day?

Plainness remains a solid answer for people who really do love Christ instead of the world. Can we revive the solid Biblical and sociological principles which undergird plainness? We already know that if plainness values are set forth today in some circles, we can expect a great outcry. Can we handle that? Does backbone still exist? Can we speak clarity and leadership into the mounting chaos? I think so. Will anyone heed? I think so. The past says so. Can leadership rally to the challenge? I hope so. I, for one, am already enlisted!



Growing as a School Leader

Gerald Miller, Guys Mills, PA

In January, I had the distinct privilege of spending a weekend with 40 other school principals. It was energizing to talk shop with other men who are in the same work. Something good happens when leaders relate to each other personally about the challenges and joys of what they do every day in school leadership.

We are well past the halfway point of the school year, and the countdown is here. More of the year is behind us than ahead of us. Now is the time to be planning and preparing for the coming school year, while juggling current responsibilities. Challenging? Yes! Essential? Absolutely! While some may not have the title of principal or administrator, if you are the “lead teacher” or simply provide leadership for daily operations at your school, I would like to remind us of three things that are critical this time of the year.

Reflection

Reflection is an essential key to keeping the vision of the school growing and prospering. While school leaders prefer to look ahead to what is coming and prepare for the future, this is best accomplished in the context of looking back. When reflecting, many questions could be asked. What went

well in the events of the school year? Where was confusion? Are parents excited about the school? Why or why not? What is the “temperature” of the school culture? Is there joy and rigor in the classroom? Are teachers developing and growing?

More simply, an administrator could ask three questions and share these responses with their school board:

What are we doing at school that is not working?

What has gone well in the school?

In light of what is not working and what is working well, how does this impact the next year? What do we need to be doing?

Reflection enables us to see the future more clearly as we grapple with the reality of the past. In the short term it is easier to stay in a default mode of hoping that things will somehow get better on their own. Or maybe we think that if we don’t “rock the boat and make any waves” things will keep sailing smoothly. In the long term, this default position results in apathy, carelessness in the training of young people, and loss of vision.

Planning

Few of our school administrators in our smaller schools have time for

adequate planning. However, just as businessmen see planning as a key to being a profitable business, so is planning to a healthy school. Effective planning springs from good reflection. Effective planning is also best couched in the larger context of the mission and vision of the school (What we do, why we do it, and how we will accomplish it). The common statement “if you aim for nothing you will always hit it” seems to apply here.

In planning, consider these questions:

How can we strengthen the areas of our school that are currently strengths?

How can we address areas of need with positive momentum?

What are the three goals we should have as a school next year?

Too many school leaders “fly by the seat of their pants.” The mental image of flying this way does not seem very compelling, but is seemingly a reality for us in our too busy schedules. As administrators, we need to find creative ways to devote good time to planning. Planning guides the school toward a goal, giving purpose and energy to the daily work of the school.

Development

I have already mentioned that as administrators with a heavy teaching load, we have difficulty doing adequate reflection and planning. But I must add one more thing to your plate if we are to do anything more than survive. How are you growing? In what ways are you developing? Are you reading

books and articles on education? Are you taking time for hobbies? Are **you** learning, or is it only the teachers and students who need to grow?

Sit down with your board chairman next week for one hour to brainstorm together the ways in which you can continue to grow. Stale leadership is not compelling for students or staff. Your school deserves better. Ask these three questions:

- What books will I read?
- Who will I meet with regularly to grow personally?
- What seminars or workshops should be a rhythm in my life?

Leaders who are not growing and developing lose their way eventually. Growing should be the first order of business as an administrator. Leading with integrity calls us to learning and to growing personally as we ask teachers and students to engage in the same.

Where to?


Reflection, planning, and development all take time and energy. How will we fit this into our schedules? I offer three ideas for your consideration.

- Consider requesting your school board give you a half-day per month or one day per quarter in which to do administrative work, including reflecting, planning, and developing. Maybe your board would like to substitute for you or take your students on a field trip!
- Make a schedule for this kind of work, or it will always happen

“tomorrow.” Tell your board your plan so they can keep you accountable.

- Include your staff in this process by spending two to three days meeting together after the school year has ended in May. Doing this work as a team can be a powerful way to work out the vision of the church in

community.

School leadership matters. We recognize this is in business, churches, and organizations. It is true for schools. I encourage you to seize the opportunity to develop personally as a way to serve the church by leading your school well. 

Covered

May B. Different


I have been following Jesus in the way of the Anabaptists for about three years now. This includes the wearing of the head covering. I have a question in regards to the head coverings I see in Anabaptist circles. At what point in history did the head covering style go from actually covering the head to becoming merely a symbol of a covering? It seems that the head used to actually be covered until recent history.

To me, what I see worn as a “head covering” does not cover the head at all. It is merely a symbol of a covering. Whether cap-style or hanging veil, only the back of the head and perhaps the bun are covered, and not the head. Scripture says that the covering is a symbol. If we wear a symbol of a covering instead of an actual covering is that sufficient obedience to God’s Word?

Scripture does not say to wear a symbol of a head-covering. It says that to cover the head is a symbol. If one interprets this passage as requiring a symbol of a covering only, then size

and style do not matter at all. Can we read these verses (*1 Corinthians 11:1-6*) objectively (*not influenced by upbringing, tradition, or personal preference*) and conclude that it teaches to wear a symbol of a covering? Is there integrity if we preach obedience to God’s Word yet the heads are not actually covered?

I would like to suggest (*coming to this from a non-Anabaptist background*) that it would be preferable to err on the side of being too literal than to err on the side of loose interpretation. I am presently wearing a style of covering that covers my head, even if it makes me a bit of an oddball at my church.

[Used by permission from Anabaptist Voice, Issue 3, Fall, 2016. The writer’s name given here is only a pen name, but James Landis, AV editor, assures me that they have a writer’s name on file, who was given anonymity. The writer raises valid concerns, does she not? It’s tempting to keep a semblance of the practice without also embracing the principle it expresses. -PLM] 

marriages

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

Beachy-Miller

Bro. Marcus, son of Marvin and Emma Beachy, Wellman, IA, and Sis. Angie, daughter of Marlin Eugene and Fern Miller, Kalona, IA, at Fairview Mennonite Church for Sharon Bethel A.M. Church on Nov. 12, 2016, by Delmar Bontrager.

King-Petersheim

Bro. Nathan Durrell, son of Amos and Kate King, New Holland, PA, and Sis. Rosene Marie, daughter of the late John and Barb Petersheim, Kinzers, PA, at Weaverland Mennonite Church, East Earl, PA, on Oct. 15, 2016, by Amos King.

Correction: Rohrer-Miller

Bro. Kelton, son of Ernest and Sharon Rohrer, Conrath, WI, and Sis. Sabrina, daughter of Marvin and Neva Miller, Grove City, MN, at Evangelical Free Church for Believers Fellowship Mennonite Church on Dec. 10, 2016, by Melvin Beiler.

Stoltzfus-Stoltzfus

Bro. Daniel Jay, son of Reuben and Mary Stoltzfus, Bird-in-Hand, PA, and Sis. Ruth Ann, daughter of Sam. J. and Mary Ann Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, on Sept. 17, 2016, at Spring Garden Amish Mennonite Church, by Ben A. Stoltzfus.

Tulcey-Schrock

Bro. William, son of Norris and Tomasita Tulcey, BZ, and Sis. Lucy, daughter of Stephen and Marilyn Schrock, Isabella Bank, BZ, at Zion Mennonite Church, Scotland Halfmoon, Belize, on Nov. 19, 2016, by Ellis Beachy.

Yoder-Chupp

Bro. Jamison, son of Vernon and Naomi Yoder, Centreville, MI, and Sis. Tonya, daughter of Darrel and Elaine Chupp, Sturgis, MI, on August 27, 2016, at the Ben Hochstetler residence for Pilgrim Fellowship, Centreville, MI, by Jon Yoder.

Yoder-Jantzi

Bro. Karl, son of Ed and Lois Yoder, Wesley, AR, and Sis. Rachel, daughter of Arnold and Rosemary Jantzi, Wellesley, On, at Church of Christ for Lighthouse of Faith Church on Dec. 17, 2016, by Arnold Jantzi.

Yoder-Yoder

Bro. Allen, son of Ivan and Viola Yoder, Baltic, OH, and Sis. Kayla, daughter of Dave and Esther Yoder, Newcomerstown, OH, at Maranatha Fellowship Church for Salem A.M. Church, Newcomerstown, OH, on October 22, 2016, by Bobby Miller.



cradle roll

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

Beachy, Jevon and Abigail (Troyer), Free Union, VA, second child, first daughter, Elizabeth Kate, Oct. 2, 2016.

Beachy, John Wesley and Malissa (Schrock), Wytheville, VA, first child and son, Wyatt James, July 20, 2016.

Fisher, Elvin and Saralynn (Esh), Honey Grove, PA, sixth child, second daughter, Audrey Kate, Jan. 1, 2017.

Graber, Myron and Joanna (Wagler), Montgomery, IN, sixth child, third son, Kendrick John, Dec. 3, 2016.

Graber, Wesley and Allyson (Knoblauch), Grabill, IN, second child and daughter, Eleanor Deloris, Jan. 19, 2017.

Groff, William and Heidi (Miller), Russellville, KY, first child and son, Kameron David, Nov. 7, 2016.

Jantzi, Darren and April (Overholt), Dunmore East, Waterford, Ireland, third child, first daughter, Elsie Kate, Jan. 29, 2017.

King, Steven and Ruth (Yutzy), Arlington, KS, third child, first daughter, Keturah Elise, Jan. 24, 2017.

Mast, Jared and Sara (Yoder), Mt. View, AR, first child and son, Landon Eric, Nov. 24, 2016.

Mast, Lyle and Donna (Bacher), Concord, AR, second child and son, Rylan Everett, Dec. 4, 2016.

Mast, Michael and Eunice (Miller), Mt. View, AR, third child, first daughter, Emily Grace, Nov. 21, 2016.

Miller, Henry and Dorthy (Hooks), Leon, IA, third child, second son, Tyson Mack, Dec. 31, 2016.

Miller, Jeremy and Maria (Bender), Rural Retreat, VA, seventh child, fifth daughter (one stillbirth), Shanna Joy, Jan. 10, 2017.

Miller, Leander and Emma Marie (Overholt), Kalona, IA, seventh child, third daughter, Laurel Janine, Oct. 31, 2016.

Miller, Marlin and Anna (Miller), Franklin, KY, fifth child, second daughter, Kristal Joy, Nov. 14, 2016. (Died Nov. 19, 2016, from a genetic disease, whose brother also died of the disease.)

Miller, Rodney and Regina (Peachey), Rural Retreat, VA, third child, first daughter, Keturah Ruth, Jan. 3, 2017.

Moore, George and Laura (Slingland), Quaker City, OH, ninth child, second

daughter, Lovina Linn, Dec. 10, 2016.
(See obituaries.)

Ropp, Richard and Bethany (Gerber),
Atwood, ON, first child and son, Liam
Richard, Dec. 10, 2016.

Schrock, Matthew and Kathryn
(Miller), Kalona, IA, second child, first
son, Jaden Isaac, Aug. 16, 2016.

Stoltzfus, Douglas and Kelsey
(Martin), Narvon, PA, first child and
daughter, Karina Grace, Dec. 19, 2016.

Torkelson, Richard and Shannon
(Gore), Sarasota, FL, second child, first
daughter, Gentry Reese, Sept. 30, 2016.

Wagler, Joshua and Hannah (Harlow),
Hartville, OH, second child and daughter,
Aliya Ruth, Jan. 27, 2017.

Wagler, Randall and Emily (Wagler),
Montgomery, IN, third child, second
son, Sawyer Benjamin, Nov. 28, 2016.


Yoder, Josh and Tamara (Yoder),
Blackville, SC, second child and daughter,
Kate Nicole, Jan. 14, 2017.

Yoder, Martin and Esther (Kanagy),
Holmesville, OH, sixth child, third son,
Jariah Lynn, Jan. 12, 2017.

Yoder, Michael and Rosina
(Zimmerman), Dundee, OH, (serving
in Cambodia), fourth child, second
daughter, Janeva Rose, Jan. 6, 2017.

Yutzy, Ryan and Heather (Beachy),
London, OH, third child, first son, Blake
Ryan, Dec. 28, 2016.

Zook, Kevin and Jen (Weaver),
Burgettstown, PA, second child and son,
Damien Asher, Nov. 18, 2016.

Zook, Michael and Emily (Schrock),
Millersburg, OH, first child and son,
Christian Jude, Jan. 1, 2017. 

ordinations

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

Bro. Michael J. Hershberger, 43, (wife
Gloria Nisly), was ordained as minister
at Salem A.M. Church, Newcomerstown,
OH, on Oct. 30, 2016. Preordination
messages were given by Justin Goff,
Belize. The charge was given by Bobby
Miller, assisted by Roman Mullet and
Paul L. Miller. Jeffrey Mullet and James
Yoder were also in the lot.

Bro. Elmer Kropf, 48, (wife Renee
Hostetler), Harrison, AR, was chosen
by voice of the church and ordained
as a minister at Little Flock Christian
Fellowship on January 22, 2017.
Preordination messages were given by
Dan Byler, Huntsville, AR. The charge
was given by Charles Hamilton, assisted
by Mark Auker, Gail Bear, and Tim
Stoltzfus.

Bro. Jason Stoll, 28, (wife Amanda Wagler), Cross Hill, SC, was ordained as minister at Cross Hill Mennonite Church on October 16, 2016. Preordination messages were given by Bill Yoder, Sarasota, FL. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Bill Yoder and Ernest Hochstetler.



obituaries

Bontrager, LoAnn Kaye, 42, of Kalona, Iowa, died Oct. 13, 2016. The daughter of Perry and Pauline (Yoder) Bontrager, she was born on Dec. 8, 1973, with cerebral palsy, thus she faced physical challenges in life and required much care.

Lo Ann is survived by her parents, Perry and Pauline, of Kalona, three sisters and two brothers: Iva (Michael) Hunsberger, Westminster, SC; Mary Lou Miller, Kalona; Larry Bontrager, Lexington, VA; Lori (Dwight) Schrock, Sharon Center; Lamar (Sarah) Bontrager, Westminster, SC; 14 nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her grandparents.

The funeral was held on Oct. 17, with Delmar Bontrager, Jacob Yoder and Moses Yoder, Jr. serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Flaud, Lena D., 90, of Myerstown, PA, died at the home of her son, Alvin Flaud, Honey Brook, PA, on Dec. 6, 2016. She was born in rural Lancaster County, PA, to the late Gideon and Nancy (Dienner) Riehl.

She was a member of Pequea A.M.

Church.

On Dec. 7, 1946, she was married to David B. Flaud, now deceased. Surviving children: Nancy, wife of Lester Coblentz, Millersburg, OH; Alvin, husband of Ruth Lapp Flaud, Honey Brook; Omar, husband of Nancy Glick, Honey Brook; Sara, wife of Melvin Stoltzfus, Myerstown; 21 grandchildren, and 68 great grandchildren.

Preceding her in death were two children; infant daughter and son; Jacob, husband of Mary Ann Nissley Flaud, Denver, PA.

The funeral was held at Pequea Church, with Jonathan, Ben A. Stoltzfus, and Melvin Zook serving. Interment in the Millwood Mennonite Cemetery.

Kramer, Alvin, 77, of Franklin, KY, died Nov. 27, 2016, at Greenview Medical Center. He was born in the Norfolk, VA, on Jan. 23, 1939, son fo the late Daniel and Elizabeth (Troyer) Kramer.

He was a devoted member and deacon of Franklin Mennonite Church.

On May 13, 1961, he was married to Leona Overholt. She survives. He is also

survived by seven children: Rosanna Kramer, Franklin, KY; Julia (Peter) Miller, Sarasota, FL; Regina (Mark) Beachy, East Earl, PA; Margaret (Daniel) Miller, Fairplay, SC; Nathaniel Kramer, Franklin, KY; Stephen (Elnora) Kramer, Franklin, KY; 21 grandchildren, and two great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a daughter, Ashley Kramer, and two grandsons.

The funeral was held on Nov. 30 at Franklin Mennonite with Jonathan Overholt, Wayne Overholt, and Larry Baer, serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Miller, Levi M., 90, died at Pleasantview Home in Kalona, Iowa, on Nov. 6, 2016. He was born March 6, 1926 at Kokomo, Indiana, to the late Menno and Susan (Schlabach) Miller.

Levi was a member of Sharon Bethel A. M. Church. He was a farmer. Levi led out in starting the local ministry of Christian Aid Ministries, headquartered in Berlin, OH, and served as CAM director in Kalona for the first eight years.

On Feb. 20, 1949, he was married to Clara Viola Miller. She died June 7, 2016. Four children survive: James (Melody) Miller, Kalona; Phil Miller, Kalona; Nathan (Cheri) Miller, Kalona; and Emma (Phil) Stutzman, Montrose, CO; 17 grandchildren, 30 great grandchildren, one great great granddaughter; a brother, Mose, Buffalo, MO; and a sister, Sara Miller, Kalona.

Others preceding him in death were a

sister, Elva Miller and two brothers: Ivan and David Miller.

The funeral was held on Nov. 9, with Delmar Bontrager, Gabriel Beachy, and Lamar Ropp serving. Burial was in the Sharon Bethel Church cemetery.

Moore, Lovina Linn, infant daughter of George and Laura Moore, died one hour after birth on Dec. 10, 2016. The funeral was held at Salem A.M. Church, Newcomerstown, Ohio, with Paul Sommers and Bobby Miller serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. A modified obituary was read as follows: *Lovina Linn Moore was born at home in the early hours of December 10, 2016. She was rushed to the hospital in Cambridge where she soon went home to be with Jesus. She will be greatly missed by her parents, her sister Naomi, and her brothers Obadiah, Tobias, Ezekiel, Hezekiah, Azariah, Wilbur, and Manzel who had anticipated the arrival of a daughter and sister in the family.*

But in the moment of grief and loss, the family realizes that Lovina is in much better place where there are no ambulances, doctors, hospitals—and where Lovina will not have to undergo any surgeries. She has been truly, fully healed. George and Laura agree with sage Job who said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Schrock, Olen L., 91, of Kalona, Iowa, died at Pleasantview Home in Kalona Dec. 18, 2016. He was born Sept. 11, 1925


in Bremen, IN, the son of the late Levi S. and Sarah (Yoder) Schrock.

He was a member of Sharon Bethel A.M. Church, Kalona. He enjoyed fishing, hunting mushrooms, carpentry, and woodworking in his shop. For more than 30 years he volunteered for local prison ministries, attending chapel services and holding Bible studies. He was a member of Gideons, Intl. In his youth he made two voyages to Europe to deliver cattle and horses to war-torn countries in Europe.

On Dec. 2, 1948, he was married to Mary E. Graber. She survives. They moved to Iowa from Indiana in 1956. To Olen and Mary were born 10 children: Wayne (Norma) Schrock, Millersburg, IN; P. R. (Sherry) Schrock, Wellman; John (Diane) Schrock, Wellman; Carl (Julie) Schrock, Syracuse, IN; Lawrence

(Linda) Schrock, Syracuse, IN; Jay (Lori) Schrock, Kalona; Ezra (Dawn) Schrock, Wellman; Ruth (Lawrence) Schlabach, Kalona; Rachel (Mike) Wagler, Sigourney; Rosemary (Mark) Slabaugh, Kalona; 31 grandchildren, nine great grandchildren, two sisters, Sylvia Ropp and Alma (Daniel) Nisly; a brother, Leo (Nedra) Schrock; two sisters-in-law, Pauline Schrock and Fannie Schrock, and a brother-in-law, Perry Miller.

Olen was preceded in death by two sisters, Mary Miller and Judy Miller, three brothers, Perry, Elmer and Edwin and two brothers-in-law, Elmer Ropp and Rudy Miller.

The funeral was held on Dec. 21, with Delmar Bontrager, Wayne Schrock, Gabriel Beachy, and Calvin Yoder serving. Burial was in the Sharon Bethel Church cemetery. 

observations

After Dad passed away, I ‘inherited’ a stack of his old mail. I found postmarks dating back to 2003. The mail I saw was almost exclusively from friends and other interested readers of this column. Evidently, some of you kept an eye out for items that you thought would be worthwhile to have mentioned in Observations. Dad won’t be reading your mail nor offering his commentary any

more. Rest assured however, that the current column scribe would be very grateful for any items you feel would be noteworthy and worthwhile. One way that Dad’s long-time friends and readers can honor his memory is to continue providing potential material for the writer of this column. I’d like for you to consider my interest in your gleanings to not only be an invitation for the same, but a request. I can’t promise you that I will use

everything you send, but I probably won't use what you don't send. My mailing address is:

Ronald Miller
2178 17000 Road
Oswego, KS 67356
email: brenald90@gmail.com

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The minimum wage either has risen or is slated to rise in 17 states during the current calendar year. Kansas has a minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour which translates to yearly earnings of \$15,080. While that wage might work well for some stages in life, most families would be hard pressed to pay the basics of housing, transportation, food and medical bills for a family with a single minimum wage income. For a family to live on one income and own the house they live in, puts them on an economic plane that is difficult for many to attain. I guess that makes many of those in our local congregation pretty well-to-do.

Our lifestyle choices profoundly shape our understanding of what makes a 'living wage' or a 'subsistence wage'. The ability to live on a single income has equally as much to do with how much we spend as how much we earn. The minimum wage debate centers around the latter. The additional expenses incurred

when both parents work outside the home that could be saved if one stayed home is quite astounding. The cost of child care, prepared food, transportation to another job, etc... when totaled up might add as much to the expense side of the ledger as the added income adds to the income side.

I appreciate the values communicated by example and teaching for us to be careful with our spending so that our mothers don't feel like they need to work outside the home to help support the family. This is how it should be. However, I haven't heard as much exhortation to those of us who are employers to bear in mind that if we are serious about a family living on one income, that the remuneration should reflect that awareness. If my impressions regarding the emphasis are accurate, it's likely because most of us are earners, and not all of us are employers.

One family man who grew up in another setting moved his family to one of our church communities. He didn't want his wife to work outside the home and gained employment at a business that was owned and operated by people he worshiped with on Sunday. He found the work environment refreshing and

wholesome. They loved the church fellowship and admired the practice and faith they observed. But he was puzzled that these employers pay long term workers a wage that qualifies them for government assistance in the form of child tax credits and other subsidies and freebies. It seemed incongruous to him that while we idealize stay-at-home moms, we pay the dads a wage that assumes another source of income and/or government assistance. It looked to him like the business was operating with a welfare mentality that assumed that the government would make up what the employers were unwilling to pay.

The issue is much more complex than can be adequately presented in this small space. However, employers with a goal of wise stewardship, do well to acknowledge that “whatever the market will bear” is only one factor in the equation of appropriate employee compensation. Praise the Lord for the many employers in our midst who practice this stewardship thoughtfully and seriously.

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Mark Galli’s December, 2016, editorial in Christianity Today cites some interesting statistics. Recent research conducted by LifeWay Research indicated that 62% of

churchgoing Christians believe that their church has no authority to withhold communion from them nor to exclude them from church fellowship. Nine out of ten, similarly believe that the church doesn’t have the authority to state that they’re not Christian.

The prevailing view seems to be that churches that take a stand on these issues demonstrate judgment and intolerance. The apostle Paul’s letters to the Corinthians present a different perspective. This editorial mentions InterVarsity Christian Fellowship’s recent communication that all of its 1,300 employees are expected to abide by their theological positions. This was criticized by some as being an unnecessary exercise in authority, calling it a “purge” or a “witch hunt”. Galli says that a better way to understand InterVarsity’s action would be to call it discipleship.

Mr. Galli sees evidence that church discipline and discipleship is making a comeback in some Christian circles. Nine Marks church network says that church discipline isn’t so much “correcting the sin in the life of the body”, but rather “everything the church does to help its members pursue holiness.” This speaks of church standards, protocol, and relationships that are not only

corrective, but also proactively prescriptive.

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The millennials are those who were born in the mid 1980's and following. One of the difficulties that the millennials face is that many have been raised by parents who subscribe to the parenting strategy that children should be reassured that they are amazing and special, and that positive reinforcement is more effective at behavior modification than physical consequences. Indeed many feel that all spanking is abusive and wrong.

I suppose that many of those parents were raised in a setting that seemed imbalanced to them. These settings would have emphasized corporal discipline and structure, without much encouragement or creative disciplinary measures.

Parents do well when they idealize doing a better job of parenting than their parents did. However, an effort at doing better often becomes a reaction. Action based on a reaction is not a safe response. Since firmness and compassion are not mutually exclusive, let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater, by discarding firmness and corporal discipline in our effort to love and encourage our children. It would be

a mistake to assume that the inspired proverb writer didn't know what he was talking about when he said in chapter 13:24 "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." This counsel is contemporary and relevant even though it was penned generations ago.

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Pedro Figueroa Zarceno, a resident of San Francisco, California had his car stolen, so he reported it to law enforcement who found his stolen vehicle for him. When he showed up at the police station to claim it, he was arrested because he didn't have the necessary paperwork for legal residence. He filed a lawsuit against the city and county of San Francisco because the police arrested him in violation of the city's stated intent to act as a sanctuary city and held him until federal authorities arrived and took him into custody. These sanctuary cities, which number about 200 in the USA, have communicated, and in some cases passed statutes, indicating that they will neither cooperate with nor enforce federal emigration laws. What a confusing time for the courts and law enforcement of this land!

-RJM 

Homeward Bound (Part One)

Steve Steiner, Dalton, OH

Tuesday I was on an early morning flight from Cleveland to Wichita. The night before we had received a call that our twenty-year-old son Paul was in the hospital with serious health problems due to lupus. Paul's kidneys were so weak and diseased that he would need to leave college. I was afraid. How could I help him walk through this struggle of shattered dreams? Paul had experienced so much pain in his childhood years as an orphan in Guatemala— and now this. I cried.

"Hi, Dad," he said as I walked into his room. "It's good to see you." We talked a bit about the family before he said, "Dad, I have some business with you. When it's time for me to die, promise me that you won't keep me hooked to machines. Let me go be with Jesus. Dad, promise me!"

"Son," I replied, "I'll do my best."

Paul went on. "I want to tell my birth father in Guatemala that I forgive him for killing my birth mom and that I love him. I want to tell him of the joy and peace that I have in Jesus Christ."

I was amazed. "Paul, you've changed! What happened?"

"Last Thursday night, Jesus came to me in a dream. He was right here in my room with outstretched hands, asking me to come home. Dad, you would not believe how beautiful heaven is!"

"What did you tell Jesus?" I asked.

"That I could not go yet!"

"Why was that, son?"

"Dad, I need to tell my birth father that I forgive him for all the things he did."

"Paul, we'll do everything we can to find your birth father," I promised.

Mid afternoon, three of his friends stopped in to visit. While we talked, Paul fell asleep. In his sleep he started talking, inaudibly, weeping as he talked. The four of us, not sure of what was happening, softly sang familiar hymns. When Paul woke up, I asked, "Son, what were you dreaming?"

"Jesus came to me again and asked if I was ready to come home."

"What did you tell Jesus, Paul?"

"I am ready."

The next morning when I returned to his room, I found that Paul had a fever and was very uncomfortable. As his temperature rose, his blood pressure dropped. I read Scripture

and prayed with him. Late in the night Paul asked, “Dad, if I can’t urinate, does that mean my kidneys quit working?” When I replied that it probably did, he said, “Remember, Dad, I don’t want to be kept alive with a machine.”

Thursday morning I called my wife, Beverly, to tell her that Paul had a rough night. She supported Paul’s request not to allow life support. We prayed for wisdom for the decisions to be made.

Paul was sitting up in bed when I returned, panicked and in pain, “Where were you, Dad? I’m sorry. I tried to move and I pulled out my IV.”

Since the IV team was unable to restart Paul’s IV, Paul was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). The doctor said that things were not good. “Something grave is wrong in his abdomen. We would like to do exploratory surgery. It will mean a ventilator and, if we can get his blood pressure up, a dialysis machine. The kidneys have shut down. We don’t know what is going on.” The doctor told me that the chances of Paul’s surviving the surgery were 50-50 at best and that there was a possibility Paul would need a dialysis machine for the rest of his life.

At that moment I was reminded of the words that Eric, Paul’s younger brother, had spoken to me only

thirty minutes earlier. When Eric phoned, he said, “Dad, we don’t want machines to keep Paul alive. Paul’s body is not like most 20-year-olds, it is much older than that.” This gave me an overwhelming sense of confirmation that the right decisions were being made.

I explained Paul’s requests to the doctor and his refusal of life support. Since I respected those desires, I could not sign for the operation. I had peace I was telling the doctor the right thing.

I sensed tenderness in the doctor as said he respected my position. He advised me that Paul probably had less than an hour to live. I left to go and stay with our son.

Paul was clearly glad to see me. “Dad, I would like to have an anointing service when my friends come.”

I thought, he has less than an hour to live; his friends have exams this morning, and they’ll never make it. “Paul,” I said, “let’s you and I have the service, and then when your friends come we’ll have another one.”

I held Paul in my arms, his frail and weakened body slowly shutting down. Paul said he was at peace with God. I thanked the Lord for Paul’s life and asked that He would pour out His grace on Paul. I thanked the Lord for the great emotional

and spiritual healing that He had done in Paul's life. Even though I did not understand why Paul had to experience so much pain, I thanked Him for giving Paul the grace to endure it. Paul then prayed a short prayer of thanksgiving for the life and opportunities he had experienced. Then, since there was no oil available, I took my saliva and anointed Paul's head.

Shortly, the chaplain came and we talked in the hall while the nurses attended to Paul. "The doctors have something they want me to ask you," the chaplain said. "They do not understand you and your son. They are confused. Why no heroic efforts, no machines?"

"Christians are just passing through this life on their way to a better place," I shared.

"You don't understand." The chaplain tried to explain. "Daily, they deal with distraught families. Even when treating a 90-year-old patient on the verge of death, they are expected to do all they can to keep the person alive for a few more days or weeks. Many of these are Christian families, too. Your son is young, 20, in the prime of his life. Why, as a father, would you not do everything possible to keep him alive?"

I told him of Paul's experience of peace and looking forward to heaven.

I shared with him my understanding that we place far too much value on our earthly lives, that Scripture tells us that life is a prelude to heaven. I explained that Paul knew he was going to have a new, perfect body. Why should I wish to hold him here? Instead I had released him to God's care and keeping. I knew God could do a miracle and restore Paul's body, but Paul had already received the ultimate healing of emotion and spirit. To me that was what mattered.

Shortly after this, friends from college walked into his room. I was surprised. Didn't they have exams? How did they know to come? Then the dean of students walked over to Paul's bed and said, "I am here to see you."

Weakly Paul said, "I know, and it will probably be the last time."

"Paul, would it be OK if we had an anointing service?" the dean asked.

What I had thought could not happen, did, as Paul's friends gathered around him for the anointing service he desired. The dean prayed and anointed Paul with oil as we quietly sang several hymns. All of us in that holy moment experienced God's comfort and peace.

Paul's blood pressure improved and he was allowed to sit in a chair. The nurse agreed to bend the rules for visitors, but only two people at

a time. Paul was happy to be up. It hurt a great deal, but he stayed there for three or four hours. For the next eight hours a stream of Paul's classmates, the soccer coach, and fellow teammates came by. Two by two they came into his room and he challenged each one in their faith walk. They had come to grieve with Paul in this difficult time, but went away blessed, privileged to be at his bedside as he encouraged them on their journey of life.

In the middle of the afternoon the surgeon, who had diagnosed Paul's illness as lupus just two weeks earlier, stopped by. I asked if Paul's kidneys could ever recover. He explained that they were too diseased to ever work again. Some of the agony over the

decisions we had made earlier eased.

That evening as I sat with Paul, he said to me, "Dad, I am so happy I am going home." His radiance was intense as he lay there in peace. As Paul slipped away, he left a testimony of a glorious home coming with Jesus.

Paul was gone from this life, but my work was not over. I was committed to finding his birth father and sharing Paul's story. My flight home, despite the pain of missing Paul, was a celebration of the freedom that my son was experiencing in his heavenly home.

(Published in The Mennonite, August 7, 2007 and in Our Faith Digest, Fall/Winter, 2007. Used by permission.)



Whatever Happened to the Resurrection?

Ernest Strubhar, Perkins, OK

At a funeral we often hear statements like this: "On November 10, 2016, our departed brother exchanged his old, worn-out body [or, "his cancer-ridden body," or...] for a glorious new body."

Well, I wonder. Is it important to use precise language? Or is this a

legitimate example of agreeing with God who "calls those things that be not as though they were" (Rom. 4.17)?

Jesus said, "The hour is coming, in the which *all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth*; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that

have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:28-29, italics added).

Paul affirmed that he had “hope toward God . . . , that *there shall be* a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Acts 24:15, italics added).

In the great “resurrection chapter” Paul defended the doctrine of the future resurrection of the body with a lengthy reply to those who asked the question: “How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35).

In verse 44 he replies, “It is sown a natural body [in death and burial, right?], it is raised a spiritual body” [in the resurrection, not?].

Paul continues, “Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep [in death], but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” (15.51-52).

This hope of a future resurrection has sustained Christians through the many centuries in suffering, sickness, persecution and death—yes, unspeakably horrible deaths. This hope takes away “the sting of death” (v. 55), assuring us of ultimate “victory through our Lord Jesus

Christ” (v. 57). Because we have a sure hope of the resurrection, we can “be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Because of the resurrection, “We know that [our] labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58).

Jesus’ promise in Matthew 16:18 gives us hope: “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (NKJV). I’ve heard various explanations for the “gates of Hades” phrase. But if we understand what all Christians used to understand, that Hades is the abode of the dead, of both the righteous and the unrighteous, until the great day of the resurrection, a simple, straightforward understanding makes sense. Though we die, we are not defeated. The church cannot be defeated by death. Because there shall certainly be a resurrection of the body, we can each be part of the church triumphant, joining the multitude of holy angels around the throne of God for eternity.

On the other hand, Paul warned against two false teachers, “who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some” (2Ti. 2.18).

We don’t want to be saying that, do we?



Lord, Make Me a Bold Witness

Clayton Shenk, York, PA

Most of us would probably say that Jorge should have used more tact in his speech at the end of the Christmas Eve candlelight service.

Isaiah was not far into his prophetic message when he said, “Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers, children that are corrupters: they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the Holy One of Israel to anger, they have gone away backward” (1:4).

Jeremiah’s assignment from the Lord was “to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy, and to throw down, to build, and to plant” (1:10b).

Jesus tended to be sharper with the Pharisees than with the publicans, sinners, and Gentile believers. He was more forthright in his discussion with Nicodemus than with the Samaritan women. To the seven churches of Asia, Jesus commended the believers for their character and works where He could. But Jesus (who identified Himself as “the sharp sword with two edges”) also urgently told the church at Pergamos to “Repent or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth” (Rev. 2:16).

Paul and Barnabas had just been sent by the Holy Spirit and the church at Antioch to leave the home shores and preach the Gospel. Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit approached the sorcerer, a false prophet, Elymas, with sharp words because this man was seeking to derail Sergius Paulus (the first convert) from the faith: “O full of all subtilty and all mischief, thou child of the devil, thou enemy of all righteousness, wilt thou not cease to pervert the right ways of the Lord?” (Acts 13:8-10).

We need to respect the specific gift that the Holy Spirit has given to each believer, even though some have the prophetic gift (Rom. 12:6) in which this person tends to be more forthright in rebuking error. He sees things as black and white. Whether Jorge was tactful or not is not the point. Or could he have been more effective in a mellowed tone. But remember, as the article reveals: “What Jorge said was all true. His boldness was tremendous.” Jorge got people thinking and discussing. Gospel seed was sown and God can bring an increase.

(This article was printed in *Sword and Trumpet*. Used by permission). 

Pain, a Gift

Mary June Glick, Seneca, SC

Dr. Paul Brand, author of the book, *Pain, The Gift Nobody Wants* explains that pain is actually our friend. Without pain in our physical bodies, many times we would not realize anything is wrong until it is too late. Dr. Brand spent many years working with leprosy patients and discovered the reason they frequently lost fingers and toes was simply because they had no feelings in them. They burned or injured limbs without feeling pain, then infections set in and destroyed them.

I have experienced pain in my life and I admit I find it hard to be thankful or to welcome pain. However, I do understand the purpose of it and am aware that God ultimately has a plan for physical pain. At times we may mask our pain by hastily using something to kill the pain, thereby allowing a disease or even cancers to go undetected. Nevertheless, there is no shame in admitting that the pain is more than we can personally handle and seek for ways to ease or alleviate the pain. Too much pain affects the blood pressure or heart rate and can cause stress on the heart. There is power in prayer and I have experienced immediate relief from

pain at times in answer to prayer. Other times, God may choose to heal through doctors or other methods. Thank God, one day we will be at home with Him where there is no more pain.

There are other types of pain besides the physical. There is mental, emotional and spiritual pain. Let me assure you God understands your pain in whatever area you may be dealing with it. Do not hesitate to ask for help. Talk with someone who has experience in dealing with your specific need. Ask for prayer from those you love and trust. God wants to use your pain for good in your life or in the lives of others. I remember the title of a book I read years ago, *Don't Waste Your Sorrows*. Pain is not because of sin, unless we have lived a sinful or careless life. Remember, Jesus' reply when he said, "Neither has this man sinned nor his parents but that God may be glorified through Him." Glorify God through your pain.

Even though we can experience pain in all these areas, I want to refer specifically to emotional pain. What is emotional pain? Emotional pain is caused by a heartache that has come into our lives from a painful experience such as the death of a loved one, an

illness or a deep loss. There is pain in failed relationships. There are financial reverses that bring pain. Emotional pain can cause depression, anxiety, fear, or guilt if it is not understood or dealt with.

If you have ever been through a severe trial or season of deep emotional pain, you know how difficult it can be to recover or heal. We have heard the comment that time heals, which is true in a sense. Yet the amount of time varies with individuals and with the seriousness of the situation. A degree of pain may remain in our hearts until we reach heaven, where our minds will be filled with complete joy and peace.


How does God want us to relate to pain. Our first reaction may be to say, "Why me?" Even David in the Psalms often asks God, "Why?" However, we need not remain in the *whys*, but we need to turn the *whys* to *what*. Whys can cause self-pity or even end up causing bitterness in our hearts.

God wants us to ask: "What?" What does God want me to learn from this

situation? Are there changes in my life that God wants me to make? Can I use this experience to minister to others?

We need to cultivate an attitude of thanksgiving even in the midst of suffering. There are many things we can thank God for in spite of the pain we may be feeling. Make a list of those things you can thank God for. Choose to have a thankful spirit.

Look for ways to help others. It may be just a phone call, an email, or a note of encouragement to someone else who is struggling. Help a young mother or an elderly person with a project or just a friendly visit. Thinking about other people's problems may prevent depression and discouragement.

Pray often. Pray out loud. Pray as you go about your work. God understands our tears. The Bible tells us that He collects our tears in a bottle. In Psalm 34, verses 17-19 we are assured that God is near to the righteous and He hears the prayer of the brokenhearted. May God grant you his peace and comfort, today in the midst of your pain. 

junior messages

Celebrating Memorization, Part Two

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

I walked with Mary and Rose to Dickson's house. Whinney was sitting on the

ground outside their kitchen hut. Her mom took her inside and put a clean dress on her.

The children sat on the floor on the reed mat. We chatted awhile, then Whinney led some good African choruses. We prayed and then in her sweet voice she recited the last 8 verses in Ephesians 4. Her father, Dickson was sitting on a low bench outside the door. I felt rewarded to watch this strong country man grinning from ear to ear as his daughter recited those verses. I thought she would only recite four verses, but she kept going and did eight.

What a nice surprise! Whinney can now read and recited eight verses. Even her teacher did not recite that passage.

Her prize was a nice African basket filled with a water gun full of jelly beans, a container of peanuts, two small shampoo/body wash bottles, crayons and markers. She was a happy little girl. It's so good that this crippled girl is able to do something her parents think they cannot. They could memorize, but truly feel it is difficult. I told her dad I will give him a prize if he memorizes Psalm 23.

Whinney's brother Joseph recited Psalm 23 to Markus after church recently. Her little sister also memorized Psalm 23.

What really blessed me was Mary (her teacher) telling me some stories Whinney confided to her.

"Sometimes I want to hit my siblings," Whinney said "But something is telling me to not do that."

Or she feels angry with her father, and something quietly told her to not be angry. Mary, her Christian tutor, told her that God is speaking to her. Whinney says, "But I can't see Him."


She said, "If I take something from Mom, that is wrong. Something keeps my hand. That is God, he catches my hand."

The verses she learned are touching the heart of a poor child who can seldom go to church.

The day she recited Psalm 23 she also prayed for God to forgive her sins and to live in her heart. On that day the angels in heaven rejoiced.

It blessed me immensely to hear of her simple childlike faith.

We hope to arrange for Mary to continue teaching her after we leave. I believe it is a blessing to all in that house, her parents and five brothers and sisters.

God's Word blesses everyone who hides it in their hearts. 

In Search of Healthy Traditions

Javan U. Lapp, Gordonville, PA

Tradition—the word itself engenders a range of emotional responses from any audience. To some tradition represents the safety and comfort of the familiar and loved. To others tradition represents an old way of doing things beholden to ignorance and unlighted by the creativity and freedom of new insights and expressions. Per standard definitions, tradition refers to the inherited knowledge, experiences and rituals of any cohesive social group whether a family, a neighborhood, or ethnic group.

As conservative Anabaptists, we have a particular relationship with tradition because our faith heritage has placed such a strong emphasis on living out our beliefs in community in ways that keep us intentionally separate from the world. We have embraced the belief that our faith will take particular cultural shapes, and that doing so will make us not only think differently than the world, but also act and look different.

For many young people in

conservative Anabaptist churches, however, tradition doesn't always look and feel like the thing of beauty that we might wish it to be. While there are many traditions that pass seamlessly from one generation to another, there are others that fail to transmit without anybody giving it much thought or attention. Still other traditions—particularly faith traditions and church practices—sometimes receive great scrutiny, critical questioning, or even outright rejection.

Why do some struggle with the traditions of conservative Anabaptism? Obviously, there are many different types of traditions in our communities from eating meals together as families to gardening and food preservation to sewing our own clothing to specific congregational dress standards. There are, however, some recurring things that young people who struggle with their conservative Anabaptist identity experience, specifically those drawn to evangelical Christianity as opposed to a complete rejection of Christ.

To some people it feels like a package of distinctions without spiritual power, with a lot of emphasis on more minor issues. To others it feels like conservative Anabaptist traditions are too inward focused and hold us back from evangelistic witness and cross-cultural church planting. To still others it feels like conservative Anabaptist traditions put up walls that divide us from other Christians and keep us from experiencing the joyful freedom of being God's children. Sometimes these feelings are developed over time and are informed by hurts received in church. It is true that our churches are not always the places of love and grace that they should be.

Despite the way we might struggle with tradition at times, tradition does not have to be seen as a negative thing. It doesn't have to be a weight holding us back. Tradition can serve as a signpost for us—a connection to the past that gives us direction today. I'd like to suggest a few positive models for thinking about tradition and why it matters.

First, I'd like to borrow from British Catholic G. K. Chesterton who spoke of tradition as “the democracy of the dead.” He was pointing out that tradition gives those who have already died a voice. In *Orthodoxy* Chesterton wrote,

“Tradition means giving a vote to the most obscure of all classes, our ancestors. It is the democracy of the dead. Tradition refuses to submit to the small and arrogant oligarchy of those who merely happen to be walking about. All democrats object to men being disqualified by the accident of birth; tradition objects to their being disqualified by the accident of death. Democracy tells us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our groom; tradition asks us not to neglect a good man's opinion, even if he is our father.” (*Orthodoxy*, 45)

As Christians, we value the voices of the elderly and our departed brothers and sisters; cultivating a respect for tradition allows us to do that. Sometimes we want to chart our own course without input from others, but tradition gives us access to ancient wisdom. It is not that those who have walked the path before us are somehow superior to us, but having their example and testimony allows us to learn from and build on their experience. Tradition matters because history matters.

Secondly, because tradition is a practice or understanding that has been passed down from a previous generation, traditions often reflect communal habits either of the mind or body. Science has learned

a lot about how the human brain works over the past several decades. They have been able to observe the ways our brains make connections and can re-wire themselves. We also know that our brains develop “habit loops” that, once started, require very little brain function. Perhaps you’ve witnessed this phenomenon during a familiar and highly repetitive activity. Likely you found yourself finishing the task without remembering if you completed all the steps in the process. Established habits are essentially automated in our brains. The same is often true of routines in the culture of organizations. Established habits and routines allow people to know what their key priorities are and how to respond to different kinds of situations. Tradition matters because it allows collective wisdom to become communal habits. (For more on habits, read *The Power of Habit: Why We Do What We Do in Life and Business* by Charles Duhigg.)

Finally, tradition matters because traditions teach us to practice. “Practice” has a dual meaning. It refers to the training or rehearsal of something we haven’t quite mastered but it also means to apply what we know (as in, *to put something into practice*). In fact, this second meaning can come to denote great skill as we might expect from a physician’s

practice of medicine. As Anabaptists, we know the importance of the practical applications of our beliefs and having a living faith that works (or practices).

Many traditions are physical rituals that require doing something. They impart the wisdom stored in them only as we do them. Learning by doing is after all one of the most effective ways to learn. It has become common in the modern age to speak of humans as if we are primarily rational beings and our primary motivations lie in the mind with thoughts that later bear fruit in actions. This is a rather recent way to think about human beings. I believe that at our root we are desiring, loving, worshiping beings more than we are reason-driven thinking machines. I think Scripture points to this with such an intense focus on what we love and worship and the importance of renouncing idolatry and the love of the world. What we do—or how we practice our faith—has the power to help direct and shape our desires and, by extension, who we become. Tradition matters because by teaching us to practice our faith in real and visible ways, it helps shape our identity as humans. (For more on how practices shape our desires, read *You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit*, by

James K. A. Smith.)

Traditions develop amongst any group of people with varying degrees of intentionality. We do not get to choose between tradition and non-tradition; we can only choose between traditions. We can, however, choose to influence, create, and modify traditions. Many of us have found traditions to be stifling at times, but we as community-oriented humans are bound to create tradition and culture. This is part of being made in the image of God.

The challenge is to promote healthy traditions without passing along more frustration and hurt. How do we do this? I'd like to make five suggestions for my fellow conservative Anabaptists in regards to tradition.

1) Find new ways of thinking about healthy change.

Change happens whether we like it or not or even whether we are aware of it or not. Sometimes we like to think that our conservative Anabaptist communities have mechanisms that slow the pace of change, but I'm not sure that is entirely realistic. There have been obvious changes in technology and communication. The availability of information and the access to media is greater in this Information Age than it was for previous generations.

There has been a substantial change from rural life to suburban life in many communities.

Before all that, however, there have been other substantial changes in traditional patterns in our communities. Many of our churches changed our language of worship from German to English in the last half century. Along the way, we have moved from preaching based on the assigned text of a lectionary to topical sermons and we've given up the old written prayers of the German prayer book our people used for many generations. We've traded the verbally reinforced *Ordnung* for written church standards, and we've allowed various changes in dress and appearance, particularly less separation in dress for men. Yes, there has always been change.

What we have not always done is find healthy ways to evaluate and embrace good changes. Tradition does not have to be a posture of anti-change. In fact, the most powerful and long-lasting traditions are open to constant improvement and innovation. Young people like me are sometimes eager to see traditions change quickly and adopt new approaches. Experience, however, teaches that real, lasting and positive change does not come quickly. We should be cautious in

regards to change, but we need to be open to learning and growing. Sometimes “because we’ve always done it this way” is keeping us from a better, more effective way of meeting our goals and fulfilling our mission.

2) Re-emphasize the importance of quality training.

As a young father, I am keenly aware of the importance of child training. Quality education matters and is something we need to all care about and work towards at home and in our schools. Of course, sometimes far more is implicitly caught than explicitly taught. In many of our communities that’s a good thing. However, we must make sure we are verbalizing what needs to be explained and not only relying on understanding to be caught. Tradition without education and explanation is very dangerous. Consider Joshua 4 when the Israelites were commanded by God to create a monument to help them remember the mighty work of God in allowing them to cross the Jordan River. They were explicitly told that it was intended to be a sign that would create teaching moments when their children would ask for explanation.

Are we giving attention to our explanations? Are we able to answer

the “Why’s?” Unfortunately I’ve experienced a few instances where people felt like the “Why” questions were not worth answering. When this occurs it is either negligence in training or a sign that some traditions have outlived their usefulness.

3) Don’t confuse Scripture and Tradition.

The subject of Scripture and traditions is a lengthy one that cannot be covered in this article. In fact, the worthwhile study of what Scripture has to say about tradition has not even been touched here. Let it just suffice that as Bible students we are familiar with the repeated warnings Jesus gave to the Pharisees and Paul’s warnings about the Judaizers. These warnings can perhaps be summarized by Jesus’ comment in Matthew 15:9 about those who “teach as doctrine the precepts of men.”

One of the challenges in our circles is that in our quest to be Biblical and base all that we do on God’s word we can sometimes claim Scriptural backing for our traditions in ways that are not necessarily exegetically sound. Judging by many of the church standards I’ve seen, at some point in the past century it became common place to find Scripture passages that supported every church standard, even if the connection was contextually

strenuous. This zeal to be Biblical is a good thing, but sometimes it keeps us from being honest about what is expected by tradition and what is required by Scripture. We do ourselves a great disservice to confuse these.

We also need to be very careful that our embrace of healthy tradition and our desire for accountability through church disciplines does not justify our creation of new moral codes. This is the danger of legalism. One early Anabaptist church leader even chided a group of Swiss Anabaptists for this very thing. Pilgrim Marpeck wrote that some were “making sin where there is no sin, setting up laws, commandments, and prohibitions against the authority and sovereignty of the Spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ, who gave his own no law except the law of love.” (*The Writings of Pilgrim Marpeck*, 327) Marpeck also warned that the same people were quick to judge a branch, blossom, or bud instead of reserving their judgment of people for the fruit of their lives.

4) Don't use our traditions as a wall from other Christians.


It is so easy for us conservative Anabaptists to harbor a small amount of pride in regards to our traditions or our attention to Biblical application. We like to talk as though

we are just a bit more consistently Biblical or spiritually alive than other Christian groups. This spiritual pride is a sin of which we need to continue to repent. We cannot defend and promote our traditions as a way to set us apart from the rest of Christ's bride. We are not called to division in the body of Christ.

In our own churches, sometimes it is easy to use traditions and communal practices as a substitute for real fellowship and honest relationship. This is another way our traditions can be used as a wall to divide us from other Christians.

5) Make sure that God's Kingdom is more important than any of our traditions.

Our commitment to seeking first the kingdom of God needs to be greater than traditions we develop. Our focus needs to be on bringing God glory, conforming to Christ, and abiding in the Spirit. If we are seeking to bring glory to Anabaptism, we will fail our mission. Let's make sure that our embrace of healthy traditions does not allow our attention to stray from our top priorities.

Writers for Thinking Generation wish to generate, first and foremost, greater involvement in God's Kingdom, especially among today's Anabaptist young people. Submit feedback or contributions for the column to gideonutzy@gmail.com. 

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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Man weighs the deeds; God weighs the intentions.

• • • • •

In a confused world, some have peace while others go to pieces.

• • • • •

True patience waits without worrying.

• • • • •

Big opportunities tend to come when we make good use of little ones.

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A poor man cannot afford to be lazy.

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Swallow your pride—it contains no calories.

• • • • •

True religion is transformed behavior—not just wordy belief.

• • • • •

To grieve over sin is one thing; to repent is another.

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Being first is less important than being right.

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Is your life on the rocks? Bring it to the Rock.

• • • • •

To experience an increase of Christ, there must be a decrease of self.

• • • • •

Some suffer from loneliness because they simply sit, when they could be serving.

• • • • •

To touch the heart of another, we must reach out with the heart.

• • • • •

Hatred of sin need not keep us from loving the sinner.