



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

NOVEMBER 2017

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Calvary Messenger

November 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.

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To My Dear Friends

Donna Lowry, Hutchinson, KS

I pray that God be with you
In every plan you make.
I pray that God will bless you
In all you undertake.

I pray that God will lift you up
And fill you with His grace.
I pray that in the Master's plan,
You'll have a special place.

I pray that angels tend to you
To guide you on your way.
I pray the Lord will give you peace
And joy with each new day.

I pray that you will always have
The hope you've given me.
I pray the Lord will strengthen you
To help all those in need.

I pray the love and care in you
Will never start to fade.
I pray that you will always see
The difference you have made.



From Thanksgiving to *Thanks Living*

Some years ago, an unnamed writer wrote in *The Prairie Overcomer* about gratitude. He wrote, “Thinking comes before thanking.” So today let us *think* seriously about *thanking*.

A good starting point is James 1:17: “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above and cometh down from the Father of lights in whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning.” That sounds different from today’s English. Here’s the close of that verse from NIV, “(God) does not change like shifting shadows.” A transliteration of Luther’s German gives further clarity, “(God) does not switch back and forth between light and darkness.” In essence, James says that thankfulness is always appropriate because God is always good.

When Paul traced the downward path of mankind in Romans 1:21, he wrote, “when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful.” Is this saying that an attitude of *ingratitude* leads away from God and that an attitude of

gratitude leads toward God? I think so!

A Brief Review of Thanksgiving in America

The first Thanksgiving Day in America was initiated by Governor Bradford of Massachusetts in 1623. He declared: “Inasmuch as the great Father has given us this year an abundant harvest of Indian corn, wheat, peas, beans, squashes, and garden vegetables, and has made the forests to abound with game and the sea with fish and clams, and inasmuch...as He has spared us pestilence and disease, has granted us freedom in worship according to the dictates of our own conscience, now I, your magistrate do proclaim that all ye Pilgrims, with your wives and ye little ones, do gather at your meeting house between the hours of 9 and 12 in the day time, on Thursday...November 29, 1623, and the third year since ye landed on Pilgrim Rock...there to render thanksgiving to Almighty God for all His blessings.”

Unfortunately, however, as making

a living in the new land became a bit easier, such thankfulness apparently tended to slip away. But not always—some 168 years later, in 1791, George Washington, the first president of United States of America, freely mentioned God and His gifts. In announcing a day of thanksgiving, President Washington said, “Whereas it is the duty of all nations to acknowledge the providence of Almighty God, to obey His will, to be grateful for His benefits, and humbly to implore His protection and favor...that we may all unite in rendering unto Him our sincere and humble thanks for His kind care and protection of the people of this country...[I proclaim a day of thanksgiving.]”

Thanksgiving Day was discontinued during Thomas Jefferson’s (the nation’s third president) tenure as president. A special day of thanksgiving was then not observed as a national holiday for many years. Taking one day off each year for thanksgiving finally came, at least in part, because of the persistent efforts of Sarah Hale. As early as 1828, she wrote letters to national leaders. It seems that she was not taken seriously enough by those in political position to take action until she wrote to President Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was elected president in late 1859 and took office in early 1860. Three years later, on January 1, 1863, he issued the Emancipation Proclamation that was to set all slaves free. Later that same year, with the Civil War going, Lincoln proclaimed the fourth Thursday in November to be our “National Thanksgiving Day.” Near the end of that bloody conflict between the Confederate forces and the Union forces, on April 14, 1865, Lincoln was felled by an assassin’s bullet. Only a few weeks later, on May 28, 1865, the last Confederate troops surrendered and the war was declared over.

Thanksgiving Day thereafter was often observed yearly, however, it was not actually ratified as a national holiday until much later—1941! It is interesting that ratification came during another war--World War II.

The secularization of this day has many folks now casually referring to Thanksgiving Day” as “Turkey Day.” Let us, nevertheless, give God our thoughtful gratitude and his rightful glory. Every good and perfect gift still comes from Him.

Why Give Thanks?

The psalmist David frequently expressed thankfulness. In Psalms 95 to 106, he kept mentioning and encouraging praise and thanksgiving. Then in Psalm 107, he developed

that theme *four* times, first detailing people's times of anguish and cry for deliverance. Each time God heard them and delivered them. Then as the psalmist detailed those situations of deliverance, he notes with this lament their thoughtlessness and ingratitude, "O, that men would praise the Lord, for his goodness and for his wonderful works to the children of men."

What can help us acknowledge God and his love and providence after our cries of desperation for his help? David gives us one simple, obvious aspect of this that is helpful when he says in Psalm 103:2 "...forget not all his benefits...."

The following lines by an unknown poet speak to us all:

I Thank Thee

*O thou whose bounty fills my cup
With every blessing meet!
I give Thee thanks for every drop—
The bitter and the sweet.
I praise Thee for the desert road,
And for the riverside.
For all Thy goodness hath bestowed,
And all Thy grace denied.
I thank Thee for both smile and frown,
And for the gain and loss.
I praise Thee for the future crown,
And for the present cross.
I thank Thee for both wings of love
Which stirred my worldly nest;
And for the stormy clouds which drove*

Me trembling to Thy breast.

I bless Thee for the glad increase,

And for the waning joy;

And for this strange, this settled peace

Which nothing can destroy.

Thankfulness is Shown in Generosity

In his second epistle to them, Paul commended the Corinthian Christians (who were Gentiles) for their eagerness to help Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were in the grip of severe famine. The Corinthians felt indebted to Jewish Christians for bringing them the Gospel of salvation in Jesus and for accepting them as brothers and sisters in Christ. So naturally, they wanted to help them in their time of need. Indeed, they saw helping them more as a *privilege* than a *duty*. That is the essence of cheerful giving. Paul offers cheerful givers this outcome: "God loveth a cheerful giver." Luther's German translates that nugget of sacred writ with this second meaning: "A cheerful giver loves God."

An unknown poet gave us these pithy, untitled six lines:

*"Go break to the needy sweet
charity's bread;*

For giving is living," the angel said.

*"And must I be giving again and
again?"*

My peevish and pitiless answer ran.

“Oh, no,” said the angel, piercing me through,

“Just give till the Master stops giving to you.”

May God give us true gratitude that goes beyond making pious, once-a-year statements about God’s goodness. Even while we acknowledge our unworthiness, let us daily praise Him and weekly give generously—without fanfare—to charity. (See 1 Cor. 16:1, 2) Is there a truer expression of thanksgiving? I doubt it. And that is one mark of going from mere *thanks*

giving to sincere *thanks living!*

God, who sees in secret, will “outgive” us as only He can! His “outgiving” does not come with a guaranteed material prosperity, but it greatly enhances spiritual prosperity. He does give us assurance of adequate provision for daily living, He promised, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things [daily needs] will be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

-PLM 

Announcements

2018 Annual Beachy Ministers’ Meeting | April 3–5, 2018

Location:

Fairlawn Mennonite Church | 8520 Emerson Rd. | Apple Creek, Ohio 44606

Hosted by the Holmes County churches. 


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The Dock is conceived as a service for teachers, pastors, administrators, and board members in

Conservative Anabaptist schools. ***The Dock*** was begun as a project of the CAEC and operates under the authority of the Beachy constituency.

Some of the more popular sections are the blog, written by practicing teachers, the weekly video series, featuring educators discussing questions of philosophy and practice, the forums, and the classifieds. The content repository is also growing, with hundreds of recorded talks, articles and e-books.

I would be glad to provide any information that would be helpful.

Lucas Hilty—Resource Project Manager

Faith Builders Educational Programs · 814-789-4518 · fbep@fbep.org- 

The Prayer of a Righteous Man

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

First there was the total eclipse of the sun on 8-21-17, then Hurricane Harvey stalled over Houston, Texas. At this writing all eyes are on Hurricane Irma and Florida. Two super-sized hurricanes back-to-back in the south is unprecedented. Currently, Irma is over the many islands in the greater Caribbean area. Mr. Sourdough (not his real name) says he is employed as a public relations man on the island of St. Martens. He tweets (formerly what birds did to express joy), from the eye of the storm. It is upon him and he says it is hot. The 185 mph winds howl and hiss and shriek in an unbelievable manner. He is in a concrete stairwell with many others. He put out a call in his tweet for “every unbeliever, atheist, and heretic to pray for me.”

I sit back on my office chair on 9-5-17, chin propped on my hand and look out through the double windows in front of my desk. Our house is on a hill. Our view contrasts

with those extreme scenarios as I look out over a broad expanse of our beloved Paradise Township in Pennsylvania.

Now back to Mr. Sourdough’s request. There is a one-liner that says, “Man’s extremity is God’s opportunity.” Jesus said, “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1-8). Then he gave the parable of the widow who had an unjust adversary. As a widow, she was on the lowest rung of society in her day. The presiding judge, it was said, “feared not God, neither regarded man,” but he heard her case and granted her relief in that litigation because of her importunity (keeping on asking in earnest).

Jesus’ punch line is, “Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them?” There is no consideration here for unbelievers, atheists and heretics in this lesson. There is no relief for such in Jesus’ words or in the New Testament that

I can recall, to indicate that such have power with God in prayer to be given relief from a surface inconvenience. While the crisis is upon them, they think of God, and of prayer. It is the thought of unbelievers, atheists, and heretics as a last resort for relief.

The Bible says, “the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16). Mr. Sourdough is calling for the unrighteous to pray. We could pray for him that someone would show him the way of God more perfectly.

The wise man said, “If thou faint in the day of adversity, thy strength is small” (Proverbs 24:10). Spiritual strength is built up in good times as a reserve for the time of adversity. When the flood waters are rising up to the first floor is not the time to think about buying flood insurance.

We remember the classic verse that says, “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; THEN will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14, emphasis added). Healing the land is contingent on forgiveness of sin, which is dependent on turning from their wicked ways, which has seeking God’s face in prayer as the appropriate exercise, all of which

begin by humbling one’s self before God. As a nation, we have a long way to go before healing will take place. It can, however, take place in us, one person at a time, then one congregation at a time, then one community at a time, then one church conference at a time. But many of us have a long way to go for God’s healing for our own broken hearts and our crippled lives.

Some people think of praying only when there is a life-threatening sickness, or after an accident, or when the winds are blowing at 140 miles an hour, or the flood waters are rising at an inescapable rate. Prayer is “used” to overcome the impossible, the unavoidable, and the inescapable. An abstract faith produces prayers that are too late, and without having had prior fellowship with God. It is like a spare tire without air pressure.


Somehow, Mr. Sourdough, should call on all the unbelievers, atheists, and heretics to “weep and howl for the miseries that shall come upon [them]” (James 5:1, emphasis added). They should first do so in repentance to God for their sins and unbelief and Biblical errors. It doesn’t work for good to remember God only in the storm and forget Him when the sunshine becomes bright and clear again.

Life for unbelievers, atheists, and

heretics is like the time of the plague of darkness in Egypt. The Egyptians had darkness so thick that it could be felt, but in the land area in Egypt where the Israelites lived, it was graced with pleasant light. (Exodus 10:21-23). The Bible says, “Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but ye shall be ashamed: Behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but ye shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall HOWL for vexation of spirit” (Isaiah 65:13,14, emphasis added).

Prayer is not a psychological way to bring relief for inconvenient surface pressure. Effective prayer is a two-way fellowship with God. He speaks

into our lives by His commandments, and we make known our requests with thanksgiving. God makes His express will known to us, and we thank God for His grace and desire to then pray according to His will and follow in it.

The Bottom Line is that prayer does have power with God. Mr. Sourdough’s request has a good idea. Every unbeliever, atheist, and heretic can pray, of course. But if they wish to be heard by God, the Bible says they should pray in repentance for their sins and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ to salvation. Meanwhile, we could pray for Mr. Sourdough and all those like him who need to be saved, not merely from Irma, but from hell itself. 

School Matters

Education Begins at Zero

Gerald Miller, Guys Mills, PA

One of the most exciting moments in a child’s life is the first day of school. Just several weeks ago, school shopping was in full swing. Children were begging for just the right pencil and that (unnecessary) pack of 48 crayons rather than the hum-drum

pack of 24. With a new lunch box and backpack, first graders proudly stood on the porch or front lawn for the all-important first day of school picture.

Children recognize the importance of the first day. Parents undoubtedly feel the importance of the first

day. Even other students in school recognize the importance of the first day and quickly reach out to help first graders navigate the new things.

But a question emerges: When does a child's education begin? Is it the first day of school in First Grade?

I propose that we begin training and educating our children at the age of, well, zero. Research has been clear that the development of a child (not just physical development) begins in the womb. An unborn child hears his mother's voice reading aloud and is impacted by her singing. During this time, parents tend to eagerly read everything they can about how to best care for this unborn child and give their baby the best chance possible.

But after the baby is born and we spend a tremendous amount of time changing diapers, cleaning up puke, feeding the child, and staying up all night with a sick child, it is easy to lose sight of who this child is quickly becoming. The care and nurture of a child certainly includes proper physical care. This baby, though, is far more than just a physical being. This child has a spirit, soul, and mind.

If a child's education and training starts at zero, what should be taking place? Allow me to offer several things that makes a tremendous

difference when your child goes through the school house doors the first day of school.

Read often and much to your children. Children love stories. Children who love stories will tend to read stories. And children who read are far ahead developmentally throughout their growing up years. Sitting down with children and reading to them is a gift that offers huge returns on the investment of time and energy. One caution: read good books that have stood the test of time. (A constant diet of "Berenstein Bears" doesn't quite meet those criteria.) Reading from a variety of genres is important and good for children, but don't forget the shaping power of these stories. Oh, and one more thing, ask questions about the story. Ask them what just happened in the story, or what they think will happen next. Help your children to engage with stories. This greatly improves reading comprehension later in life. Yes, it takes time and energy, but my wife (who spent countless hours reading to our children) says she misses these special times with her children. The payoff in reading to children is greater than simply the educational benefit.

Make your home a place of

learning. Children will spend the rest of their lives learning. This human quality is essential to growing in Christ, to doing well vocationally, and being a steward of who God created us to be. It was heartwarming when I recently saw my two year old nephew looking at an ABC book with his dad and was able to recognize many of the letters of the alphabet. Teach them to count. When preparing a meal, talk about what you are doing. When driving, ask young children what animals they see, what sound they make, count the signs beside the road. The sky is the limit! The opportunity is ours as parents to teach our children “along the way.”


Severely limit screen time for children. Screens have become the new babysitter and have replaced good parenting in too many cases. Research is showing the devastating effects of screen time on young children. Unfortunately, this is not a problem that is “out there.” It is a part of our daily lives. There are many two year olds who know their way around a smartphone quite well. Bear in mind that the medical field has discovered that screen time is literally rewiring the brains of our children. As a teacher, I can’t help but notice that the number of special needs coming to first grade has doubled

(in some cases tripled) in the last ten years in our schools. Screen time and the change in parenting styles has created huge learning issues for our children. Are we going to be concerned enough to change our habits and lifestyles to give the best possible chance to our children?

Sing with your children. Generally speaking, most of us have not realized how much we have turned into consumers rather than producers. Significantly, music has become a primary place of consumerism for Anabaptists. While it is a wonderful thing to have skilled singing groups available for our listening and worship, an unintended consequence is that fewer and fewer families actually sing together around the kitchen table or in the living room and produce music. Music and singing is key to the whole development of a child. Interestingly, the percentage of children who can hear and sing pitches and sing well when coming into first grade is decreasing. The “fix” is not some sort of magic. Rather singing together as a family and hearing the mother of the home singing while working is a wonderful place to start when our children are very young. Churches can help by creating ample time for worship in song, as well as offering

music classes to the adults in the congregation for those who do not have much background in music.

Nurturing children starts early. As parents, we make the difference in a young child's life that sets the trajectory for his entire life. While vigilance in training at all ages is called

for when we take the responsibility of raising children that God graciously gives us, extraordinary attention should be given to the training of children from ages 1-6. May God help us to raise the next generation of warriors through careful attention to our young children. 

Children Drawn Into the Heart of God

Richard Owen Roberts

Years ago I was taught that children can't handle the great truths of Christianity. That is ridiculous. Don't cheat your children by sending them into some side room when serious things are happening in the church. Children have an incredible capacity to absorb and respond to all the deep things of God.

In fact, I have more hope for the children than I do for the middle-aged. Many of our middle-aged people are so sold out to gold and goods they can't hear anything serious. But thank God, the children haven't been corrupted yet, and they indeed can hear and can make remarkable responses.

When I was twelve years of age, I felt clearly led to commit myself, in fact, my entire life to the issue of

revival, but that began when I was a boy of eight. I was drawn by the Spirit. I can go back right now in my mind and feel something of what I felt as an eight-year-old. Don't tell me that children can't be drawn into the heart of God. I wouldn't waste their lives sending them off into side rooms to listen to idle talk when something significant is going on among the people of God in the sanctuary.

[From The Herald of His Coming, Used by permission. I believe this testimony from another part of the Christian family deserves thoughtful consideration. Note that the writer is not saying that children must be exposed to the failings of Christians. But as when the family gathers around the supper table and each gets what is needed for nourishment, so when great truths are being taught children can grasp much that nourishes mature faith.

-PLM] 

marriages

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

Beachy-Miller

Bro. Kevin, son of Wilford and Alice Beachy, Kalona, IA, and Sis. Jenelle, daughter of David Lee and Martha Miller, Kalona, IA, at Fairview Mennonite for Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church, on July 15, 2017, by Delmar Bontrager.

Beiler-Huber

Bro. Micah, son of Melvin and Verna Beiler, Elmer, NJ, and Sis. Kendra, daughter of Mervin and Nancy Huber, Stevens, PA, at Ephrata Business Center, for Salem County Church on March 25, 2017, by Melvin Beiler.

Beiler-Yoder

Bro. John, son of Katie and the late John Beiler, Port Royal, PA, and Sis. Julie, daughter of John and Janice Yoder, Hutchinson, KS, at Arlington A. M. Church, on Sept. 30, 2017, by Arlen Mast.

Brenneman-Miller

Bro. Matthew, son of Miriam and the late Philip Brenneman, Beckworth, CA, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Mose and Amy Miller, Dundee, OH, at Maranatha A.M. Church for Messiah A.M. Church on June 17, 2017, by Philip Miller.

Fisher-Petersheim

Bro. Ryan, son of Raymond and Lana Fisher, Limestone, TN, and Sis. Jennifer, daughter of Alva and Marion Petersheim, Chuckey, TN, at Greene County Mennonite Church on August 12, 2017, by Raymond Fisher.

Kanagy-Miller

Bro. Ronald, son of Urie and the late Dayle Ann Kanagy, Swanton, MD, and Sis. Larissa, daughter of Johnny and Katie Miller, Swanton, MD, at Cherry Glade Mennonite Church for Swanton Mennonite Fellowship, Swanton, MD, on July 7, 2017, by Eli Hershberger.

Martin-Miller

Bro. Shannon, son of Carl and Nancy Martin, Lititz, PA, and Sis. Veronica, daughter of Valentine and Darletta Miller, Orange, VA, at Orange Baptist Church for Gospel Light Mennonite Church on Sept. 23, 2017, by Darrel Beachy.

Miller-Miller

Bro. Merlin, son of David and Katie Anna Miller, Wellman, IA, and Sis. Kimberly, daughter of Marlin and Fern Miller, Kalona, IA, at Fairview Mennonite for Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church on July 22, 2017, by Delmar Bontrager.

Miller-Smucker

Bro. Nathanael, son of Levi and Mary Miller, Limestone, TN, and Sis. Ashley, daughter of Marvin and Anita Smucker,

Chuckey, TN, at First Baptist Church for Greene County Mennonite Church on Sept. 9, 2017, by Raymond Fisher.


Miller-Schlabach

Bro. Ryan, son of Bobby and Jeani Miller, Newcomerstown, OH, and Sis. Judith, daughter of Delbert and Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH, at Still Waters Mennonite Church, Georgetown, OH, on June 3, 2017, by the groom's father, Bobby Miller.

Stoltzfus-King

Bro. Alvin, son of Aaron and Anna Stoltzfus, Gap, PA, and Sis. Esther, daughter of Omer and Emma King, Greene, NY, at Berean Bible Church on August 19, 2017, by Lee Stoltzfus.

Yoder-Coblentz

Bro. Anthony, son of Keith and Wilma Yoder, Swanton, MD, and Sis. Julia, daughter of Don and Lorene Coblentz, Antrim, OH, at Stop Nine Church of Christ for Antrim Mennonite Church on July 29, 2017, by Keith Yoder. 



cradle roll

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

Esh, Al and Sue (Helmuth), Pratts, VA, third child, first daughter, Sarah Grace, Sept. 6, 2017.

Gerber, Tim and Marybeth (Wagler), Gadshill, ON, eleventh child, seventh daughter, Rebecca Ann, June 20, 2017.

Graber, Larry and Lois (Raber), Rose Hill, VA, third and fourth children, second son, second daughter, Asher River and Allison Brooke, August 24, 2017.

Helmuth, Andrew and Regina (Hochstetler), Nappanee, IN, first child and son, Jack Archer, Sept. 9, 2017.

Kauffman, Curtis and Kelly (Shenk), Leon, IA, third child, first daughter, Tenaya Shae, August 14, 2017.

Kauffman, Melvern and Patricia (Whitt), Montezuma, GA, eighth child, fifth daughter, Laura Joy, Nov. 19, 2016.

King, Ivan and Verna (Hostetler), Honey Brook, PA, sixth child, third son, Timothy Jacob, August 13, 2017.

Lengacher, Caleb and Larhonda (Wingard), Montezuma, GA, four child, second son, Tyrell Wade, Feb. 2, 2017.

Miller, Jesse and Lori (Hostetler), Blackville, SC, fourth child, second son, Brandon Scott, Sept. 7, 2017.

Miller, Mark and Liz (Kline), Berlin, OH, fourth child, second son, Kyle Jacob, May 21, 2017.

Peachey, Matt and Daria (Yoder), Lewistown, PA, sixth child, fourth daughter, Lillian Sadie, Aug. 29, 2017.

Plank, James and Megan (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, fourth child, third daughter, Sierra Raine, April 12, 2017.

Stoltzfus, Arlen and Angie (Stoltzfus), Morgantown, PA, third child, second son, Bryant Chase, Sept. 10, 2017.

Stutzman, Elwyn and Rhonda (Hackman), Wellman, IA, fifth child, third daughter, Chloe Joy, June 11, 2017.

Swartzentruber, Nolan and Heidi (Barkman), Abbeville, SC, second and third children and sons, twins, Archer Finn and Oliver Will, Sept. 15, 2017.

Swartzentruber, Wendell and Mary (Beachy), Montezuma, GA, fifth child, first son, Theodore Elliot, June 30, 2017.

Troyer, Duane and Melody (Gingerich), Leon, IA, second child and son, Jadon Morris, July 30, 2017.

Troyer, Harold and Larissa (Zaikova), Belleville, PA, sixth child, fifth son, Daniel Harold, June 15, 2017.

Weaver, Ryan and Rebecca (Yoder) Montezuma, GA, third child and daughter, Alexis Kate, April 4, 2017.

Yoder, Adam and Christina (Yoder) Montezuma, GA, first child and daughter, Skylar Brielle, Feb. 5, 2017.


Yoder, Andrew and Judith (Swartzentruber), Montezuma, GA, fifth child, second son, Kameron Layne, June 8, 2017.

Yoder, Dave and Audrey (Overholt), Montezuma, GA, third child, second daughter, LaWanda Kate, Feb. 5, 2017.

Yoder, David Lee and Heidi (Cross), Montezuma, GA, fourth child and daughter, Aundrea Hope, Nov. 30, 2016.

Yoder, Julius and Verna (Schwartz), Auburn, KY, sixth child, third daughter, Krista Ryann, August 26, 2017.

Yoder, Morris and Beth (Martin), Montezuma, GA, third child and son, Shane Brinson, Feb. 19, 2017.

Yoder, Trenton and Amber (Plank), Montezuma, GA, fifth child, first daughter, Janessa Faith, April 12, 2017. 




ordinations

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

Bro. Richard Ropp, 31, (wife Bethany Gerber) was ordained as deacon for Anchor of Hope Anabaptist Fellowship, Stratford, ON, on Sept. 3, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Perry Miller, Lornesburg, TN. The charge

was given by Arnold Jantzi, assisted by Laverne Ropp and Perry Miller.

Bro. Josiah R. Troyer, 33, (wife, Amy Mullet), of Sugarcreek, Ohio, was ordained as minister at Maranatha Fellowship Church on May 7, 2017. Preordination messages were given by Joel Gingerich. The charge was given by Paul Leroy Miller, assisted by Phil Miller and James B. Mullet. Sharing the lot were Terry Mullet and Jay Wendell Stoltzfus. 

obituaries

Jantzi, Laura (nee Zehr), 93, of Mitchell, Ontario, died May 24, 2017. She was born Jan. 7, 1924, daughter of the late Moses and Fannie (Lichty) Zehr.

She was a faithful member of the Cedar Grove Amish Mennonite congregation.

On Oct. 22, 1977, she was married to Elmer Jantzi. He died on July 11, 1982.

She will be sadly missed by her siblings: Mary Gerber; Norman Zehr and his wife Amy; Jacob Zehr and his wife Alma; Elmer Zehr and his wife Ethel; and Esther Jantzi and her husband Ohmer. She will also be missed by her many nieces and nephews.

Laura was predeceased by her brother John Zehr and his wives, Esther and Mary Anne; her sister, Emma and husband Allan Wagler, and her brother-in-law, Amos Gerber.

The funeral was held on May 28, with Paul Jantzi and John Gerber serving.

Burial was in the Mornington A.M. Cemetery.

Kaufman, Reuben J., 86, of Sugarcreek, Ohio, died August 5, 2017, after a long battle with Lou Gehrig's disease. He was born on Sept. 29, 1930, at Lovington, Illinois, son of the late Jephthah and Rebecca (Miller) Kaufman.

He was a minister of the Beachy church for many years. He also served as missionary for several terms in Belize, Central America, and in Liberia, Africa.. He worked as an electrician specialist for a number of years. In recent years he was a driver for Choice Books and provided Amish taxi service. He recently commented: "I am blessed that I have been able to serve in the kingdom of God."

On Oct. 18, 1956, he was married to Elva Miller. She survives. Also

surviving are five children: J. Mark (Anna Ruth) Kaufman, Millersburg; Judy Kaufman, Berlin; Joy Elliot, Canton; James (Erma) Kaufman, Millersburg; and Mary Jean Kaufman, Sugarcreek; nine grandchildren and seven great grandchildren; brothers, Dan (Anna) Kaufman and Valentine (Martha) Kaufman and sister-in-law, Emma Kaufman, all of Illinois.

He was preceded in death by a sister, Katie Miller, and brothers, Andrew, Amzy, Noah, and a son-in-law, Vernon Elliot.

The funeral was held on August 9 at Messiah A.M. Church with Phil Miller, Elmer Smucker, and Lavon Stoltzfus serving.

Miller, Elizabeth Jane, 82, of Kalona, Iowa, died from complications of a stroke on May 6, 2017. She was born on March 13, 1935, at Inola, Oklahoma, to John L. and Mary (Yoder) Chupp.

She was a member of Sharon Bethel Amish Mennonite congregation, Kalona.

On Nov. 20, 1958, she was married to Menno L. Miller in Chouteau, Oklahoma. She was a housewife that enjoyed spending time with family and friends and quilting, baking, gardening, reading, fishing, watching birds and enjoying the winter months in Arizona.

Surviving are three sons: Nelson (Glenda), Fay, OK; Lloyd, Moundridge, KS; Larry, Wellman; four daughters: Lovina Miller and Gerry Mauro, Glendale, AZ; Ruth (Manuel) Miller, Wellman; LaVertta (Randy) Hochstetler, Grabill, IN, and Lucille Miller, Kalona; 10 grandchildren and six siblings, EJ (Ida)

Chupp, Inola, OK; Lydia Mae Chupp, Flemingsburg, KY; Johnny (Katie Mae) Chupp, Inola, OK; Mary Fern Chupp, Kalona; Freda Chupp, Inola, OK; and Esther (Jake) Hershberger, Inola, OK; sister-in-law, Susie Chupp, Inola, OK; one aunt, one uncle, and many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Menno L. Miller, on March 18, 2016, a granddaughter, Brittany Hochstetler, and a brother Noah Ray Chupp.

The funeral was held on 15, at Sharon Bethel Church with Delmar Bontrager and Jacob Yoder serving. Burial was in the Sharon Bethel Cemetery.

Miller, Jonas J. E., 83, of Sugarcreek, Ohio, died at his home following a period of declining health on August 23, 2017. He was born in Holmes County on November 14, 1933, son of the late Jacob E. and Susan (Miller) Miller.

Jonas was a member and minister of Maranatha Fellowship, serving as minister and bishop for a total of 40 years until his retirement in 2003. He was also involved in helping various churches and served on the board of Amish Mennonite Aid and Christian Aid Ministries. He was a building contractor.

On Nov. 29, 1956, he was married to Fannie A. Yoder. Children born to this union are: David (Ruth) Miller, Esther Miller and Paul Leroy (Miriam Joy) Miller, all of Sugarcreek; Debbie (Greg) Gouriluk, Venice, FL; and Roselyn (Josh) Hochstetler, Sarasota, FL, 13 grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by brothers Henry, Mose, and Melvin and a great grandson, Seth Elliot Miller.

The funeral was held at Maranatha Fellowship Church on August 29, with Deacon Andy Miller officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.


Stoltzfus, Daniel, 79, of New Holland, PA, died on June 27, 2017. He was born June 13, 1938, to the late Jacob E. and Barbara (Stoltzfus) Stoltzfus.

He was a member of Westhaven A. M. Church, New Holland.

On Nov. 30, 1961, he was married to Sadie Mae Stoltzfus. She is deceased. Surviving are his eight children: Wilmer (Emma) Stoltzfus, Gordonville; Barbie Ann (Ivan) Stoltzfus, New Holland; Daniel (Naomi) Stoltzfus, Romney, WV;

Elmer (Bonita) Stoltzfus, Plain City, OH; Steven (Linda) Stoltzfus, Bridgeton, NJ; Allen (Joanna) Stoltzfus, Paw Paw, WV; Daryl (Rose) Stoltzfus, Ronks; and Rose (Christian) King, Paradise. Also surviving are 44 grandchildren, 24 great grandchildren, and six siblings: Mary (the late Daniel) Stoltzfus, Elizabeth (the late Aaron) Lantz, Jonathan (the late Katie) Stoltzfus, Samuel (Susanna) Stoltzfus, Gideon (Edna) Stoltzfus, and Amos (Katie) Stoltzfus.

He was preceded in death by three siblings: Elmer (Mary) Stoltzfus, Jonathan Stoltzfus, Jacob (Annie) Stoltzfus, and one grandson, Matthew Ryan Stoltzfus.

The funeral was held at Westhaven A M Church on July 30, with Daniel Stoltzfus serving. Burial was in the church cemetery. 

observations

One of the challenges after a natural disaster like Hurricane Harvey is the arduous task of assessing damage. There are many, many bridges, public buildings, homes and factories plus infrastructure that delivers things like electricity, gas, etc. that need to be evaluated to determine the extent of damage. In many cases it is not safe for a human to get close enough to make a helpful evaluation. This is where licensed drone operators

enter the picture. Drone photography can help, both to assess the extent of damage, and to understand when humans can safely move in for a more thorough examination. Some search and rescue operations utilize drones that are equipped with thermal sensing capability to help locate people that can't be seen.

There are more than 2,000 licensed drone operators in the Houston area alone. Current technology facilitates high quality photography

with impressive zoom capability that provides both clear and still images as well as live video footage. Union Pacific Railroad used drones extensively to inspect stretches of track that are difficult to access. Insurance companies deployed drones to aid adjusters in speeding up the claims process. Public works employees utilized information gleaned from drones to assess drainage and water flow problems.

The agriculture sector is another area where drone usage is on the rise. I can only imagine how many jobs a rancher would find for his drone to perform. How about locating cattle in rough terrain, checking cattle during calving season without getting close enough to disturb them, for example? Many farmers are also utilizing drones to monitor crops.

However, as is usually the case, there is a negative side to this technology. This capability comes with major privacy concerns. After all, the privacy fence in your back yard is designed to provide horizontal privacy, not vertical privacy. Drones can peek in a window high off the ground if there are no shades or blinds to obstruct the view. Earlier this year firefighting planes in Arizona were grounded and firefighting crews on the ground withdrew for about an hour after a drone was spotted in

the area where they were battling a fire. That drone operator will have the opportunity to answer in court for how his indiscretion endangered those battling the blaze and allowed the fire to make progress while the firefighters pulled back.

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Black Friday got its label because it is regarded as the approximate time of year when retail stores see their financial balance move from the “red” to the “black.” While brick and mortar retailers have hitched their promotional efforts to “black Friday,” online vendors have their own version of “black Friday”. It falls on the first Monday following Thanksgiving and is called, “cyber Monday.”

Evidence of the ongoing shift away from shopping in physical stores to online shopping is generously represented in the news. Sears is closing around 250 stores in 2017, JC Penney announced 138 store closings earlier this year and Macy’s announced plans to close more than 100 stores this year.

The Galleria was once a ritzy shopping mall in Pittsburgh, Pa that boasted 1.1 million square feet. However, the income that the property generated didn’t meet the expectations of the developers. They owed about 143 million dollars when

the property sold this past January at a foreclosure auction. How much do you think a property like this would be worth? Well, it sold for \$100 at auction. I'm guessing a lot of people paid more for a pair of foot wear at that location than the property ended up selling for.

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A 55,000 square foot facility recently opened in Great Falls, Montana, to grade and process organic, cage-free eggs primarily for Costco stores in the northwestern states. This project is a joint effort between Costco and about 35 Hutterite colonies where the eggs are produced for this specialty market.

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My daughter Brianna and I overheard a bit of communication several rows behind us as our plane was approaching our gate after a three-hour flight. A gentleman who appeared to be traveling with his wife and another couple suddenly began earnestly patting his legs and inspecting his trousers, then said, "Wow, boys and girls! I left my car keys back in the rental car." After allowing the implications of his discovery to soak in he mentioned to those who were listening, "It seems that every time I travel something major happens!"

In spite of his predicament, he

spoke more like a good-natured fellow than one feeling distraught. Maybe he had learned that no matter how dire the situation, our angst never really alleviates the problem. I surely hope he had an extra set of car keys somewhere.

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A major stated objective of the 2015 Paris Agreement was to enact policies that would limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. The scientific information cited at that time, predicted that this threshold would be breached within the next five years or so. This agreement was signed by 194 countries pledging various levels of intent to curb pollution and carbon emissions in order to achieve that goal.

Earlier this year president Trump announced that the USA was backing out of this agreement because he believes the economic burden of compliance far outweighs any achievable benefit.

Henry Bodkin from *The Telegraph* reported that in September a group of British scientists published a study with some findings pertinent to this discussion. Their findings lead them to believe that we are not as far along as earlier thought in our march to that 1.5 degree threshold. In fact they now believe it might be a couple of

decades later that we reach that point, if at all. They are optimistic enough that they predict there is a 2 in 3 chance that global warming never gets to that point. The factors leading to this ‘adjustment’ are as follows:

The models that the scientific community used earlier were flawed.

The rate of pollution is lower than expected.

The clean energy revolution is impacting the environment sooner than anticipated.

The inevitability of impending doom for our planet, due to climate change, has long been presented as settled science. This is a good reminder that nothing is more settled than it is accurate. The psalmist remarked, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven” (Psalms 119:89). That is real reliability.

It seems to me that we who are children of the Heavenly Father, and citizens of the Heavenly Kingdom do well when we understand that our sojourn here implies a thoughtful stewardship of God’s creation. We also know from the Scriptures that some day the “elements will melt with fervent heat”. This awareness should temper our decisions and actions regardless whether climate change and how we affect it, deserves to be a popular discussion or not.

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“Shame on you!” This pronouncement was fairly commonly heard among my age mates as we navigated the landscape of our collective childhood. I can’t speak for everybody else, but my sense of the usage of “shame” as a noun very closely aligns itself to the first definition I found in Websters, “A painful emotion caused by consciousness of guilt, shortcoming, or impropriety.”

Shame has acquired some pretty negative baggage in today’s common usage. Is shame bad? That is too broad a question to comprehensively answer with a simple answer. But false shame is not a helpful sentiment. Shame that we illegitimately “take on” is not productive. Excessive shyness due to a feelings of inferiority disguised as inadequacy can get mixed up with feelings of shame that cripple us.

On the other hand, shame is very closely tied to the awareness of wrongdoing. In proper doses, it can be a helpful component that enables a proper response to temptation. Oftentimes today, the word is used as a verb to describe what people do to each other. This can be a real problem when people use shame as a control tactic. However, it’s gotten to the point today, that disagreeing with a person’s choices or behavior

oftentimes triggers an accusation that you're "shaming" him or her. It is problematic when legitimate shame for doing wrong is somehow blamed on other people.

When we repent God freely forgives us and we are free from guilt. It behooves us as God's children to pattern our responses to a repentant brother or sister after the response of our Heavenly Father. That response means that we won't try to generate more shame than the person already experiences as a natural result of wrongdoing. But we also understand that we can't really erase that shame either for another person. When our

love for another person manifests itself as trying to eliminate legitimate shame, we might inadvertently erode its benefit.

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What are you thankful for this Thanksgiving? We can look around us and see a multitude of reasons to be discouraged. We can also look around us and see many, many reasons to rejoice. When we notice what is good and right and beneficial in our world, and thank God for that, we are much more pleasant people to live with than when we focus on our woes.

-RJM 

mission awareness

A Backward Glance, A Forward Focus

Brian Yoder

Every mission organization, especially those in church planting efforts, has its growing pains. Brian Yoder treats this subject meticulously with biblical wisdom and foresight. Brian writes from the view of a mission representative for the Mennonite Air Missions Board, "We envision the mission walking beside the church as long as the Lord allows. The sixteen churches of our fellowship are quite diverse: some are small, other are larger. We hope to provide leadership where it is lacking, to encourage national leaders, and to assist with counsel and teaching. As the needs of established churches are met, we want to reach new areas with the Gospel." -FS

The airplane served Mennonite Air Missions well in the early years.

Harold Kauffman, the founder of MAM in Guatemala, was able to visit several remote outposts on a single

Sunday and bring Bible teaching and godly encouragement. Even after roads were built, wings were a useful resource and a real time-saver. But the country has changed since those years, and the plane has become more of a convenience than a need. It has been expensive to maintain and operate, and it is difficult to keep an experienced pilot on the field.

During a board meeting several years ago, Harold Kauffman (now ninety and still serving in Guatemala) was asked, "When you began the work over forty years ago, did you envision MAM to be what it is today?" Harold thought for a moment. "No," he answered, "I couldn't imagine what forty years would bring. I only knew what the Lord's will was for me then."

Hindsight is excellent, foresight is hazy, and only God knows about the next forty years. As we consider the future, we welcome what God has taught us the last forty years. We plan for tomorrow with an awareness of our history and a deep sense of our need for the Lord's direction.

Watching a mission mature into a church is similar to watching a child grow up. A parent could almost wish the child would always remain a child: innocent, forgiving, learning, and trusting. But parents know that unless children mature, they are

doomed to a limited, frustrated life.

Sometimes a child (as he grows older) may feel more comfortable in allowing Dad to be responsible for making decisions. He doesn't mind someone older paying his rent, putting food on the table, and thinking for him. His dreams of independence somehow leave out the reality of responsibility.

I have been blessed by living among our Guatemalan brethren. Their energy in sharing the Gospel surpasses mine. Their love for the Lord puts mine to shame. I have observed their humility and faith, intensity in prayer, and love for God's Word. I owe them much for their example.

As a functioning entity, the sisterhood of Guatemalan churches is a work in progress. For many years there was "The Church" and "The Mission." The church was the membership and the leadership. But all things material, financial, or organizational came in view of the mission director's desk. The mission is where we sent the electric bills, where we called with maintenance questions. It is where pulpits, benches, and school desks were constructed.

When a mission is young, energetic, and blessed with souls for the kingdom, it is hard to imagine

that sometime in the future will come a painful disentanglement of that which is national and that which is foreign. Although the missionary is aware of national customs and realities, he often fails to realize that his foreign way of thinking is a large factor in his decisions. He builds like a foreigner and plans projects and spends money like a foreigner. National brethren soon grow accustomed to this reality, and the concept of foreign leadership, customs, and foreign funds are quickly entrenched.

Even in this environment the church might continue to grow and be blessed. On a spiritual level nationals and foreigners are united and at peace as long as the arrangement lasts.

Over the years faithful Christians continue to grow as a body. In his book, *Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours*, Roland Allen suggests that there is an optimum time for a newly-founded church to assume its own leadership. If a mission group squelches the church's desire to express this maturity, the relationship between mission and church is cemented into a parent/child relationship in perpetuity.

When a church reaches this maturity, it is truly a blessing from God. The highest goal of an

evangelistic mission effort should be to not only bring individuals to spiritual maturity, but also cement them into a working body under Jesus Christ. Yes, there may be frustrations but such is the process of maturity, just as parents experience with their teenagers. But unless parents are willing to acknowledge their children's maturity, and even allow them to make some mistakes, they are doomed to be parents for a long time.

During this time of disentanglement, the differences between what is foreign and what is national becomes strikingly important to consider. Is our centralized approach to church life sustainable for a national church? Is the way we bus school children, fund institutes, do committee meetings, operate clinics, and travel around the country an asset to an indigenous church or a millstone around its neck? Will the programs we North Americans start and promote only exist as long as we oversee and fund them, or will they continue to be a practical asset in a Guatemalan church?

The Mennonite Air Missions Board of Directors believe that it is the will of the Lord to support the Guatemalan church on a path toward greater maturity and autonomy.

First, we reaffirmed that the board's role in Guatemalan church life is an advisory role, not a controlling one. Second, we invited our national brethren to be more directly involved in mission decisions and oversight. This pertains especially to the area of handling finances. Third, we unanimously chose to sell the mission airplane. In Guatemala, airplane ownership is exclusive to the wealthy. In looking ahead, we felt the airplane would not fit within the parameters of an indigenous church.

I believe the mission and the church are important in God's eyes. Yet the mission organization is but a tool, while the church is the final

product. Like a new building is permanent while the scaffolding is temporary, so the church of Jesus Christ is eternal while the mission effort that planted it has a measured span of usefulness.

The grace of God is the only power that can help a church to grow. The grace that brings her to life is the power that allows her to walk; otherwise she is doomed to a handicapped existence. May we not build into her the very handicap that will quench her for life, but lead her to dependence on the Lord Jesus that allows her to flourish.

(This article, though abridged, first appeared in the MAM Newsletter; used by permission).



helpers at home

Joy *A By-Product of Thanksgiving*

Mary June Glick, Seneca SC

A thankful woman is a joyful woman. It does not necessarily mean she has an easy life or has experienced a life free of stress. In fact it may mean just the opposite. She may be a woman who has experienced deep pain or grief. Her life may have been full of bends and curves. Life may not have met her expectations. However, I believe

a woman who has courageously walked through the storms of life and emerged with a deeper faith and a joyous spirit is a woman who has learned the secret of thankfulness.

Thankful, grateful, and appreciative all express the same thought. Thankfulness shows an indebtedness to someone. We are all indebted to God for His blessings to us and we

are indebted to people. Cultivating a spirit of thankfulness strengthens our faith and brings glory to God. At the same time it can also strengthen our relationship with people. We don't want to be like the nine lepers who were healed and forgot to say, "Thank you" to Jesus. Only the one who returned to thank Jesus formed a relationship with the healer. The Bible commands us to be thankful in all circumstances. This is not an easy command when we are going through trials and difficulties. We live in a culture that encourages us to act how we feel. However, God knows that only as we focus on our blessings will we become people of joy.

We have experienced many natural catastrophes in this past year all over the world. Earthquakes, tornados, and hurricanes have left many people homeless. There is war, famine and persecution in countries around the world. We wonder "Why" have certain areas been spared and others suffer? Was it because Christians prayed? I believe God answers prayer. I also believe there were many devout Christians who prayed. They still suffered tremendous loss of possessions and loss of life. We do not understand the mind of Christ. However, I believe God may have spared us be the hands and feet of Jesus, to bring

hope and comfort to the hurting. He may want to use our resources to rebuild, to feed the hungry, and even to heal the sick. We can express our thanks to God by reaching out to others.

Why should we be thankful? Because God has blessed us and we should thank Him for each blessing.


Thank God for material blessing, for food, shelter and clothing. Everything we have in life ultimately comes from God. He gives us physical strength, mental understanding, many opportunities to work and the ability to work. Thank God for each gift he gives you, name them one by one. Speak of your blessings to others. Share your blessings with your children. Rejoice together in God's goodness. I have seen people who experience so little in life of material benefits, yet exhibit a deeply thankful and joyful spirit.

Thank God for the people in your life. It is easy to take people for granted, to become angry and complain because they do not meet our need. But we must learn to thank God for those He has placed into our lives, our spouses, children, extended families and church family. Even thank Him for the people you work with. Let people know you love and appreciate them.

Thank God for the difficult experiences in your life. None of us wants to go through trials and trouble, yet it is in the midst of these that we draw close to God and experience His divine grace upon our lives. Suffering gives us a new perspective on life and draws our hearts to Heaven.

Thank God for the beauty of creation. For those of us who have eyesight, we need to enjoy the beauty of the sunset, the stars, birds, flowers, the ocean. God has given us so many things to enjoy. I will never

forget looking up at the full eclipse in August, and recognizing just a glimpse of the greatness of God. I believe even the poorest person on earth can find joy in God's creation. He does not limit His gifts of nature to anyone.

Thank God most of all for the gift of salvation. We will experience deep peace as we walk in a daily relationship with Jesus Christ. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and your neighbor as yourself. In everything give thanks. Joy is the by-product of thanksgiving. 

junior messages

Hippos and Road Runners

Margretta Yoder, Hutchinson, KS

God has designed many interesting animals and birds. I enjoy learning fun facts about God's creation. I would like to describe two unique creatures—a huge mammal and an unusual bird.

The hippopotamus is an animal that I enjoyed spotting while in Africa on a safari. The roadrunner is a bird I studied in school. Just recently, I had the privilege of sighting this bird

many times when it nested close to our house.

Do you know what animal's name means "water horse"? None other than the hippopotamus. Most of us have seen hippos only in zoos, but many of them live in the wild in Africa.

Two kinds of hippos exist—the water hippo and the pygmy. I would like to share some interesting facts about the water hippo. The water

hippo is huge and fast! It can be 16 feet long and weigh up to 9900 pounds. That's almost five tons. It can be as heavy as a truck or two cars. Most, however, weigh two tons or less.

Hippos, of course, need to eat a lot. One hippo may eat anywhere from 80 to 150 pounds of grass in one night! Surprisingly, this large animal is mainly herbivorous, meaning it eats plants—not animals. Occasionally hippos have been known to eat meat or insects if grass supplies are low. Hippos also enjoy fruit. Their keen sense of hearing enables them to hear fruit drop from trees.

The hippo can't sweat, but needs to keep its skin wet so it won't dry out. God took care of that because the hippo's skin secretes a thick, reddish ooze when its hide is getting hot, to keep it from getting sun-burned! Hippos spend most of the daytime in water, keeping cool. Hippos can stay under water for five minutes! They close their nostrils and hold their breath. They are able to open their eyes while under water as they have built-in goggles—a clear membrane which covers their eyes while under water.

If hippos make noises while under water, these vibrations carry through the water and other hippos can feel

the vibrations.

Baby hippos are called calves and are born under water. When they are born, baby hippos weigh nearly 100 pounds—the average weight of a 13-year-old boy!

Hippos live with a group of about 15 other hippos, however, there can be as many as 200 hippos in a group. Groups of hippos are called “pods,” “herds,” or “sieges.”

Although hippos do not eat humans, they are considered Africa's most dangerous land animal. They may attack if they are guarding their territory, their calves, or when a man gets between them and the river. More humans are killed by hippos than by lions.

Hippos are old at 40 to 50 years.

Hippos have huge mouths spanning up to four feet across and they have twelve-inch-long ivory teeth. Their incisor (front) teeth and canine (tearing) teeth never stop growing but remain a manageable size because they get worn down from use. A hippo uses its large front teeth to fight off predators and to guard its territory. However, a hippo uses its horny lips—not its teeth—to pull up a meal of grass. The molars then do the job of chewing the food.

Now let's learn about the Greater Roadrunner.

Have you ever seen a bird with a sturdy blue beak and a bushy blue-black crest, mottled feathers, and yellow eyes? If you have, then likely you spotted the Greater Roadrunner, a bird in the cuckoo family.

This bird is not like most of the birds that come to your bird feeder. This big bird prefers sprinting to flying. It is capable of killing a rattle snake and thrives living in the deserts.

The roadrunner is a monogamous bird which means it mates for life.

Roadrunners are found in the southwestern part of the United States and in Mexico. Their favorite foods are insects, reptiles, birds, fruit, mice, lizards, and snakes. To kill a snake, sometimes two roadrunners help each other. One will distract the snake and the other will grab its head and strike it on the ground until the snake dies. Sometimes the roadrunner is full before it has eaten the entire snake so part of the snake just hangs out of its mouth until its the roadrunner's stomach has room to digest more. Eating a poisonous snake does not harm the roadrunner.

While trying to woo a female, male roadrunners make a variety of noises, coos, putts, and whirrs. Male roadrunners also offer gifts

such as dead animals to the female to attract her.

Other noises you might hear from roadrunners are sharp barks similar to a coyote or a low-pitched growl used to communicate to their chicks or when searching for food.

The nest or clutch of a roadrunner has an average of four eggs, but can have as many as ten. Even though a roadrunner spends most of its time on the ground, the female often builds the nest three to 15 feet above the ground in shrubs, trees or cactuses. Both male and female help take care of their little ones.

If you think you may have spotted a roadrunner, look for its tracks. A roadrunner has four toes, two pointed forward, and two pointed back which makes their tracks the shape of an X.

Roadrunners live seven to eight years in the wild which is quite a bit longer than the average age of a songbird.

Do the hippo and the roadrunner have any similarities?

Surprisingly, they do. They both run nearly the same speed. Hippos can run 19 miles per hour and roadrunners sprint up to 20 mph. Likely the small roadrunner would win the race if it was ever chased by

a hippo!

On an African morning, we saw a lone hippo trundling along on the grassland. What a huge beast with short fat legs, jogging back to the

river to spend the day.

Keep your eyes wide open. Some day you may well see the unique roadrunner racing along a dirt road in Kansas!



thinking generation

The Weight of Too Much Liberty

Josh Nisley, Jerusalem

Here in Jerusalem and around the world, one can recognize Orthodox Jewish men by their white dress shirts and dark pants. In fact, you might mistake them for conservative Anabaptist men on a Sunday morning if it weren't for their black yarmulkes (skullcaps). As far as I can tell, they wear this same outfit all the time—summer or winter, praying or playing.

I can't help but envy the liberating simplicity of such a wardrobe. Getting dressed for the day? No need to ask my wife if this shirt goes with these pants. Shopping for clothes? No need to sort through the myriads of colors, patterns, and styles. White, black, done. There is a paradoxical freedom in constrained options.

Freedom in contemporary

Westernized culture has become what philosopher Richard Weaver would call a “god term,” something that is considered ultimately good and unquestionably desirable. We glorify the free individual—the self-made ones who refuse to conform their brilliance to social expectations and norms. Originality and self-expression are ultimate goods. Constraint and conformity are grave evils. The problem with cultural “god terms” is that they are rarely defined well, much less challenged. What is individual freedom anyway? Freedom from what and for what end? How might freedom actually be harmful and limits be helpful?

This essay will not be a screed against individuality and freedom as such. I rather enjoy being an individual, after all. And I would dare guess we all

prefer to spend time with people who have distinctive personalities, think original thoughts, and come up with creative ideas. Instead, it will attempt to think critically, historically, and scripturally about the modern conception of individual freedom in hopes of unsettling its status as an ultimate good. Sometimes the best way to resist adopting cultural idols is to hold them up to the light.

A Genealogy of Individualism

As with all cultural phenomena, individualism has a backstory. Perhaps no other historical event shaped our modern understanding of the individual as much as the Protestant Reformation. Before the Reformation, issues of salvation and biblical interpretation were primarily the purview of the Roman Catholic Church. The reformers changed all this by defining salvation as a kind of legal exchange between the individual and Christ. They also emphasized the importance of individuals reading and understanding Scripture for themselves, thus eroding the interpretative authority of the Church.

The Radical Reformers (Anabaptists) further centralized the role of the individual in matters of faith by adding the element of personal choice. The true Christian

is one who makes a rational decision to follow Christ, not one who is baptized into the state church by no choice of their own. Soon Pietism emerged, stressing a personal relationship with God. Christians should seek to hear God's voice in their own hearts and experience authentic, personal relationship with the divine. All of these events precipitated the democratization of Scriptural interpretation that continues virtually unabated today.

The so-called Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries further shaped our modern conception of the individual. Trends in Enlightenment thought cannot be entirely separated from trends in Protestant theology, but Enlightenment philosophers took things in a decidedly secular direction. The political philosophies of the day enshrined individual rights and freedoms as the highest kinds of rights. The father of modern philosophy, Rene Descartes, gave a thoroughly rationalist account of human knowledge in which the foundation of all knowledge was the individual's knowledge of himself as a knower ("I think, therefore I am"). Individual experience became the only reliable kind of knowledge.

It took several centuries, but the Enlightenment seeds eventually

blossomed into the radical subjectivity that defines our postmodern moment. Individual freedom remains the inviolable creed of our day—one of the few remaining orthodoxies. Even truth claims are subjected to the individual’s right to have an opinion.

These streams of theological and philosophical individualism converge in the story of America. The American founders built the country on an Enlightenment foundation with some gestures toward a theistic, loosely Christian anthropology. At the same time, the Great Awakening cemented the role of non-hierarchical, democratized Christianity in American culture. Anybody with a pulpit and a following could establish themselves as a religious authority. This naturally created a kind of Christian capitalism in which charismatic leaders had to compete for followers. The celebrity preachers, authors, and bloggers of today are modern manifestations of this historical trend.

To be clear, theological ideas and movements are not necessarily wrong simply because they contributed to present-day individualism. Faithful Christian communities usually held other beliefs that mitigated the more destructive elements

of individualism. For example, Anabaptists might have rejected the authority of the Pope and elevated the role of the individual in matters of salvation, all the while maintaining a high regard for the authority of Scripture and for church leaders within the brotherhood.

The problem arises when secular society appropriates Christian ideas without the larger framework of Christian faith and practice. Christian ideas stripped of their context quickly become secular monstrosities. As G.K. Chesterton put it, “The modern world is full of the old Christian virtues gone mad.”¹ The Bible clearly teaches the intrinsic worth and dignity of the individual. But separated from the larger biblical narrative of human sin and the need for salvation, this teaching easily morphs into the idolatrous individualism we see today.

Individualism “gone mad”

Two radical notions of the individual self dominate contemporary culture. The first is a kind of Romantic notion in which you discover your true self within yourself and then express that self to the world. The second has a more Existentialist bent in which the true self is something you create

1 G.K. Chesterton, *Orthodoxy*, Chp. III—“The Suicide of Thought,” Page By Page Books, Accessed Online.

through action and experience. There is nothing essential about the self. You are what you do.

To be sure, both the Romantic and Existentialist conceptions of self get some things right. But both ultimately fail because they imagine the self as an autonomous entity floating in a sea of infinite possibilities. They fail to reckon with the contingent, constraining elements of our individuality. To be human is to be limited. We are all born into families we did not choose, with genetic codes we did not design. We are limited to one body that is subject to the natural laws of biology, time, space, and ultimately death.

But what about our minds and our wills—those spiritual elements of our existence? Aren't we free in respect to those? The Apostle Paul doesn't seem to think so. Throughout his epistles, Paul holds up freedom as something of supreme importance, but never freedom for its own sake. Freedom for the follower of Christ is always freedom directed toward the *telos* of godliness and restored relationship with God. As he tells the Roman believers, we do not choose between freedom and slavery, but between a slavery that leads to death (ultimate bondage) and a slavery that leads to eternal life (ultimate freedom).

^{19b} *For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.*

²⁰ *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness.* ²¹ *But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death.* ²² *But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.* ²³ *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.* (Rom. 6:19-23, ESV)

This passage highlights three elements of Christian freedom that warrant some discussion.

You've got to serve somebody or something.

There is no neutral ground. We are made to worship, and we naturally bind ourselves to the objects of our worship. The late postmodern author, David Foster Wallace, notes this proclivity for worship in his now-famous commencement address:

In the day-to-day trenches of adult life, there is actually no such thing as atheism. There is no such thing as not worshipping. Everybody worships.

The only choice we get is what to worship. And the compelling reason for maybe choosing some sort of god or spiritual-type thing to worship... is that pretty much anything else you worship will eat you alive.²

Wallace goes on to describe the devastating effects of worshipping money, beauty, power, and intellect, all of which constitute a kind of self-worship. Clearly, Wallace doesn't arrive at this conclusion as a Christian. For him the choice is between self-worship and worship of some higher power. But his honest observation of everyday adult life reinforces the point Paul makes in Romans. We are free to choose our gods, but we are not free to choose what those gods demand of us and the ends they bring us to.

Rebellion against limits is what got us into our sinful predicament in the first place.

Our enslavement to sin is rooted in our original parents' attempt to transcend a good limitation God placed on them. They traded the knowledge of God for the knowledge of good and evil; and thus, death became a natural part of the human condition. Death is not an arbitrary punishment doled out for

2 David Foster Wallace, "This is Water," Kenyon Commencement Address, 2005, Accessed Online.

disobedience. It is the natural end of cutting ourselves off from God, the source of life. Did Adam and Eve have limits in the Garden of Eden? Yes. Were they in bondage? Absolutely not. They were free to be who God created them to be—creatures made in his own image and for his glory.

Paradoxically, it is only when we are enslaved to the will of God that we are truly free.

The autonomous exercise of will is not an ultimate good. True freedom is not being free from all limitations—free to define reality according to our own whims. It is having the capacity to see the world as it actually is and to order our lives accordingly. And how do we see the world as it actually is? By knowing the Truth—Jesus Christ, the Son of God—who sets us free. And if the Son sets us free, we are free indeed (John 8).

Getting practical

So far this discussion has been rather abstract. I want to look now at some of the particular ways the twin gods of individualism and autonomy threaten the follower of Christ (particularly those of us in the conservative Anabaptist tradition) and how we might subvert them.

Individualism feeds consumerism.
Corporations want our hearts.

Because once they have our hearts, they have our dollars. Corporations are more than happy to fill the West's "post-Christian" void with promises of meaning, fulfillment, and identity. They don't just respond to demand, they actively *create* demand by creating desire. They don't just offer us things, they offer us ways of life—templates and patterns that give shape to our existence in the world. Wear X brand of clothes, drive Y kind of car, eat Z kind of food, and you will become a whole person. The modes of being are seemingly endless, but they are all built on an idolatrous notion of self.

Despite our general acceptance of the capitalist system, most conservative Anabaptists in the past were not as bombarded by the advertising industry, thanks in part to our historic resistance to mass media. But in the Internet Age, this is increasingly no longer the case. Our generation and the generations following will have to be particularly attentive to the illusory promises of freedom, identity, and self-definition offered by the consumer culture they live in. (And hopefully in the process, we can challenge Anabaptism's participation, often uncritical, in the system itself. But that is another discussion for another day).

Jesus understood the corrosive power of money and stuff, which is why he warned against it in such stark terms. Materialism is a sham gospel that promises freedom, but ultimately results in all kinds of bondage and unfulfilled desires. Resist it by budgeting your money and limiting the amount of time you spend shopping, whether online or in stores. Consciously reduce your exposure to commercials and ads. Interrogate your motives when making a purchase. Better yet, seek advice and wisdom from your brothers and sisters in Christ.

False freedom can cause anxiety.

This is one of the reasons I don't care for Subway. How am I supposed to know which of the four dozen toppings and sauces go well with Autumn Roasted Turkey? The infinite combinations and permutations are paralyzing. (I've learned that it all tastes much the same anyway, so it doesn't actually matter.)

Designing a sandwich is one thing. Creating an identity out of thin air is far more exhausting. Social media offers us powerful tools to define ourselves to the world. You can curate your identity by posting this picture but not that one, reposting this meme but disliking that one, aligning yourself with this cause

while publicly disparaging the opposing one. Yet even as it offers you the security of being able to control and craft your public image, this freedom perpetuates all kinds of anxieties because it focuses attention on the self in relation to others. We simultaneously want to fit in and stand out, to be like everybody else and define ourselves against everybody else. And what if our manicured online personas don't match our real-world lives?

Numerous studies have demonstrated a clear, causal link between social media use and anxiety, depression, and general unhappiness. This is not an argument against all social media use, but it should be a wakeup call to any Christian member of the so-called Millennial or iGen generations. Be aware of how it consumes your time. Schedule and keep regular tech fasts (extra points if you don't announce it on Facebook beforehand). Identify certain "sacred spaces" as tech-free zones—the dinner table, church services, and social functions. Write out life goals and budget your time accordingly. Thoughtful living is a radical act in an age of push-button reactions and retweets.

Limits can be liberating.

Living in a predominantly Jewish

culture has helped me reevaluate the potential goods of my own Anabaptist tradition. The Jewish life is bounded by a code of rules and traditions complex enough to make even the most traditional Anabaptist's mind spin. But there is an undeniable beauty and freedom in this boundedness.

One of my favorite parts of living in Jerusalem is walking home from work on Friday afternoons as the city winds down for Shabbat (Sabbath). Shop owners clean their floors and lock their doors. Families dressed in their Sabbath best meander to the Western Wall for evening prayers. The few remaining tram cars wind their way to the depot. The honking, roaring Jerusalem traffic dwindles to a trickle, and an almost palpable peace settles over a city otherwise characterized by its near-manic intensity. The sound of silence is like a collective sigh of relief. For observant Jews, the twenty-four hours of Shabbat are extremely limited. They can't drive, use their smartphones, or even flip a light switch (many households have their lights on programmable timing systems). Yet these very limits free them to be with each other in ways they might not otherwise be.

The conservative Anabaptist life

is similarly bounded, albeit to a lesser degree. While we generally try to base our practices on the Bible, it is undeniable that we live out biblical teachings in particular (and sometimes peculiar) ways. Perhaps for some readers of *Thinking Generation* these limits can be frustrating, especially for those who are in the process of figuring out who they are, where they belong, and what they want out of life.

But rather than rejecting the extra-biblical boundaries as stifling and legalistic, consider how they might free you to exist in ways that are more human, and ultimately more Christ-like. Live into the limits of your particular tradition. Root yourself in a faithful community, and wrestle with questions of individual identity within that context. Accept your particular situation as a template for faithful Christian living, a pattern that orders, shapes, and forms your life—not necessarily *the* template, but a good one that has stood the test of time. In the words of the Psalmist, we have a “goodly heritage” (Ps. 16:6). Thank God for this heritage, for the structures it offers and the questions it answers.

The Romantic poet William Wordsworth recognized the liberating power of limits. In his

“Prefatory Sonnet,” Wordsworth engages in a kind of meta-poetic reflection on the nature of the sonnet form. After observing various people and creatures in states of contented boundedness, the sonnet concludes:

Within the Sonnet's scanty plot of ground:

Pleas'd if some Souls (for such there needs must be)

Who have felt the weight of too much liberty,

Should find short solace there, as I have found.

The sonnet is one of the most structured poetic forms with fixed schemes of rhyme and rhythm and a fixed number of lines and number of syllables per line. Yet it is precisely within this “scanty plot of ground” that Wordsworth finds creative freedom and solace.

The culture around us is being crushed by “the weight of too much liberty” because it makes an idol of this liberty. It's on us to show the world where true freedom ultimately lies—within the liberating constraints of the lordship of Christ.

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



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Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Evangelism, like charity, begins at home.

• • • • •

Being slippery does not make you polished.

• • • • •

We're only poor when we want more than we have.

• • • • •

The most fitting response to an undeserved blessing is unreserved gratitude.

• • • • •

We seem old when we stop noticing good answers.

• • • • •

Opportunity usually shows up in work clothes.

• • • • •

Practice optimism,—it is just as easy to look for good things as bad things.

• • • • •

Too often rich parents are poor parents.

• • • • •

Investigate mistakes only when you are calm.

• • • • •

What you eat usually does not cause ulcers; it's what eats you.

• • • • •

God does more than hear words; He reads hearts.

• • • • •

A closed mind—like a locked, shuttered house—
is secure and quiet, but also dark and gloomy.

• • • • •

Make square deals if you want a circle of friends.

• • • • •

The easiest person to deceive is yourself.