



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

## MARCH 2020

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Calvary Messenger

March 2020

**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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## Lord, It Belongs Not to My Care

*Richard Baxter (1615-1691)*

Lord, it belongs not to my care  
Whether I die or live;  
To love and serve Thee is my share,  
And this Thy grace must give.

If life be long, I will be glad,  
That I may long obey;  
If short, yet why should I be sad  
To welcome endless day?

Christ leads me through no darker rooms  
Than He went through before;  
He that unto God's kingdom comes  
Must enter by this door.

Come, Lord, when grace hath made me meet  
Thy blessed face to see;  
For if Thy work on earth be sweet  
What will Thy glory be!

Then I shall end my sad complaints  
And weary sinful days,  
And join with the triumphant saints  
That sing my Savior's praise.

My knowledge of that life is small,  
The eye of faith is dim;  
But 'tis enough that Christ knows all,  
And I shall be with Him.

*-Public Domain*



## Check Your Oil

**I**t happened in the first year of our marriage as I was driving home from teaching music at our local church school. I was cruising into the west side of town with my '67 baby blue VW "Bug" when simultaneously the wheels locked up when the engine stopped. I pushed in the clutch and coasted to the side of the road. As I opened the hood of the car at the back, a hot smell and sensation rushed into my face. I pulled out the dipstick and found it dry. The engine was locked up because it had run out of oil.

Sometimes the situation is arrested in time. Recently, as we waited at an auto service center, we met an acquaintance who discovered a sad fact about a recently-acquired used vehicle. As he was driving into town, he heard a ticking noise. Since he was concerned, he stopped at the service center and had it checked out. The mechanic didn't find any oil on his dipstick.

Engines do not run on oil, but they do not run without oil. Without proper lubrication, friction from moving parts causes heat, which

causes the engine to work harder. Engine failure is certain to follow.

Human beings do not use motor oil. Neither do we have an oil light nor a dipstick, but we need to regularly evaluate our lives to see if we are operating properly. There are various parts of our beings that fail if we do not heed a proper maintenance protocol. There are physical, emotional, and spiritual failures that are likely if we do not "check the oil." This article will be limited to the emotional and spiritual parts of our being.

One of the most powerful effects on our lives is love. A popular quote states that "love is what makes the world go 'round.'" Franklin P. Jones countered that quote and said, "Love doesn't make the world go 'round. Love is what makes the ride worthwhile." Understanding the love of God and what He desires to do in our lives brings a fullness to our lives and joy in the daily grind.

Romans chapter five leads us through the process of finding peace and hope with God that comes from receiving His love into our hearts

by faith. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” (Romans 5:1-5). Reading and believing these truths of God’s great love for us takes away so much of the burden and stress of normal driving on the road of life. We really do not deserve His love! Even while we were His enemies, Jesus gave His life for our atonement and restoration to divine favor. “For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement” (Romans 5:10-11).

Rejoicing in Christ our Savior is a powerful lubricant for the road of life. Joy, peace, and hope make the difference between a dreaded trip and the anticipation of both the daily experiences on the road and

the final destination. Yes, there are mountains and deep valleys. There are disappointments and detours. The heat of adversity and the wintry dangers of ice, snow, and frigid cold can test our wills. But an engine well-lubricated with faith in the love of God **will make it through** all of these difficulties. As I write these words, it seems like a very bold statement. Can I be positive that I will reach the end of the road with grace? How can I be sure to have a good trip and make it to the end of the road?

A very important practice in engine maintenance besides keeping it full of oil is to change the oil and filter. During daily operation, the oil can become contaminated with grime that will clog oil pathways. Its lubricating properties also break down with heat and age. A regular changing of the oil and filter assures that the lubrication is reaching all parts of the engine. May I suggest that spiritually we cannot wait until three months or three thousand miles come around to take care of our lubrication. A regular (think daily) infusion of God’s Word can filter out those impurities that keep the peace, joy, and hope from reaching all parts of our hearts and minds. The daily stresses of life can break down our spiritual oil and cause our engine parts to

work with difficulty and dread. Car manufacturers recommend changing oil at shorter intervals if operating in severe conditions. Staying close to the Father during the severe times of life is important to keep us from an engine failure.

After the love of God, another powerful element in ensuring a blessed road trip is love for and from our fellow man. The camaraderie of Christian friends who sincerely care for each other is part of God's daily grace. Peter admonishes us to love our brethren after our lives have been changed through obedience to the truth. "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1 Peter 1:22). Besides sharing notes of the road trip of life, friends also challenge and admonish each other.

We may not hear the ticking noises of our own engines or see that we're running a little hot, but a faithful

spiritual friend will let us know. Sometimes we need to stop in and ask a mechanic for his opinion. A true friend will point out our needs before the ticking in our engine turns into a fatal clunk. "A man that hath friends must shew himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Proverbs 18:24).

May we all keep the joy, peace, and hope in the Lord for our journey. The circumstances of the journey may not change, but the love of God in our hearts changes our outlook from drudgery to anticipation, not only for the destination but for our daily experiences as well. Especially during the death valleys and the difficult mountains, may we keep our tanks full and our oil filtered by the truth of God's Word. The assurance of the destination rests on our faith and all the strength and might of our Almighty God! "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6).

-AY 

*Pray for faith*  
*that will not shrink when it is*  
*washed in the waters of affliction.*

## A Springtime Psalm of Praise

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Praise be to our God for joyous spring.

The springs in the meadows overflow with clear waters.

The streams ripple their song among the rocks.

The waterfalls cascade in perpetual chorus,

The meadows green, the dandelions yellow.

The heifers leap and frolic for the joy of the pasture's freedom.

Shall not man praise Thee, O God, in these days?

Shall not man join nature in the new praise?

All ye who sorrow in heart,

Give ear to nature's praise, both audible and inaudible;

Let thine heart be tuned to the victory notes of springtime.

Lift up thine eyes and behold, for beauty is everywhere.

Open thine heart, all ye who labor in weariness.

Be glad in the Lord thy God and in His evident nearness.

All ye who are pained in spirit,

Consider the lilies, who without worry exude perfect praise.

They come forth from winter's chill in their brightest and best.

Their praise is brief, yet they accomplish their Creator's purpose.

Behold the amaryllis, a gorgeous flower of majestic trumpets,

Which from October through January languish in a damp, dark cellar,

Yet it rises in simple form in the lengthening days of March,

And by its blooms, heralds the promise of new, vibrant nurture.

Let its muted voice cheer thee, all ye that fear the future.

All ye who are anxious of mind,

Behold the lovely daffodil, an early riser of springtime,

Who fears no frost, no wind, or late snow;

Which appears early to cheer the heavy heart by reason of the long winter,

And by its perfection shows the loving hand of God's good ways.

God also loves us and calls us to blossom in the perfection of praise.

All ye who fret and groan,

Behold the beautiful crocus, in the brightest of colors,

Rising early in gloomy March to shout its resurrection,  
And though it is the lowliest of flowers,  
It rates high in its splendor and grace,  
And shows that every person also has a place.

Now, to all in God's dominion,  
Let everything that hath breath, praise the Lord!

For the Lord God is good. It is He who brings forth new life in springtime:

The green grass of the field,  
The fresh herb of the garden,  
The little lambs in the pastures fair,  
The newborn kittens in the corner of the barn,

The ducklings with paddling feet in the nearby stream,  
The juncos and cardinals,  
The robins and goldfinches;  
All are signs that say, "Spring has sprung."

*The Bottom Line is despite the sorrows in the valley of life, let your personal praise break forth as the springtime flowers! Amen.*

*P.S. I wrote this while my wife, Marian, was dealing with cancer in 2006. She died on December 3, 2006. May all those who sorrow be encouraged anew by the remembrance of the resurrection of Christ, signified by the emerging flowers of spring.*



## Announcement

### 2020 Marriage Enrichment Seminar

Held at: Deeper Life Ministries | March 27–29, 2020

Topics:

A Portrait of Christ's Love - Dave Snyder

Following the Rationale - Dave Snyder

Feeling the Emotions - Ben Waldner

Setting Goals - Denver Yoder

Testimony: "Walking Together Through Life" - Kenton & Wendy Martin, PA

Cultivating Loyalty - Ben Waldner

Worshipping Together - Denver Yoder

Registration deadline: March 15, 2020. For more information or to register, please call 614-873-1199 or email [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org). This seminar is sponsored and hosted by:

Deeper Life Ministries | 5123 Converse Huff Rd | Plain City, OH 43064

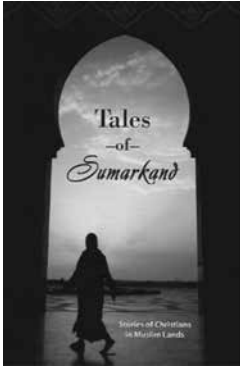
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# Book Review: *Tales of Sumarkand*

Mike Atnip, Plain News



This book, I must confess, is giving me a hard time. I mean, I am stumped as to how to review it.

*Tales of Sumarkand*, subtitled *Stories of Christians in Muslim Lands*, is just a little different from your average book. It sometimes feels disjointed, as if the parts don't really work well together. At the same time, it feels like that is the way it is supposed to be. Maybe it is like a song sung in minor key: at first it can haunt our sense of propriety, but when it is all done, we acknowledge that the flatted note on the third tone fits the chord and the song.

## The Stories

The publisher freely acknowledges that these stories are not true, as written. And yet, they are true. The characters are real, the events genuine. The author simply mixed up a lot of the details to purposely confound the reader, who may someday be a person who has a

macabre personal interest in one of the characters. Enough blood has flowed already.

The stories range from thrilling examples of God's miraculous intervention in the lives of His children—saving them from a certain death—to His seeming blind eye to the woes of others of them. Some live, some die. Some get fed miraculously; some get married off to unbelievers, never to be heard from again after making a start in the Christian race. One lady gets her jaw shot to pieces... by her very own brothers who are intent on redeeming the family's honor from the conversion of their sister to Christianity.

Welcome to the land of Sumarkand!

## Sumarkand

Sumarkand is a "virtual" nation, not found on any standard world map. Yet, the author—who cries out from behind the minor-key pen name of Krie of D'Agés—has composed this nation from many real-life characters on planet Earth. They walk, talk, eat, drink voluminous amounts of tea, wrestle with truth, and feel pain and joy just like the rest of us. Well, maybe they drink more

tea than others of us do!

Krie is lifting his voice to sound forth what appears to be a deep, profound message that he would like to say in simple words to the whole world of western Christianity. Yet, the message is too complicated, too much bound up in the spirit and soul, for the voice to easily utter. So, he cries out in story after story (quoting page 6): “The blood of lost men and women cries to me from the ground of this whole land!”

### **Sumarkand’s Problems**

Sumarkand is full of darkness. A religion that has misrepresented God has blinded men’s eyes to the beautiful life of peace, love, and joy that He has offered to humanity. This darkness is darker in some areas than others, but it is a long-standing darkness; in most areas of Sumarkand, it has pressed over the land for more than 1,000 years.

One problem that Sumarkand faces is that sometimes the children of light think that all they need to do is run through the streets of the land, handing out free lanterns and light bulbs. That would be nice, but dispersers of these items are sometimes shot dead in the street just for having a light bulb, let alone handing out free ones.

Then there are tribal issues, where various groups of men living in the same country sometimes gun each

other down just for being born across the river. This begets long-running retributions, with most of them not knowing why they despise the people who were born on the other side of the river. Sometimes a common religion bonds these tribes together, but sometimes the side of the river on which one was born is more important than religion. You never really know which way it is, in Sumarkand.

It gets even more complicated when the national government is from neither warring tribe. Sometimes the state is able to control the tribal bickering; sometimes it just makes the battle a three-way war. Mixing state, religion, tribe, and egoism is bad enough, but then there is the fifth partner of darkness, called money. All across Sumarkand, these and other issues make the darkness grow blacker or lighter, depending on the day of the year in some cases.

Yes, it would be nice if all of the people across this darkened land were monolithic in character. It would be nice if they were for the most part welcoming of messengers of light and truth. But the messengers have to pick their way through the tangled mess with a huge amount of distrust hanging over the atmosphere everywhere. In Sumarkand, Christian visitors to church meetings are not usually asked their names. Neither

do they offer them, sometimes for months or even years. One misstated sentence and the guns will bark, and fresh blood will run into the sand of Sumarkand. Human blood.

### **My Takeaway**

As I said at the beginning, I am finding this a hard book to review. Is it so off-key (two flat notes instead of one?) that one would do better finding another book to read. NO! Read this book; I recommend it to anyone who is old enough to have a driver's license. Younger children will enjoy some of the stories, but the overall message will take some pondering that little children are incapable of managing.

On the other hand, **do not read this book, if:**

- you do not want to think very deeply about what you read. These stories are not for mere entertainment.
- you do not have time to meditate on what you read and listen to the heart cry of Krie of D'Agés.
- you do not mind setting the book down with a heavy heart after reading a chapter.
- you do not mind coming to the realization that we western Christians, Plain People included, are weak and anemic in faith.
- you do not mind being reminded that our hard decisions—such as whether to buy DeWalt or Milwaukee, Ford or Dodge, GE or Frigidaire—are

not so hard after all. I mean, some Christians are having to decide whether to eat all of their last small chunk of bread or save half of it for tomorrow because there is no visible hope of any fresh bread coming tomorrow. Maybe we should skip both the DeWalt and the Milwaukee?

- you do not like to be reminded that we were not saved to warm a pew on Sunday mornings.

- you do not like to be reminded that God is at work, and is a mighty God!

The Introduction and the blurb on the back cover both say this: “Please read carefully.” The last sentence of that same paragraph then says, “If you know what true Christianity is, then this book is for you.”

Well said.

*Tales of Sumarkand is available from the publisher at:*

*Grace Press*

*2175 Division Hwy, Ephrata, PA 17522*

*717-354-0475*

*Also available from:*

*Sermon on the Mount Publishing*

*P.O. Box 246, Manchester, MI 48158*

*734-428-0488*

*\$9.95 + \$4 shipping for first book, \$1 extra for each additional copy*

<https://kingdomreading.com/shop/tales-of-sumarkand/>

*[Used by permission]* 

# A Biblical Theology of Suffering

*Glenn Penner*

**I**t is well recognized by those who work among persecuted Christians that few attempts have been made to develop a biblical theology of persecution. This is to be expected since most Christians in the West have little or no experience with persecution per se. The tendency is for Western Christians to misapply these passages to situations of general physical, psychological, and spiritual suffering because the biblical texts that speak to suffering for righteousness cannot readily be applied to a setting where there is little or no persecution.

Unfortunately, this misapplication is subsequently turned upon the text itself in future readings. So, the application influences future interpretations, resulting in the typical Bible student in the West never suspecting that the biblical texts that deal with pain and suffering might be dealing with suffering for righteousness' sake rather than suffering because of sin. This influences how Western Christians view and deal with those who suffer for their faith. We fail to recognize that persecution is

normative for the follower of Christ historically, missiologically, and (most importantly) scripturally.

There is a clear scriptural link between persecution and discipleship. Indeed, there can be no discipleship without persecution; to follow Christ is to join Him in a cross-carrying journey of reconciling the world to the Father.

Persecution is hardly an exclusively New Testament phenomenon. Numerous passages refer to the suffering inflicted on the people of God throughout the Old Testament historical narratives.

The psalms of lament address the issue of the suffering of God's people more clearly than any other portion of Scripture (including the New Testament). This train of thought is amplified by the call of the prophets to look ahead to the Day of the Lord, believing that history is under the control of an Almighty God who, from the foundation of the world, has set His plans in motion of reconciling the world to Himself.

All of this comes into focus with the coming of Jesus Christ, the revelation of the triune God. Through Christ,

we see that sacrificial love is in the very nature of who God is. To suffer and die to accomplish His Father's purposes was not to be unexpected. Weakness, suffering, and sacrifice are God's *modus operandi*. This is how God accomplishes His work: not through strength or compulsion but through love and invitation. The Son of God suffers and dies, as do those who follow Him. A cross-centered gospel requires cross-carrying messengers. When Jesus declared, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matthew 16:24), these words are to be taken much more literally than we are accustomed to doing.

The demand of Jesus on His followers is to tread the path of martyrdom. As He prepared to send His disciples out as sheep among wolves, He told them that they would likely die in the process of carrying out their ministry. In order to build His Church, His death was necessary, as He points out in Matthew 16:18-21. This is the foundation. Without Christ's death there is no redeemed community. But just as Christ's cross was needed to establish His Church, our crosses are needed to build His Church (Matthew 16:24). Both are needed. As Josef Ton observed, "Christ's cross was for propitiation.

Our cross is for propagation."

This understanding that sacrifice, suffering, shame, and even death were the normal cost of discipleship fueled the evangelistic efforts of the first century Church.

Rather than following the common Western practice of thanking God for freedom from suffering, the early Christians thanked God for the honor of suffering for His sake (Acts 5:41).

They knew that in order to bring life to others, they must die; to see others experience peace with God, they would have to suffer the violence of the world; to bring the love of God to a dying world, they would have to face the hatred of those whom they were seeking to reach. This is the reality of persecution today. We continue the task of taking the gospel to the end of the earth, knowing that He goes with us and that we do not suffer alone. In all of our afflictions, God is afflicted, and just as Jesus demanded of Saul of Tarsus, so He asks of today's persecutors, "Why do you persecute Me?" The knowledge that nothing can separate us from Christ's love (Romans 8:35), that the Spirit prays for us when we can only groan in agony (Romans 8:26,27), and gives us His words in the face of our accusers (Matthew 10:19,20), provides the help that the disciples

of Jesus require to remain faithful witnesses. God has provided all that is necessary for the disciple to stand firm.

There may be fear, but by God's grace it need not control us. There may be terrible suffering, but suffering is not the worst thing that can happen to the child of God; disobedience to the Father is. As we witness the testimonies of courageous persecuted brothers and sisters, it is worthwhile to reflect on the words of Peter, "For this is a gracious thing, when, mindful of God, one endures sorrows while suffering unjustly" (1 Peter 2:19 ESV). In these words, Peter defines grace as being enabled to endure suffering because of one's faithfulness to God. As we read the accounts of those who have suffered for the sake of Christ, we might be justified in saying that, from the world's perspective, those who endure persecution are heroic. But from God's perspective, Peter reminds us, they are recipients of grace.

Peter stresses that enduring suffering is evidence that God is at work in one's life. There is no glory for the sufferer, no hero worship, no merit for those who are able to endure hardship, no boasting of one's achievements. It is evidence of God's grace. It is all a work of God,

from beginning to end. Is it any wonder that near the end of his first epistle, written especially to instruct persecuted believers to stand firm in their faith, the apostle writes, "And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10, 11 ESV).

This hope is solidified with the Revelation of John's vision of the victorious Lamb. Written to address the apparent discrepancy between the belief that God's kingdom has come and that Jesus Christ is Lord and the reality that the forces of evil continued to exist, to dominate the culture and even flourish, while oppressing Christians to varying degrees, Revelation provided the churches with what they most needed; a revelation of who Jesus Christ is.

God's priority is not so much to answer the questions that His people may have as to why they are persecuted as to give them a revelation of Himself. In this final book of the Bible, Jesus is revealed as the One who is in the midst of the churches, as One who is in control of history and who will soon bring history to its conclusion.


The believers to whom John writes face the challenge of witnessing for Christ in the midst of temptations to compromise with idolatry. John sees the persecution as increasing and his warning is meant to prepare the churches for that day, as well as for the challenges they presently face. He sees that not all of the churches are prepared; some are already well on their way to denying Christ. The Christian in Revelation is called to witness for Christ, even to the point of death, in the midst of compromising Christianity and a hostile world, knowing that his reward is coming.

Revelation helps us to see that there is always hope. Defeat may seem imminent to those in the midst of persecution; the disciple needs to be reminded that so is victory. The victory is the vindication of the Church. Redeemed, triumphant in heaven, secure forever with the Lamb who has won the victory for Himself and the Church through His death and His conquest over it, the Church participates in

this victory with Christ as Bride and Bridegroom. By refusing to deny their allegiance to Him and acknowledge the idolatrous claims of the world order (13:15, 14:9), enduring even unto death, the martyrs share in Christ's victory over it and in His triumph over all the powers of evil (12:11). God has determined to save the world by the foolishness of the cross of Christ and by the foolishness of the crosses of His children whom He has chosen and called for this very purpose. He will be consistent in using this unique method until He achieves His final goal. God will thus bring the nations to Himself by the sacrifice of His obedient Son followed by the sacrifices of His other obedient sons and daughters.

*[Edited from IDOP Resources: <http://idop.org/web/resources/>*

*“A Biblical Theology of Persecution and Discipleship”*

*by J. Mark Horst for Hope Horizons.  
Used by permission] *

*Think less of the power of things over you and  
MORE OF THE POWER OF CHRIST IN YOU.*

## marriages

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

### **Bontrager-Yoder**

Bro. Ronald, son of Lydia and the late Floyd Bontrager, Arlington, WA, and Sis. Rachel, daughter of Barbara and the late Alvin Yoder, Partridge, KS, on February 9, 2019, at Center Amish Mennonite Church by David Yoder.

### **Byler-Miller**

Bro. Giles, son of Ted and Kendra Byler, Chile, and Sis. Carolyn, daughter of Jerry and Sarah Miller, Partridge, KS, on June 15, 2019, at Center Amish Mennonite Church by William Byler, grandfather of the groom.


### **Gehman-Glogovsky**

Bro. Delbert, son of Nelson and Mary Gehman, Stephansport, KY, and Sis. Lydianna, daughter of Mike and Kathleen Glogovsky, Squaw Valley, CA, on October 12, 2019, at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft, VA, by Simon Schrock.

### **Miller-Yoder**

Bro. Andrew, son of David and Wanda Miller, Martinsburg, OH, and Sis. Ruth, daughter of Joseph and Twila Yoder, Partridge, KS, on November 16, 2019, at Center Amish Mennonite Church by David Yoder.

### **Yoder-King**

Bro. Elmer Yoder, son of the late Wallace and Ida Yoder, Uniontown, OH, and Sis. Edna King, daughter of the late John and Alma Wittmer, Hartville, OH, on November 2, 2019, at Hartville Conservative Church for Pleasant View Church by Thomas Wagler. 

## cradle roll

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

**Beachy**, Leon and Edith (Miller), Fredonia, KY, seventh child, sixth daughter, Wanda Joanne, October 28, 2019.

**Beiler**, Jamien and Rachel (Lee), Mt. Pleasant, PA, second child and son, Elliot Lee, January 20, 2020.

**Chupp**, Andrew and Michelle (Landis), Eden Valley, MN, fourth child, third son, Logan Harvey, stillborn, December 21, 2019.

**Chupp**, Daniel and Jana (Miller), Atwater, MN, fifth child, first daughter, Karabeth Marian, January 8, 2020.

**Coblentz**, Tristan and Brooklyn (Weaver), Antrim, OH, first child and son, Kypton Alan, January 7, 2020.



**Detweiler**, Galen and Claudia (Miller), Fredonia, KY, first child and daughter, Shanice Rose, January 9, 2020.

**Graber**, Josh and Allison (Beachy), Auburn, KY, third child, second son, Sawyer Jaxon, January 21, 2020.

**Graber**, Randall and Althea (Stoltzfoos), Amboy, IN, serving in Lesvos, Greece, first child and son, Alexander Creed, December 7, 2019.

**Helmuth**, Andrew and Regina (Hochstedler), Nappanee, IN, second child and son, Anderson Bo, January 25, 2020.

**Kauffman**, Daniel and Sara (Mast), Lancaster, PA, second child and daughter, Madeline Noel, December 9, 2019.

**Kauffman**, Galen and Doreen (Nissley), Paris, TN, first child and daughter, Brooklyn Paige, January 15, 2020.

**King**, Shane and Myrna (Stoltzfus), Ephrata, PA, third child and son, Oaklan Bennet, November 10, 2019.

**Mast**, Howard and Ruth (Knepp), Bloomfield, IN, first child and daughter, Briana Kate, December 30, 2019.

**Miller**, Clayton and Angie (Helmuth), Plain City, OH, first child and son, Blake Edward, January 12, 2020.

**Miller**, Jason and Carolyn (Schrock), Cambridge, OH, fourth child, second daughter, Dominica Edna, born January 25, 2017, adoption finalized December 18, 2019.

**Miller**, Jason and Esther (Byler), Titusville, PA, fourth child, second daughter, Lillian Grace, October 29, 2019.

**Miller**, Jethro and Sherri (Hershberger), Melvern, KS, second child and son, Wyatt Marshall, January 17, 2020.

**Miller**, Jonathan and Julie (Raber), Dundee, OH, fourth child, third son, Ashton Blake, November 29, 2019.

**Miller**, Jonathan and Lena (Miller), Worthington, IN, fourth child, second son, Arlon Jon, October 14, 2019.

**Miller**, Josh and Grace (Hershberger), Kiev, Ukraine, second child, first son, Aleksei Ivan, November 17, 2019.

**Miller**, Joshua and Olga (Bernik), Big Prairie, OH, third child, first daughter, Natalie Kay, January 1, 2020.

**Miller**, Karl and Darella (Rohrer), Grove City, MN, second child and son, Karson Blake, December 23, 2019.

**Otto**, Jeremy and Lynette (Gingerich), Crossville, TN, third child, second son, Zachary Finn, January 15, 2020.

**Otto**, Joshua and Regina (Wagler), Crossville, TN, fourth child, third son, Bradley Joshua, January 12, 2020.

**Petre**, Dennis and Donna (Yoder), Moulton, AL, fourth child, second son, Desmond Isaiah, December 17, 2019.

**Schlabach**, Joe and Naomi (Miller), Cochran, PA, second child, first daughter, Mia Sue, January 21, 2020.

**Schrock**, John and Teresa (Overholt), Fredonia, KY, first child and son, Asher John, November 10, 2019.

**Stoltzfus**, Arlen and Angie (Stoltzfus), Morgantown, PA, fourth child, third son, Coleson Grant, January 5, 2020.


**Stoltzfus**, J. Wendell and Kaylene (Bontrager), Millersburg, OH, fourth child, first daughter, Madelyn Hope, December 30, 2019.

**Stutzman**, Jonathan and Irene (Miller), Zanesville, OH, third and fourth children, twin daughters, Alexa Jo and Shianne Renee, January 4, 2020.

**Weaver**, Rodney and Glenda (King), Denmark, SC, fourth child, second daughter, Brooklyn Noel, December 21, 2019.


**Yoder**, Jacob and Eunice (Yoder), Ripley, OH, second child, first daughter, Kara Grace, January 6, 2020.

**Yutzky**, Ben and Kristi (Yoder), Decatur, IA, third child, first daughter, Raelyn Jo, December 6, 2019.

**Zook**, Dwayne and Heidi (Gingerich), Hummingbird Community, Belize, seventh child, fourth son, Zion Calèb, December 28, 2019. 

## ordinations

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

**Bro. John Ray Miller**, 58, (wife, Emma Yoder), Crossville, TN, was called through the church and ordained to the office of bishop for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church on January 12, 2020. The charge was given by John Mast, assisted by Perry Miller and Stephen Beachy. 



**Byler, Levi “Lee” W.**, husband of Carmen Hochstetler Byler, of Abbeville, SC, went home to be with his Lord and Savior Thursday, January 9, 2020. He was born February 8, 1966, in Wooster, OH, to William J. Byler and the late Elizabeth (Hostetler) Byler.

Lee was a member of Cold Spring Mennonite Church. He courageously fought an inoperable brain tumor for five years; never complaining but always looking for the good in every situation. The struggle he faced from side effects from the tumor or radiation was more than he let people know. His deep love and tender care for his wife and children were above average and will be treasured forever. Most people who knew him, first think of his kind heart and love for the heavenly Father and His written Word. Lee wanted the focus of his memorial service to call everyone to celebrate the atoning work of our Savior, and the forgiveness and grace He has made possible for us all.

In addition to his precious mother, he was predeceased by his stepmother, Edna (Yoder) Byler, and sister-in-law, Elsie (Dan) Byler.

Lee is survived by his wife of 15 years, Carmen, and four children:

Ravi Jon, Elyse Mary, Cedrych Dirk, and Callie Joy, all of the home; four brothers and three sisters: Anna (Myron) Miller, Daniel, Reuben (Iva), Ella (Tyrannus) Troyer, John (Sharon), William Jr. (Lori), and Barbara (Paul) Staken, all of Millersburg; and stepbrothers and stepsisters, Marlin (Debra) Yoder, Velma Yoder, Daniel (Liz) Yoder, David (Esther) Yoder, Mary (David) Yoder, and Regina (Robert) Miller.

The funeral was held on January 12, 2020, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church with Javan Bender, Loyal Bacher, and Paul Yoder serving. Sam Yoder and Dave Troyer conducted the committal at the Cold Spring Church Cemetery.

**McFadzean, Oswald**, 86, passed away at his home in St. Paul’s Bank, Belize, on January 3, 2020. He was born on March 25, 1933. His wife, Voicenie, passed away last January, and ever since then his health was declining.

Bro. Oswald was a member of Zion Mennonite Church. He and his wife were of the first to choose Christ as their Lord and Saviour when AMA started a church in the village of Double Head Cabbage. They were baptized sometime in the 1970s.

Many people have been blessed by their faithfulness and generosity.

The funeral and burial took place at the McFadzean residence in St. Paul's on January 7, 2020. J. Ellis Beachy, Stephen Schrock, and Justin Goff officiated.

**Raber**, Sarah Celesta, 79, of Sugarcreek, OH, died Monday, January 13, 2020, at Aultman Hospital in Canton, OH, following a nine-month illness.

She was a homemaker, loved nature and working with her flowers, and watching birds. She treasured her time spent with her husband and family in Florida. She was a member of the Maranatha Fellowship Church.

On April 6, 1961, she married Eli M. Raber. In addition to her husband, she is survived by her children: Loretta (John Allen) Miller, Dundee; Rita (Daniel) Miller, Sugarcreek; Linus, Dover; Rebekah (James) Mast, Dundee; and Javan (Christina), Sugarcreek; 19 grandchildren, 10 great-grandchildren, and her sister, Clara Miller, Berlin.

In addition to her parents, she was preceded in death by an infant brother, Daniel Yoder, and her brother-in-law, Ervin Beachy.

Funeral services were held on Thursday, January 16, 2020, at the Maranatha Fellowship Church, Sugarcreek, OH, with Paul Leroy


Miller officiating. Burial was in the church cemetery.

**Stoltzfus**, Mary Ellen (Stoltzfoos), 63, of Cochranville, PA, peacefully passed on to her eternal reward on Friday, November 1, 2019, at home surrounded by her family after a six-month battle with cancer.

She was born February 12, 1956, to Samuel and Hilda (Beiler) Stoltzfoos. On February 12, 1977, she married Mel Stoltzfus. She dedicated her life to Christ in her youth and was a faithful member of the Mine Road Amish Mennonite Church. She will be remembered for her gentle, caring spirit.

Mary Ellen is survived by her husband, Mel, of 42 years, and eight children: Merlin (Trina), Gap; Melanie (James) King, Christiana; Martha (John) Glick, Philadelphia; Marita, at home; Mark (Abby), Christiana; Marlena (Phil) Beiler, Lancaster; Matthew (Ariana), Coatesville; Mandel (Ally), Lancaster; and eighteen grandchildren. She is also survived by six brothers and four sisters.

She was predeceased by her parents, a brother-in-law, and a sister-in-law.

The funeral was held on November 5, 2019, at Calvary Monument Church for Mine Road Church, Gap, PA, with Alvin Stoltzfus and Verlyn Yoder serving. Burial was at the Mine Road Church cemetery. 

The experiences of our lives exert a shaping influence on us and our understanding of what is normal. As of this writing we have spent some of these last days in preparation to travel to El Salvador. Having lived there for about six years of our lives, there is a way in which El Salvador feels like a home away from home for Brenda and me. Of course, the familiarity shouldn't gloss over the linguistic and cultural challenges of navigating a setting that is not native to us. We love El Salvador and love the people there, but there are things about the USA and the English language that are uniquely comfortable for us because that is where our roots are.

As I was thinking these things, my mind wandered to the spiritual parallels that God's children experience. As the child of God grows in his walk with the Lord, it stands to reason that he will experience a growing affinity for and expectation of the eternal homeland. But since we're quite human, sometimes it can feel like there is a bit of competition between our sense of home and loyalty—between our earthly experience and our eternal citizenship. When

we get together and worship and fellowship with other believers, there is a sense of being “at home” that we experience that seems proportional to our awareness of our heavenly citizenship.

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One blessing that I've gleaned as we've traveled from time to time is that I'm really happy that the family of God is defined by ways aside from our ethnicity or in terms of majority. Globally, professing Christians comprise a very diverse demographic. I'm particularly grateful that there is room in His Kingdom for the minority Caucasians because that's who I am. The feeling of being part of a cultural, racial, ethnic, or national minority is an experience that we could all benefit from once in a while.

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The way we behave when we're in the majority in almost any setting affects us in ways that are a bit subtle sometimes. Those in the majority might tend to rely on the group for their identity. The majority also sometimes forgets the need to try to understand those who aren't enjoying the security feeling of being in the majority. When the majority is out of touch

with the minority, this can translate relating to others that comes across as arrogant. When that arrogance is well-developed, a pronounced lack of diplomacy and decorum follows. This dynamic is painfully obvious in the political realm, but it is even more sobering when we note those trends and tendencies in our midst. The scripture reminds us in Colossians 4:6 that we should, “Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.” May our interpersonal relationships reflect this priority.



How do these factors affect how we relate to each other? In our local congregations, we sometimes need these reminders to interact with each other in ways that affirm the mutual respect that is needed for maximum group function. There are occasions in which our congregations are blessed with the opportunity to exercise these graces in our interaction with other congregations. Our church structure is loosely affiliated. If we defer to each other on a congregational level, we need to cultivate an awareness of that importance. There isn't much built-in organizational accountability in our inter-congregational structure. Each organizational structure has inherent weaknesses and strengths. Some of us

see more of the strengths and others more of the weaknesses. Both exist. It is my impression that the strengths of our church structure are significantly compromised when we lose our awareness that our decisions and way of relating influences and affects others more than we realize.



The ongoing impeachment saga should be receding in the rear-view mirror of the nation by the time you read this. There is a common phrase that circulates in circles where a judicial process is unfolding. I'm talking about the phrase, “innocent until proven guilty.” Oftentimes it is stated as fact that in the USA a person is indeed innocent until proven guilty. I'd like to point out that the language regarding our rights in this aspect is actually that people are “presumed” innocent until proven guilty. There is sometimes quite a difference between how people who are charged with a crime or misdeed need to be regarded and what they actually are. Sometimes they are guilty, and sometimes they aren't. However, in a hundred years or so from now, it will make very little difference what the general population or the courts have determined regarding any person's guilt or innocence. With God there are no mistakes and no presumption either of guilt or innocence.

I make no claim one way or another with regard to President Trump or his accusers. I have some opinions, but they are of little consequence. However, God keeps track of what is right and wrong, and He will address all that if and when He sees fit to do so. Having stated that I make no claim one way or another should not be confused with indifference about it. The fact that people who have been elected to serve and have accumulated a lot of birthdays, but act like little children with poor manners is not a reassuring scenario nor one in which I care to be identified. I hope it's not arrogant for me to understand that Christians are above that kind of behavior. To the extent that we aren't, a bit of repentance and renewal would be appropriate.

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The World Health Organization (WHO) has declared five global health emergencies in recent years.

There was the swine flu epidemic in 2009, polio in 2014, Ebola in 2014, Zika in 2016, and Ebola again in 2019. In January of this year it added another to the list with the coronavirus outbreak. The outbreak was traced to a seafood market in Wuhan, China, where most of diagnoses have occurred. But with international travel, people who spent time in that area in China and

traveled to other parts of the world took the virus with them. The first case was diagnosed on January 7 of the current year. By month's end about 25 different countries had reported a diagnosis. China reported over 14,000 cases and most of the other 25 countries have reported fewer than 10 cases. China has confirmed over 300 deaths due to the virus with more that are suspected but not confirmed.

Symptoms vary greatly, with some people not experiencing much more than a common cold. But acute respiratory and kidney failure sometimes lead to death.

Precautions against spreading the virus have snarled travel and brought uncertainty to financial markets.

As of this writing several major airlines have suspended flights to the China mainland. Authorities in China made quick work of erecting a brand new hospital for the treatment of those with the coronavirus, in order to more effectively quarantine those infected from any other people. The hospital was mostly completed in one week.

When we arrived in the San Salvador airport the other day, almost all the airport workers who worked with travelers wore protective face masks. El Salvador has not had any confirmed cases.

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Boko Haram is a militant Islamic group in Nigeria that has been operating for more than the last 15 years. Some months ago, they kidnapped Lawan Andimi, a Christian pastor, and held him for ransom. The group released a video of him that they hoped would exert pressure to fulfill the demands of his captors. But his testimony on the video that was released was remarkable for the calm and measured trust he expressed in God. “I believe that he who made them to act in such a way is still alive, and will make all arrangements,”

Andimi said. “I have never been discouraged, because all conditions that one finds himself in is in the hands of God—God who made them to take care of me and to leave [me with] my life.”

His testimony that because Jesus is alive, he can have peace and trust, is truly a remarkable statement of peace. On January 20 of this year he was beheaded and went on to his reward. The testimony of God’s children when faced with the imminent and real prospect of death is a tremendous encouragement to me. This man was a martyr.

–RJM 

## Zinnia by the Mailbox

*Simon Schrock, Catlett, VA*

**T**he place of our temporal earthly residence is about one mile off the state-maintained road. Driving in and out of this privately-maintained road has plenty of chuckholes to watch for and try to miss. There is no scenic overlook along the way from which to observe an awe-inspiring moment of God’s mountains or valleys. However, by the mailbox at the entrance of the road were a few seconds of genuine

beauty. This year my zinnia by the mailbox stood upright and stately, displaying its abundance of cheerful blossoms. It added a few seconds of invigoration as one entered this non-state-of-the-art community.

An adverse situation developed against the beautiful zinnia in the form of wind and rain. The beautiful ball of cheerful flowers fell on its side. In this undesirable position the blooms seemed to have more



grandeur. Instead of seeing the sides of the blossoms we could now look right into the heart of their beauty. They were blown over but did not cease to give out their inspirational splendor. After several days new shoots of buds and blooms were turning heavenward.

Life is seasoned with adversities. The Bible brings to our attention who the real adversary is. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). I’m in my fourth year of being an octogenarian. That did not graduate me from experiencing gales of adversities. Satan is constantly seeking to get an advantage of any believer of any age. The Bible also reminds us to be alert, “Lest Satan should get advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11).

My mind goes to a dear sister in the Lord whose life was a bright, fragrant blossom shining forth the light of Jesus. She experienced many adverse situations in her life. She did exceptionally well in blooming through those trials. She remained steadfast in her commitment to Jesus Christ and her marriage. In her last days she was placed in a nursing home to finish her journey in life. She was bed-ridden in a small room

with another lady. A curtain between them provided some privacy. It was somewhat of an adverse situation like a blown-over zinnia. Polly and I visited her before her departure of this life. Through it all she glowed like a fragrant, beautiful blossom. We remember her as being “down,” but her countenance and attitude were still shining forth with her trust and faith in the Lord Jesus. She displayed the good news from the Psalmist, “The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree. He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; he is my rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Psalm 92:12-15 NKJV). My preacher friend, Joe Webb, reminds me that the older a palm tree gets the sweeter is its fruit.


Life does bring many adversities. I was thinking of trying to list some that believers face in these “last times.” That list could be long and tedious. Between the teenager, who became bitter about his parents moving away from his friends to another community, and the aged saint on his death bed wondering if God forgave all his sins, are hundreds of adverse situations that Satan uses

as a trap to deceive the believer. The Scriptures gives solid instruction on responding to the adversary, “Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world” (1 Peter 5:9).

Keep the faith! Take a lesson from the Apostle Paul, “But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For we who live are

always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:7-11 ESV).

When your zinnias in life tumble from adversities, be encouraged with this word from God, “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

I have experienced many winds of adversities that seemed like my zinnias were blown over. I wonder if the life of Jesus was manifested in my body? Did I keep blooming for Him? What about you when adversities blow your way? 

True freedom is not having  
our own way but  
yielding to God’s way.

# Mary and Martha

*Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX*

Give me the heart of Mary,  
most benevolent Lord,  
whenever I need wisdom  
to determine Your will.

Open my ears to listen intently  
to Your wonderful Word,  
while humbly sitting at Your feet  
with a spirit so tender and still.

For to move ahead without first  
hearing from You will displease You  
and risk bringing grief and heartache  
into my life, and it will affect others too.

But after You have clearly revealed  
Your sovereign intention,  
then please infuse my entire being  
with Martha's tireless energy.

Strengthen my body with Your divine  
motivation and determination,  
so that I can accomplish whatever  
purpose You have for me.

For to refuse to move ahead after  
hearing from You will displease You  
and risk bringing grief and heartache  
into my life, and it will affect others too.



## A Baby Was Conceived

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

For every birth of a baby there is conception. So it was with Amish Mennonite Aid. It was more than seventy years ago when someone had a burden and I suppose some were praying for laborers to be sent to the harvest field. I remember Joe Roth preaching at the Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church. He was soft-spoken with a mixture of high German and Pennsylvania Dutch. But the tone of his voice was urgent! There flowed from his humble spirit a deep sense of compassion for the tremendous needs of World War II refugee victims.

In the late 1940s and the early 1950s, Joe and Salome Roth from western New York served in Poland and Germany under Mennonite Central Committee, assisting misplaced people. Several years earlier Joe had a strong desire to accompany a “Heifer Project” cattle boat that was bound

for Italy. Mrs. Amy Yoder writes, “Through his experience in Italy, Joe met some extremely poor people of the Waldensian faith and it became a pressing burden in him to do something to help the world’s poor.

“In 1953 the Roths served in Espelkamp, Germany, under the Conservative Mennonite Mission Board (which is now Rosedale). They helped in clothing distribution, teaching summer Bible school, invested time in listening to people’s hurts, and becoming friends with many. During this time they received two separate but very similar letters from bishops within several weeks. One from Eli Tice (Mountain View Church) and another from John A. Stoltzfus (Weavertown Congregation) asking if they could search for a location for the Beachy churches to start a mission in Europe.

“In the Roths’ prayerful search, a helpful neighbor lady introduced

them to Pastor Krimm of the German Evangelical Hilfswerk mission, who was in Espelkamp at the time for a ministers' meeting. Pastor Krimm was invited to the Roths for dinner and saw the work they were involved in. They informed him of their interest in starting a mission elsewhere and wondered if he could help them. Pastor Krimm thought for some time, then said he knows of an available place in Berlin. Joe and Salome went to investigate a program called Bodensieck-Haus, 'a place of refuge.' They agreed to launch out through this open door for a two-year commitment beginning in April 1956."

### **The Birth of Amish Mennonite Aid**

*by the late Elam Kauffman*

In October 6, 1955, fifteen ministers met at Norfolk, Virginia, where Joe Roth presented the possibilities of serving in a large refugee center at Bodensieck-Haus in Germany. The Roths shared their interest and availability to present the gospel to needy people through material aid. They informed the Beachy churches of this offer and committed themselves to this work, providing

the churches would want to launch into this field of service. As a result of this meeting, John A. Stoltzfus called a ministers' meeting for November 1955, at the Weavertown Amish Mennonite Church in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, inviting all the Beachy ministers. Thirty-one responded to the invitation. Again, Brother Roth reported of the work in Espelkamp and the possibilities of a similar ministry to be started in Berlin. Prior to these meetings there had been a willingness among the plain people to be involved in programs of relief work. However, a vision had been dawning in the hearts of some Beachy and Amish brethren to become more actively involved in fulfilling the great commission through evangelistic work. The time was ripe for a step of faith.

It was agreed to launch into this endeavor on a two-year trial basis. A three-member committee was elected: Norman Beachy, chairman; Elam Kauffman, vice-chairman; and Jacob Hershberger, secretary-treasurer. The official name later chosen for the organization was "Amish Mennonite Aid" supplemented with "Agency of the Beachy Mennonite Churches." The

organization's objective is "Dedicated to the rendering of material, moral, and spiritual aid in the name of Christ to destitute and needy people."

Anna Mary Stoltzfus (a granddaughter of John A. Stoltzfus) from Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was chosen to serve with the Roths. They sailed from New York harbor on April 18, 1956, venturing into AMA's first relief and mission work and establishing the first foreign witness of the Beachy churches.

On May 4 they arrived in Berlin and accepted their new assignment at Bodensieck-Haus. They were surprised and greatly disappointed to find that those in charge of Bodensieck-Haus had very little interest in a spiritual program. After Joes had been there for some time they saw that they could not fulfill the purpose for which they had gone to Berlin. Their conviction was to minister especially to the spiritual needs as well as other needs of life. The leaders of this ministry had little faith in the Bible and scoffed at some of the doctrines we hold so dearly.

Joe reported this situation to the committee. Since this work was opened on a two-year trial basis, it was decided to call a ministers'

meeting to decide what our people wanted to do. David Bontrager from northern Indiana offered to host this meeting at the Fair Haven Church. In May 1957, thirty-one ministers met to discuss the future of AMA. The committee gave a report of the work and conditions under which the volunteers had been serving. After various discussions and comments of the AMA service in Berlin, it was decided to continue the work beyond a two-year term.

Two members of the committee, Jacob Hershberger and I, informed the group that we were planning a first-hand investigation of conditions in Berlin. We would visit the workers and look over the needs and the present conditions. There was a possibility of purchasing a property and building where the ministry could be completely under the supervision of AMA.

In July of that same year, eight of us sailed to Germany on the SS United States. We spent several days touring through Holland, Belgium, and Germany, stopping at Espelkamp before going to Berlin. After staying several days with the workers, we still didn't know what our next move should be. We did attend the

Mennonite World Conference at Karlsruhe, Germany. At the first meeting we attended it was pointed out that the greatest need in the world was Berlin. Refugees were coming out of East Germany and pouring into Berlin. We decided to return to Berlin. The hand of God was clearly sensed.

We as a delegation made contact with some city officials who offered to sell us a property at Hynauerstrasse for relief work. We purchased the

property with a large house which was used as a dwelling for the workers. Shortly afterward two adjacent lots were purchased where a building of thirty by eighty feet was constructed. This was the beginning of Friedensheim and the birth of Amish Mennonite Aid. "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us."

*[Most of these two articles first appeared in Into the Highways and Hedges - AMA, twenty-five years of service. Used by permission.]*



## A Woman After God's Heart

### Who Am I and Why Does It Matter? (part 1)



*Following is the beginning of a three-part discussion: 1) Who we are from our first birth, 2) Whose we are as God's daughters, and 3) The redemption process in moving from the old to the new.*

Self-esteem, identity crisis, and inferiority complex were phrases I grew up around. But I didn't grow up so much on their actual meanings. We rather

caught that our core problem is *too much* self-esteem and what we really need is to *esteem others better than ourselves*. Complexes and crises were results of the fall, and we tended to

complicate things when we thought ourselves to be something when we were nothing.

We sniffed just a bit at what felt like a grain of conceit when some queried, “Who am I? And why am I here?” Wouldn’t it be better to ask, “Who are you and is there something I can do for you?”

This school girl took her place in the lineup before every school softball game, chewing her nails while the captains picked choice players one by one. At the end a motley group was left, and they said something like, “aww, just some go here, and some go there. They just make outs anyhow.”

This girl witnessed a bully’s corporal punishment at a tense session at school and wished she could hide and not see all the drawn faces, hear the sounds, or witness the scuffle.

This girl began to wonder if the shame that spilled out of unsupervised play might be the bottom line after all. That, perhaps, our fallen identity is captive to all that others demand of us. Broken relationships, broken bodies, and broken plans continued to shape her perceived identity. Sometimes the gnawing ache quieted a bit whenever she was able to appear well. To perform well. To possess

the right things. To laugh right and to walk right. To be friends with the right people. To gain approval from the right authorities.

Tension and hiding behind a good appearance became a way of life. A voice nagged, “Am I enough? Good enough? Careful enough? Plain enough? Kind and friendly enough? Stable enough?”

A merciless comparing ruled. If she wore that, I must wear this. If he said this, I believed that. An emotional roller coaster took her way up with public commendation, but to the depths when another was chosen before her for a desired task. Flashbacks of captains and softball. She beat herself mercilessly for blunders she committed. A kind of slavery took her by force; when a job was outlined, she was first to offer. Therein lay who she was. Performance addiction.

Can I safely presume that at least a few of you know what I’m talking about and have existed in this cell with me? **Let’s think about what this kind of thinking has cost us in the past.**

An identity based on performance approval doesn’t apply the same kindness rules to everyone, just to preferred ones. We become anxious and nervous when in the presence



of possible rejection. Perceived unfriendliness feels personal. We are shy, unsociable, and critical with an innate desire to impress. We become depressed when criticized and are ever testing the waters to see what people think of us.

Sensitive to rejection, we surround ourselves with people who think like we do. That reinforces how we think and just builds stronger reinforcements around us to keep others out and the *safe* people in. We become a magnet for more pain and rejection.

So, who am I really? My name is Susan, but that is what my parents named me, not who I am. I am 59 years old, but that is not my identity. It just says how many years ago I was born. My last name is Schlabach, but that only says that my maiden name, Mast, was replaced with my husband's last name, so that means I am married. My husband and I own a retail business, but that is not who we are. It only tells you how we earn a living. (An occupation doesn't identify us ladies quite as much as it tends to identify our men. But, don't mention my housekeeping skills or cooking abilities!) My husband is a minister which makes me a minister's wife, but that is not who I am. It only signifies one of the callings God

placed on my life. Six persons call me Mom, but that is not who I am. It is another calling on my life. Even my precious grandchildren do not define me.

We are not what we look like. We are not what we do. We are not the sum of others' opinions. We are not our failures and we are not our successes!

Who am I or Whose am I? I am a creation of the Most High God. In Eve that perfect creation became deeply flawed. Our fallen-ness emerges from our original birth. **But God...** and our redemption is complete in our second birth! That which was flawed can be redeemed. Into this void of who we are not, moves the blessed reality of who we truly were created to be. In the new reality I acknowledge that Susan Schlabach, 59, mother, grandma, store keeper, minister's wife, perpetually busy, busy performer, can finally find rest. My titles do not give me value or take away from my value. I am who I am, not because of my birth, who my parents were, who my husband is, what church I attend, how much money I have, how well decorated my house is, how my children turn out, how talented or simple I am, how much I weigh, whether I write for publication, my youthfulness, or

my age. I am who I am because of Whose I am, and that is everything.

Romans 5:8 - **But God** commendeth his love toward us. Galatians 6:14 - **But God** forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:4 - **But God**, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.

Sisters, this is the good part. We've agonized long enough over mistaken identity. This calls for a funeral. A once-and-for-all burial of the old.

We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. A birth celebration follows the funeral. He has made us accepted in the Beloved. Our longing for acceptance has finally come home to the Father!

To be continued...

*Recommended resources:*

*Oasis Ladies' Retreat 2009, Teresa Beachy, (smbi@smbi.org)*

*The Search for Significance by Robert S. McGee*



## junior messages

# Plant a Tree

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

**O**ur yard was all brown and parched. The earth was hard and cracked. It was dry season in Kenya. I could hardly wait for the rainy season to come. We would plant trees and flowers. God's rain would brighten this dusty place.

One day Marcellus stopped at a nursery. He came home with a surprise in the back of the van.

Micah and I ran out. Marcellus opened the hatch; there were three small banana trees. We were delighted. We like trees.

The next day he worked hard, digging in the solid, dry earth until he had a big hole for each small tree. Solomon, the grounds keeper of the compound, told him to work up manure from the goat shed into each hole. Then we carefully planted the small seedlings, patting the dirt around them and pouring them a drink of water from the cistern.

I was grateful that three green banana trees got planted in our brown back yard. Celly had worked up a circle of dirt that was inches

lower than the yard, so rain could soak easily into the holes.

When I was finished washing the clothes, that dirty water was carried by my sons and poured to the small trees. The earth hungrily soaked up the moisture and the tiny trees grew. How beautiful it was to see new, green leaves unfurl and grow.

Behind our house was an ugly goat and sheep shed with a rusted tin roof. Two of the banana trees were planted in front of the shed. I liked seeing the green banana trees. It only took some months till the trees hid most of the shed. When we drove in our driveway we admired those lovely tropical trees.

Rainy season came. A shower came in the late afternoon. At night the rain drummed on the roof. The grass around the house turned a happy green. We planted cannas, vincas, and two papaya trees.

With all the rain and the warm sunshine, the banana trees grew and grew. The new, fresh leaves would unfurl beautifully as they reached for the sky.

I was pleased to see these sweet trees when I hung up our wash. I was thankful for trees in my yard. It only took some months till the trees were as tall as the goat shed. New baby trees were coming up around each original tree.

Would you believe it, before the trees were a year old, we saw a unique, red, tear-shaped bud forming on the tree on a long stem. Next came a tiny hanger of bananas. I would look at them often. It was fun to watch the bananas grow bigger and bigger.

It was amazing, but before a year went by we had our own fresh bananas! They were a smaller, plump variety. Solomon came to our aid and showed us how to harvest the hanger of green bananas. He cut the hanger off the tree, then cut it into sections. He told me to put them in a market basket and cover them till they ripen. If the bananas were allowed to ripen totally on the tree, a hungry bird would peck them open and eat them. When the green bananas turned a pretty yellow, they were ready to eat. How fresh and delicious they were. Each one was wrapped in its own pretty peel. We shared bananas with Solomon and were grateful for his help.

Next Solomon chopped down the large, mother stalk that had just borne fruit. It made good food for their cattle or was used as mulch.

Bible study was held at our house one day. Those who arrived early were treated to fresh bananas. They disappeared fast. "Mama Mary," I was informed, "These bananas are

special. This kind is found in other areas.”

Some of the banana tree’s leaves turned brown. Micah chopped the ugly ones off to keep the place looking good.

I encouraged our friends to plant trees. “Plant trees, and you will have more food,” I told them. Some of them asked me for baby banana seedlings.

Somehow friends found out that we were sharing banana tree babies. Solomon was kind and dug them out to gift my friends. He also wanted a baby tree.

One day Micah and I loaded baby banana plants in the old, green Rav and drove off to Dickson and to Mary’s house. It made us happy. Our friends were happy too.

I was grateful to live in a land where bananas grow.

### **Banana Facts:**

- bananas are of the finest nutritious fruit

- they are rich in fiber, antioxidants, vitamin B6, vitamin C, and other nutrients

- birds, bats, rats, and opossums love bananas


- a banana plant can produce fruit after nine months

- the mother plant dies after bearing, but around her base, baby plants called suckers or pups grow

- bananas thrive in the tropics with temperatures at 80 degrees or above

- they grow year round

- they love yearly rainfalls between 78-98 inches

Ask God for ideas. Be generous and kind. Plant something this spring that you can share. 

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WHEN WE KNOW *God's heart.*  
WE WILL NEVER QUESTION HIS WILL.

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## A Call to Arms

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

The world is in turmoil. Rumors of wars, tensions in the Middle East, and hostile relations with Communist countries have brought up questions about the draft. Conscription in the United States, commonly known as the draft, has been employed by the federal government of the United States in five conflicts from The American Revolutionary War, to the Cold War which included the Korean War and Vietnam War. In 1940 the Selective Training and Service Act was passed. It was the first peacetime draft in the country. From 1940 to 1973, men were drafted to fill vacancies in the United States Armed Forces that couldn't be filled through voluntary means. In 1973 the US Armed Forces changed to an all-volunteer military. The Selective Service System remains in place, however, as a contingency plan. All male U.S. citizens, regardless of where they live, and male immigrants whether documented or undocumented, residing within the United States, who are between the ages of 18 and 25

are required to register for the draft. Men are no longer considered draft-eligible when they turn 26. Only an amendment by U.S. Congress could change this.

I had the pleasure of interviewing Specialist 5th Class Rodney Cantrell (former Army MP) and discussing the impact that war has had on his life and his family. Rodney filled me in on some of the horrible things he had seen and the impact that they had on him as a young man from a Christian home. He told me this, "When the first Iraqi war started, I told my sons to get ready. If they reinstate the draft, we're heading to Canada. I won't have my sons exposed to the things that I was." Later he told me, "War changes a man. No one can experience the horrors of war and be trained to kill, kill, kill, and then come home and be perfectly normal again. That is why war vets struggle so much returning to society; they aren't used to backing down. If someone is in their way, they won't go around them, they go through them." (*This is not meant to imply that we have anything to fear*

*from our veterans.)*

Rodney's words should give all of us pause. If we truly understood the horrors of war, we would do more to ensure that our young men and women don't end up there. As Christians who profess to a life of nonresistance and nonviolence, are we ready for the possibility of a draft? We dutifully register for the draft when we turn 18, but do we put much thought into it after that? We as Anabaptists claim a Conscientious Objector or CO status which currently allows us to avoid active duty and service in the military altogether based on our adherence to the teachings of non-resistance in the New Testament. Are we utilizing the resources that have so graciously been made available to us? Are we cultivating an apathetic view of our responsibility to our country, and the importance of maintaining the valuable alternative to active service that we have? The Selective Service has allowed us an alternative service program known as Conservative Anabaptist Service Program or CASP. Church leaders have had difficulty getting young men to volunteer for CASP projects. Parents have expressed reservations for sending their young people to CASP for fear of them being under possible negative influences while away from home. Sometimes it's an

issue of finding married volunteers to help with administration. A CASP board member informed me that one project was actually canceled because they could not get enough young men to volunteer.

CASP was established to allow us as conscientious objectors to fulfill our civil duty while upholding the nonresistant teachings of our faith. If you were questioned as to why you claim a CO status, what would your answer be? Suppose you have a great answer, and the Scripture to back it, is that enough? If a Selective Service board were to examine your social media, would everything reflect the beliefs that you claim to uphold? If they were to look at a history of games you've played, what would they find? What if they looked at a list of books that you borrowed from the library, or the music that you've listened to? If they examined your driving record, what conclusion would they reach? We know a permit to carry a concealed firearm will automatically void your CO status, but what about the number of firearms and ammo that we own? Could the sheer amount of firepower at our disposal be used against us in a Selective Service board hearing?

Do we not realize just what a blessing we have in CASP? It is only a four-week term, and for


most volunteers, it is an enjoyable experience. What would await our young people if they were drafted? The average boot camp is between 8-12 weeks long. Wake up time is usually five a.m. and you can expect to be active for 12-14 hours. For the first couple weeks of basic training, you are allowed about two minutes to shower as a group (no private showers or bathroom use). Bathroom use is limited to a minimum of two-man teams. There are no beverages containing caffeine in the diet of recruits, and it is not served with meals. They can sometimes be used as an incentive or reward but only as authorized by an authority figure. Mealtime isn't a time to visit; you don't look around or make conversation with others. You get no days off in boot camp. There is no Sunday service and no Wednesday evening prayer meeting. The military's goal is to take away the individuality of a recruit and have them become a part of the larger "war machine". Recruits are taught to follow orders without question. In a way, a recruit is partially brainwashed to comply with orders. For example, during hand-to-hand combat training in the Army (in preparation for the Vietnam war), soldiers were required to scream "Kill!" every time they made a move during the 12-hour training exercise with bayonets on human silhouettes.

This was done for five days straight.

On the flip side, CASP projects are quite a bit more enjoyable for the volunteers. Time is allotted for personal devotions and character-building group activities. The work day is scheduled but allows for a morning and afternoon break in addition to normal lunch break. Weekends are spent sightseeing or doing outreach in the area. Former CASP project crew leader Matt Stutzman described his time with CASP as having a God-honoring atmosphere which allowed him to form new relationships and deepen already established relationships. One statement he made really stood out to me, "CASP is a golden opportunity to serve our country in a way that most people don't get to." Former CASP volunteer Dale Mast shared these words, "I think it's very important to keep it (CASP) up. It is an opportunity for us to serve our country. My experience was amazing, and I counted it a blessing to be there. Your willingness to submit will determine whether you have a good experience at CASP or not."

What can you do to ensure that we don't lose this valuable program?

*[Resources- "Conscription in the United States," Wikipedia*

*First-hand accounts of former recruits, Reddit.]* 

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## THOUGHT GEMS

Faith brings trust that conquers fear.

• • • • •

Faith and fear cannot live together.

• • • • •

In the spiritual world, believing is seeing.

• • • • •

Faith is not belief without proof, but trust without reservation.

• • • • •

Don't pray for an easy life; pray to be stronger men.

• • • • •

The secret of patience is to do something else in the meantime.

• • • • •

The end never justifies the meanness.

• • • • •

A song in your heart will put a smile upon the face.

• • • • •

Christ came not to make life easy but to make men great.

• • • • •

God gives us vinegar with a teaspoon and honey with a soup ladle.

• • • • •

The finger that points the way is part of the hand that supplies the need.

• • • • •

God's throne is mercy—not marble.

• • • • •

God gives strength in proportion to the strain.