



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

## DECEMBER 2020

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Calvary Messenger

December 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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## The Race That Long in Darkness Pined


The race that long in darkness pined  
Has seen a glorious Light;  
The people dwell in day, who dwelt  
In death's surrounding night.

To hail Thy rise, Thou better Sun,  
The gath'ring nations come,  
Joyous as when the reapers bear  
The harvest treasures home.

To us a Child of Hope is born,  
To us a Son is giv'n;  
Him shall the tribes of earth obey,  
Him all the hosts of heav'n.

His Name shall be the Prince of Peace,  
Forevermore adored,  
The Wonderful, the Counsellor,  
The Great and Mighty Lord.

His pow'r increasing still shall spread,  
His reign no end shall know:  
Justice shall guard His throne above,  
And peace abound below.

—John Morison, 1781 

## The Pull of Politics

*Caleb Crider, Strasburg, VA*

Paul wrote sadly about his old friend: “Demas has forsaken me, having loved this present world, and has departed for Thessalonica” (2 Timothy 4:10 NKJV). One attraction that can make us fall in love with the present world is politics.

### **The appeal of politics**

Politics is attractive to us for several reasons. We know that political leaders make decisions that trickle down to impact our families, businesses, and way of life. We care about having good leaders in government who will make wise decisions.

Another reason politics is attractive is that it has become much like a sport, with opposing teams to cheer or boo, tactics and strategies to discuss, victories and losses to celebrate or mourn, and opposing fan communities to support their side and put down the other side.

Choosing sides, competing, and winning appeal to us. This is one reason we enjoy playing games so much, and it’s fine when kept in check. But more than a simple game, political engagement can

quickly become carnal involvement in the kingdom of the world. Taking a political stand and supporting candidates is inconsistent with our position as “kingdom Christians” with a pilgrim-and-stranger profession.

### **Politics is inseparable from government.**

When we begin supporting political candidates, we are in danger of becoming modern-day Demases, falling in love with the present world. As you support politicians, you support the political system, which is how the country is governed. As you support the political/government system, you begin to buy into its values, methods, and goals.

God has delegated some of His authority to government to carry out oversight and order. And God overrules in government affairs. Yet we believe that the world’s governments are often associated with the kingdom of darkness that opposes God’s kingdom.

### **Politics and patriotism lead to nationalism.**

Nationalism is when we think our nation and national culture are

superior, and we support its interests above other nations. Every earthly government is nationalistic and wants its people to be ardently patriotic. We can and should appreciate good government without buying into partisan patriotic sentiments.

When patriotic nationalism starts to rub off on us, we think way too small. That's because God and His plan are big. He made all people, loves all people, and wants all people to be saved. God's plans and will encompass the best interests of all people, not just the people who happen to live in a country known as a superpower. God's kingdom is intrinsically universal, while patriotism and nationalism are intrinsically tribal.

In contrast to God's big-picture plan encompassing eternity and people from every nation, patriotism narrows our range of vision to a mere self-centered (nation-centered) scope. For example, patriotically supporting government military actions disregards God's care and concern for the well-being and souls of the real people on the receiving end of that military action.

### **Nationalism and patriotism become idolatrous.**

As American Mennonites, our collective memory of persecution under hostile governments is growing dim under recent decades of friendly government. But when push comes

to shove, all governments are hostile to kingdom Christians.

When national survival is perceived to be on the line, governments do not allow their citizens to hold another allegiance. While we appreciate and respect earthly governments, our allegiance to them is nothing like our unshakeable allegiance to God's eternal kingdom that erases all petty national boundaries on earth.

In his book *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, Greg Boyd writes:

I believe a significant segment of American evangelicalism is guilty of nationalistic and political idolatry. To a frightful degree, I think, evangelicals fuse the kingdom of God with a preferred version of the kingdom of the world (whether it's our national interests, a particular form of government, a particular political program, or so on). Rather than focusing our understanding of God's kingdom on the person of Jesus—who, incidentally, never allowed himself to get pulled into the political disputes of his day—I believe many of us American evangelicals have allowed our understanding of the kingdom of God to be polluted with political ideals, agenda, and issues (p. 11).

I understand that having strong opinions about politics is not the same as the idolatry of giving ultimate allegiance to the government. However, getting involved in politics

by taking and defending political positions begins blurring the line between the two, both in our own minds and in those looking on.

Paul gave Titus simple instructions that are relevant for us today: “Remind them to be subject to rulers and authorities, to obey, to be ready for every good work, to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men” (Titus 3:1, 2 NKJV).

### **We are susceptible to becoming puppets.**

Much of what is published today qualifies as propaganda, which Merriam-Webster defines as “ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one’s cause or to damage an opposing cause.” The truth is not easily found in the flood of conflicting information and perspectives that we spend time reading or listening to.

No one is truly an independent thinker. Each of us is formed by what we read and listen to. Many people who follow politics today have become puppets, followers who unthinkingly embrace the party line or anything that confirms their preferences.

Most readers today don’t have the time or discernment to truly study and understand the issues at hand (issues are usually more nuanced than we realize). Instead, they follow the cues of the media they consume.

You can see this play out in the scant attention given to local politics versus national politics in political discussions in our circles.

Local politics tends to be less controversial because local governments tend to work together better to get things done (to use my earlier analogy, it’s not as much of a sport). Local politics doesn’t get the same amount of media coverage. Because we consume media coverage about state and national politics, that’s where our interest grows, and that’s what our debates center around. We’ve become puppets of the media, our discussions centering about whatever the media highlights for us.

Paul had words for Timothy that apply here too: “Avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife” (2 Timothy 2:23 NKJV).

### **A lesson from Germany**

In an article entitled “Mennonite Nazis: A Lesson From History,” Dean Taylor tells how Mennonites in Germany supported Adolf Hitler because of his economic reforms and his opposition to communism. One group sent Hitler this letter in 1933:

The Conference of East and West Prussian Mennonites, assembled today in Tiegengagen, Free State of Danzig, feels deep gratitude for the powerful revival that God has given our nation through your energy, and

promises joyful cooperation in the upbuilding of our Fatherland through the power of the Gospel, faithful to the motto of our forefathers: No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid which is Jesus Christ.

Hitler's reply:

For your loyalty and your readiness to cooperate in the upbuilding of the German nation, expressed in your letter to me, I express my sincere thanks.

This was several years before the horrors of World War II, but by the time the war started, most Mennonites in Germany supported Hitler and joined his military. After all, Nazi belt buckles were stamped with the words "God is with us."

Taylor points out that the Mennonites in Germany didn't abandon their Scriptural nonresistant convictions all at once. Rather it was a process of conforming to German society over time.

### **A lesson from the Philippines**

In his readable book *Pilgrims and Politics*, Michael S. Martin tells how his Christian friends in the Philippines didn't get overly distressed over the machinations of their very corrupt government. He writes,

What is wrong with these Philippine Christians? Are they nonchalant? Naïve? Cavalier? These brothers have far more reason than I to be

concerned—and they are concerned. But they have faith, and their faith puts me to shame. If I cannot have respect, peace, and courage in the face of the relatively benign political scene in present-day America, I am ill-prepared to face the inevitably tougher future. I have much to learn from believers in other countries about a truly Christian attitude toward politics (pp. 284-285).

### **Avoiding the pull of politics**

Taking a passionate interest in politics compromises our position of being in the world but "not of this world" (John 18:36). We base our request for exemption from military service partially on these words of Jesus, who said, "That's why My servants are not fighting for Me." Yet the person who votes or supports political candidates weakens his basis for making this claim.

I propose that it is good to be informed about what is going on around us. This awareness can prepare us to respond as events overtake us. Current events are not isolated events, but they are eddies in the flowing stream of history, connected to what came before and what will come next. Understanding events and people around the world gives us deeper perspective and keeps us from being narrow-minded and parochial.

We need to balance interest in politics with interest in God's work at

home and around the world. We need to pray not just for local, state, and national leaders, but also for leaders and common people from other countries, especially fellow believers.

More words from Paul to Timothy: “I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:1-4).

#### **Recommended reading**

*Pilgrims and Politics*, Michael S. Martin. Available from Christian Light or possibly your church library.

This solid Anabaptist presentation should be required reading for every high school or youth Bible school student.

*The Myth of a Christian Nation*, Gregory Boyd. Available on Amazon. What is interesting about this book is that Boyd is not a Mennonite but an evangelical megachurch pastor.

“Mennonite Nazis: A Lesson from History,” Dean Taylor. Read this article online at <http://bit.ly/mennonnazis>. Taylor is also the author of *A Change of Allegiance*, which tells how he left the military to join the Anabaptists and also makes the case for nonresistance.

[Reprinted with permission from the September-October 2020 issue of Life Lines.] 

## **the bottom line**

### **The Time Was Right**

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

Everything in the course of life must take place in time. Schedules are man-made to hopefully make good use of time. Therefore, we talk about being on time as a matter of schedule for our events and agenda. Few people would be without a watch, more precisely

called a time piece, to at any moment be able to tell the time of the day or night.

Alarms are set to make us aware of the time to awaken or to take the baked cake out of the oven. Without a setting of the alarm, we could become alarmed at failing to see how



late it is or by how much it is past our time for an appointment.

Our Lord Jesus was sent to the earth in the fulness of time, as stated in Galatians 4:4,5. *“But when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”* As we commemorate the birth of Christ, we could be thinking about God’s timing of such a long-promised event. In round numbers, it was 4000 years from the time of the first God-given prophecy to Adam. Again, in round numbers, it has been 2000 years since Jesus was born of Mary.

The birth of Christ is important to us, being preliminary to His life on earth and His subsequent death, resurrection, and ascension.

It has often been amazing to me that the Son of God was actually on the earth in a physical body such as we have. Jesus experienced an earth-life similar to our lives as far as eating, walking, and needing rest and sleep is concerned. He also suffered emotionally and physically and died under the traumatic abuse of His body.

Our meditation here is to reflect on how the time was right for His coming to this earth. Thinking of the 4000 years until that right time finally came, it was 133 generations, based on 30 years for

one generation, and an additional 66 generations until today. Most of us can only remember back one or two generations, remembering our adult life and the adult life of our parents. We remember our grandparents as people but not the larger part of the lives they lived. Our memory is but a small slice of time. By comparison, Jesus lived on the earth for 33 years, only one generation in duration.

We want to acknowledge the several ways in which the time was right, looking at the Bible passage in declaring that *“fulness of time.”* We can think of at least seven ways in which the time Jesus was sent by God the Father was the right time, or the fulness of time.

1. The time was right religiously.

God had strengthened the law to make it binding as an obvious need for human regulation. The weakness of the law was the failure to keep it as far as man was concerned. That weakness brought an indictment of guilt upon every individual in every generation for all of time. Jesus gave His life blood as a redemption from sin to every person who confessed his sin and believed on Jesus Christ. The payment for sin results in a transition to religiously being under grace before God rather than under obligation to the law.

2. The time was right culturally.

The Romans had conquered the known world. That reduced political

and geographic rivals to a minimum. Cultural values could be expressed and lived in a moderate peace with more reasonable tolerance for the chosen rights of various ethnic groups. Minorities could flourish in their own ways.

3. The time was right for commerce.

Rome was prosperous because she allowed more freedoms for innovation and production and granted more liberty to marketing ideas. The Romans built good roads which facilitated travel and increased the private-sector aspect of jobs for more people. The roads connected towns and cities to each other. By that, all people could expend their energies and resources by contributing to the betterment of society in a climate of cooperation and peace.

4. The time was right linguistically.

The Greek language was a universal language of the time. It was the best language for the writing of the New Testament. Its value of expression was rich with meaning. The Greeks had a high level of education and the phonics to go with it. The Latin language also was a contributor to a higher level of the arts and literature.

5. The time was right civilly.

The laws of Rome were more humane than had been in force earlier by dictators and world emperors. The courts of law were based more on human rights and on the consideration of the relative

rights of individuals. Those put under arrest had recourse through a system of lower courts who had then a more equitable appeals system that was subject to the higher courts.

6. The time was right prophetically.

The timing of the birth of Christ was superintended by Jehovah God in heaven, the undisputed Sovereign of heaven and earth. God has kept His eye on both the events of the nations and on every individual in the whole earth. God knows all things—the end even prior to the beginning. And God does what is equitable and right, of orderliness and justice. We rest in His knowledge and the word of His prophecies, both in general and in specifics.

7. The time was right provisionally.

All the avenues for the betterment of men were tried. Humanity aside from God always sinks lower in sin and degradation, which was why God destroyed the world in the days of Noah. God provided a way of escape from sinking into the eternal hell and damnation. The gospel of Christ has given the clear means and terms for His provisional salvation.

**The Bottom Line** is that all mankind should seek after God and His Son Jesus Christ the Lord. Our seasonal meditation is greatly enriched to now meditate again about Jesus Christ being sent into the world to be our Savior “*in the fulness of time.*” Amen!



## marriages

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

### **Beachy-Rodes**

Bro. Micah, son of Mark and Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH, and Sis. Carolyn, daughter of James and Esther Rodes, Dayton, VA, on October 24, 2020, at the Bank Mennonite Church by Clair Heatwole.

### **Lehman-Kurtz**

Bro. Leland, son of Jacob and Laura Lehman, Rochester, WA, and Sis. Gloria, daughter of Joseph and Sylvia Kurtz, Mannsville, NY, on July 17, 2020, at Crystal Light Church for Northern Light Christian Fellowship by Wilmer Peachey.

### **Martin-Mast**

Bro. Dwight, son of David and Patty Martin, Rochester, WA (Dwight is living in Fanling, Hong Kong), and Sis. Melody, daughter of Ruth and the late Melvin Mast, Crossville, TN, on May 22, 2020, at Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Ray Miller.

### **Miller-Smucker**

Bro. Danny, son of Dave and Laura Miller, Russellville, KY, and Sis. Katrina, daughter of Daniel and Anna Smucker, Narvon, PA, on October 10, 2020, at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church for Summitview Christian Fellowship by Dave Stoltzfus.

### **Rocke-Miller**

Bro. Lucas, son of Daniel and Rhoda Rocke, Arcola, IL, and Sis. Rebecca, daughter of Richard and Mary Miller, Arcola, IL, on October 3, 2020, at Sunnyside Mennonite Church for Pleasant View Mennonite Church by Matthew Bontrager.

### **Sharp-Horst**

Bro. Joseph, son of Joseph and Martha Sharp, Belleville, NY, and Sis. Carol, daughter of Clyde and Lorene Horst, Mannsville, NY, on June 12, 2020, at Northern Light Christian Fellowship by Wilmer Peachey.


### **Stoltzfus-Gingerich**

Bro. Floyd, son of Mervin and Nancy Stoltzfus, Honey Brook, PA, and Sis. Sarita, daughter of James and Rhonda Gingerich, Leesburg, OH, on August 22, 2020, at Crossroads Christian Church for Faith and Light Mennonite Church by Floyd King.

### **Stutzman-Yoder**

Bro. Donald, son of Paul and Lydia Mae Stutzman, Washington, IA, and Sis. Christina, daughter of Mervin and Ada Yoder, Washington, IA, on September 19, 2020, by Delmar Bontrager.

### **Wingard-Bontrager**

Bro. Wendon Lee, son of Loren and Marsha Wingard, Washington, IN, and Sis. Amber Valesca, daughter of Glen and Margaret Bontrager, Stanardsville, VA, on October 17, 2020, at Dayton Mennonite Church for Faith Mission Fellowship, Free Union, VA, by Ivan Beachy. 

## cradle roll

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

**Beachy**, Kraig and Andreea (Stanciuc), Patrauti, Romania, second child and son, Thomas Iosif, July 16, 2020.

**Bender**, Lloyd and Esther (Yoder), Dresden, TN, fifth child, first son, Samuel Louis, September 29, 2020.

**Chupp**, Ivan and Carol (Mast), Holmesville, OH, fifth child, second daughter, Aliyah Abrielle, May 30, 2020.

**Chupp**, Nathan and Glenda (Zimmerman), Grove City, MN, first child and son, Kowyn Elijah, September 17, 2020.

**Funk**, Carlson and Norah (Anderson), Chambersburg, PA, first child and daughter, Magnolia Rain, October 17, 2020.

**Gerber**, Michael and Charlotte (Schmidt), Gadshill, ON, second child, first daughter, Hailey Brielle, July 2, 2020.

**Gerber**, Peter and Jenia (Muntean), Mitocu Dragomirnei, Romania, fourth child, third son, Michael Ivan, July 21, 2020.

**Gingerich**, Terry and Cheryl (Herschberger), Tuscola, IL, fourth

child, second daughter, Destiny Skye, August 20, 2020.

**Glick**, Ivan and Katrina (Riehl), New Holland, PA, first child and daughter, Aziah Cherise, August 9, 2020.

**Hochstetler**, Jerry and Marnita (Herschberger), Lovington, IL, fifth child, third son, Jamison Allen, September 10, 2020.

**Hostetler**, Eugene and Norma (Beiler), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third son, Lincoln Elliot, October 20, 2020.

**Hostetler**, Julius and Erma (Kropf), Harrison, AR, fifth living child (one son deceased), third living son, Ezekiel Lee, August 26, 2020.

**Kauffman**, Dwayne and Beth (Hurst), Swanton, MD, first child and daughter, Jessa Brielle, October 13, 2020.

**Keim**, Myron and Karen (Yoder), Russellville, OH, first child and son, Hudson Ryan, born March 28, 2019. Received for adoption October 28, 2020.

**King**, Kevin and Holly (Gingerich), Paradise, PA, fourth child, second daughter, Haven Rose, September 25, 2020.

**McGrath**, Eric and Nicole (Vasquez), Bushnell, FL, second child, first daughter, Laila Ruth, October 7, 2020.

**Miller**, Daniel and Rosanna (Yoder), Dundee, OH, fifth child, first daughter, Elena Grace, September 1, 2020.

**Peachey**, Andrew and Ina (Hershberger), Mannsville, NY, first child and son, Judson Dale, May 26, 2020.

**Petersheim**, Jonathan and Dorcas (Miller), Calinesti, Romania, third child, second son, Jasper Delbert, September 5, 2020.

**Schrock**, Ellis and Daniela (Ciocan), Patrauti, Romania, fourth and fifth children (twins), second and third daughters, Emma Christine and Kate Elizabeth, June 8, 2020.

**Shenk**, Timothy and Keturah (Yoder), Hutchinson, KS, second child and son, Benjamin Lief, October 6, 2020.

**Stoltzfus**, Glendon and Rhoda (Stoltzfus), Narvon, PA, fifth child, second daughter, Kenzie Brielle, July 16, 2020.

**Stoltzfus**, John and Melody (Ebersole), Parkesburg, PA, third child, second daughter, Jenicka Rose, August 3, 2020.

**Stoltzfus**, John Paul and Regina (Stoltzfus), Honeybrook, PA, first child and son, Declan Tyler, August 27, 2020.


**Stoltzfus**, Kevin and Kaitlyn (King), Westover, MD, first child and son, Chandler Bryce, October 24, 2020.

**Stoltzfus**, Michael and Esther (Zook), Gap, PA, first child and daughter, Adalee Skye, August 19, 2020.

**Yoder**, Joe Allen and Glenda (Bender), Rural Retreat, VA, third child, second son, Brysen Zane, May 20, 2020.

**Yoder**, Lyndon and Verna (Miller), Millersburg, OH, second child, first daughter, Brittany Mae, October 8, 2020.

**Wagler**, Matthew and Erma Jean (Miller), Odon, IN, sixth child, third son, Anderson Lane, August 3, 2020.

**Wagler**, Mervin and Wilma (Wengerd), Cottage Grove, TN, sixth child, second daughter, Erika Janae, October 8, 2020. 

## ordinations

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

**Bro. Lavon Bontrager**, 46, (wife, Vesta), Kalona, IA, called through the church and ordained minister for Sharon Bethel Church, Kalona, IA, on August 9, 2020. Preordination messages were given by Wilbur Gingerich. The charge was given by Delmar Bontrager, assisted by Wilbur Gingerich and Gabriel Beachy. Marlin Coblentz and Kevin Beachy shared the lot.


**Bro. Kevin Coblentz**, 36, (wife, Rebecca), Oakland, MD, was called through the church and ordained minister for Mountain View Mennonite Church, Salisbury, PA, on September 27, 2020. The message on Qualifications for a Minister was brought by Nate Zook. The charge was given by Merlin Beachy.

**Bro. Yakiv Dzuba**, (wife, Yasha), Krivishintsi, Ukraine, was called through the church and ordained to the office of deacon for Berezyanka Evangelical Mennonite Church on October 18, 2020. The charge was given by bishop Jim Gingerich from Burkesville, KY, and bishop Harlan Garber from Kiev.

**Bro. Matthew Petersheim**, 43, (wife, Diana), Kalona, IA, was called through the voice of the church and ordained minister for New Hope Mennonite Church, Washington, IA, on October 4, 2020. Preordination messages were

given by Darlton Bontrager. The charge was given by Monroe Gingerich for Delmar Bontrager (who was sick with COVID-19), assisted by Darlton Bontrager and Gabriel Beachy. Jonathan Beachy shared the lot.

**Bro. Jay Wendell Stoltzfus**, 30, (wife, Kaylene), was ordained to the office of deacon for the Maranatha Fellowship Church, Sugarcreek, OH, on October 18, 2020. Ed Yoder from Huntsville, AR, conducted the preordination services. Kenny Miller shared the lot.

**Bro. Lavern Stoltzfus**, 35, (wife, Loma), was ordained to the office of minister at the Silver Lake Mennonite Church, Perry, NY, on October 18, 2020. Delmar Bontrager preached the preordination messages. The charge was given by Ben Stoltzfus, assisted by Dathan Stoltzfus and Robbie Yoder. The lot was shared with Brian Stoltzfus. 

## obituaries

**Beiler**, Eli A., 54, Loysville, PA, entered into rest on September 7, 2020. He was born on August 23, 1966. He was a member of Living Hope Christian Fellowship.

He was the beloved husband of Sara Ann Beiler and the loving father of four sons: Andrew, Marvin, Elmer, and Daniel; and three daughters: Kathryn (Ephraim) Zook, Hardwick, NJ; and

Anna Grace and Kayla at home. He had four precious grandchildren.

He was the son of Ezra and Elizabeth Beiler, of New Providence. Also surviving are five brothers: Benuel (Rachel), New Providence; Emanuel (Katie Mae), Lititz; Ezra, Jr. (Barbie Ann), Gap; David, New Holland; seven sisters: Anna (David) Smucker, Quarryville; Miriam (Jonathan) Beiler, Quarryville; Lydia

(David) Glick, Holtwood; Ada (Samuel) Stoltzfus, Drumore; Priscilla (Crist) Stoltzfus, Christiana; Naomi (Alvin) Lapp, New Providence; and Katie (Elam) Stoltzfus, Drumore.

Eli was preceded in death by a daughter, Martha, and two brothers: Abner and a stillborn brother.

The funeral service was held at the Weavertown Mennonite Church in Bird-in-Hand on September 10, 2020. Burial was at the adjoining cemetery.

**Miller**, Irvin, 91, Stuarts Draft, VA, passed away peacefully at his home, surrounded by family, on August 26, 2020.

Born September 9, 1928, in Dover, DE, Irvin was the oldest son of Jake and Sarah (Yoder) Miller. His family moved to Stuarts Draft in 1946. On September 20, 1951, he married Elizabeth Miller, his wife of 68 years. He was a charter member of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship and raised his family to love and serve the Lord.

Irvin loved people and never met a stranger. He was loved and respected by young and old alike. He served as a volunteer with the Stuarts Draft Volunteer Fire Department for over 50 years, and served as the local fire warden for many years. While raising his family, he worked in construction and owned and operated an egg farm. He was employed at several local businesses, and after retirement he enjoyed his trout ponds and the many people who came to fish. He loved working at Sunrise Farms

five mornings a week, which he did up until two weeks before his death. He enjoyed every one of his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his stepmother, Nancy, two brothers, five sisters, one daughter-in-law, Rosy, one grandson, and one great-granddaughter.

Survivors include his wife, Elizabeth, his 11 children: Maynard (Shirley) Miller, Allen (Joanna) Miller, Rose Miller, and Merle Miller, all of Stuarts Draft; Edna (Stanley) Mast, Concord AR; Fern (Marlin) Miller, Kalona, IA; Sarah (Jay) Mast, Goodspring, TN; Freeman (Emily) Miller, Amherst; Truman (Irene) Miller, Heavener, OK; Floyd (Luella) Miller, Flintville, TN; Eldon (Faith) Miller, Myerstown, PA; 47 grandchildren, 60 great-grandchildren, two brothers, three sisters, and many nieces and nephews.

Funeral services were held August 30, with Simon Schrock and Ken Miller officiating. Burial was at the Pilgrim Cemetery.


**Overholt**, Walter L., 83, Antrim, OH, passed away July 31, 2020, at his residence from an auto-immune disorder, Sjogren's syndrome. He was born January 24, 1937, in Hartville, OH, to the late John H. and Mattie (Byler) Overholt.

He was preceded in death by his first wife, Mary Esther (Grabber), a daughter, Faith (Overholt) Miller, and four brothers: Leonard, Paul, Mark, and Merle Overholt.

He was a member of Antrim Mennonite Church. He was a carpenter who enjoyed remodeling challenges no one else would touch, a missionary in Cayo, Belize, and a minister in Jessup, GA.

Walter is survived by his wife, Dorothy (Wittmer) Overholt, Antrim, OH, whom he married on November 10, 2010; two daughters: Regina (Ray) Weaver, Brevard, NC; Charity (Dave) Troyer, Millersburg; two sons: Durrell (Zonya) Overholt,

Hartville; Daniel (Tina) Overholt, Barberton; a son-in-law, Mark (Brenda) Miller, Homeworth; 12 grandchildren, 11 great-grandchildren, two sisters: Mary (Roman) Wagler, Hartville; and Sadie (Cal) Troyer, Antrim; and several nieces and nephews.

The funeral service was held on August 4, 2020, at the Antrim Mennonite Church with Ed Lapp officiating. Burial was at the church cemetery. 

**observations**

In last month's column I made some comments related to the complicated relationship of the "plain people" to beauty that generated a bit of feedback. One person indicated that she often hears others speak of the beauty expressed in flower gardens and in quilts as broadly understood expressions of beauty among our people. Another person noted that I referred to order alongside beauty as traits of our Creator Whose image we bear. She commented that chaos and art really don't go together despite prevailing conclusions to the contrary. I think she's right.



Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is celebrating its 100th birthday this year. I am old enough to remember listening to the stories that Peter Dyck, born to Mennonite

parents in Russia in 1914, told about how the work of MCC impacted his life. His mother noted in a journal that little Peter wouldn't likely be with them much longer. The six-year-old boy was emaciated from hunger and near starvation from the famine of 1921. About that time food arrived from concerned people in the USA and Canada through MCC. Peter not only survived but lived to a ripe old age. But the deprivation he experienced profoundly shaped his perspective. It was about 25 years ago, I think, that I heard him tell his stories. One evening he held up a dry bagel that he used to noisily rap the podium from which he spoke, while he commented, "Old bread is not hard. No bread—that is hard!"

More recently I heard the testimony of a man from east Africa who spent time in a refugee camp.



The cold nights were much more bearable because of the blanket that he received from MCC.

I am the 10th of 12 children in our family, so by the time that I came along the stories about my Dad’s CPS days, whose formation was greatly influenced by MCC, were a bit more distant to me than for my older siblings. But I was fascinated by Dad’s experiences. Mom was the undisputed cook in our family. So, I was struck that part of what Dad did in Gulfport, Mississippi, was work in the kitchen. Years later, he served with MCC as a representative of our congregations, a position later filled by Elmer Miller, Goshen, Indiana, and currently held by Tim Miller from McKenney, Virginia.



I’m 54 years old and have no memory of a time where alternatives to compulsory military service didn’t exist. I’m concerned that the normalcy of this provision might foster a complacency in us. We owe a debt of gratitude to those instrumental in the formation of this provision, and to ourselves not to take this for granted. One way to demonstrate our gratefulness and militate against our forgetfulness is to support Kingdom-building volunteer efforts now.

I’ve invited Ken Sensenig with MCC East Coast to share a few of his reflections on MCC’s 100th birthday.

Thank you, Ken.

### **Seeking Peace in a War-torn Century**

This year marks the centennial of Anabaptist churches in the United States moving in concert to establish their nonresistant identity more firmly. In 1919, millions of U.S. servicemen returned from the Great War in Europe. Mennonites, Amish, River Brethren, and Hutterites had refused to serve in the Great War. Anabaptist young men facing the draft had no option but to report to the military camps. Here they suffered greatly. Two young Hutterite men paid with their lives.

Then news of terrible suffering from another war—civil war in southern Russia (present day Ukraine)—reached Anabaptist communities in the U.S. and Canada in 1920. Unlike the response to the draft, in this situation the Anabaptist churches felt compelled to participate in the request for material assistance. A collection of distinct Anabaptist groups banded together to form Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) and to respond collectively. According to a report on this activity, one primary motivator was “*to awaken the American Mennonites to a realization of their peculiar mission as a people who believe in saving life rather than destroying it.*” *Feeding the Hungry*, P.C. Hiebert and O.O. Miller, p 28.

Twenty years later, the evil talons of war descended yet again on Europe. This coalition of Anabaptists in MCC determined to find an alternative to the system that created tremendous suffering for conscientious objectors in the Great War. A program known as Civilian Public Service (CPS) emerged. Selective Service provided the framework for CPS, but the churches administered and financed the programs. Thousands of young men, and a few young women, served in CPS camps around the country in the 1940s.

David L. Miller from Partridge, Kansas, served in two CPS camps for 13 months in 1946 and 1947. His first assignment was at Denison, Iowa, working in soil conservation and erosion control. The second assignment in Gulfport, Mississippi, was dedicated to public health efforts including hookworm control and installing privies.

More than a quarter century after Miller's service, the draft became inactive in 1973. One visible part remains. Eighteen-year-old men are required to register with the Selective Service.

Discussion about national service has re-surfaced recently. In the past three years, a commission appointed by Congress revisited the concept of national service, including the draft. At MCC's encouragement, Anabaptist churches again chose to

work jointly. Brethren, Mennonite, Amish, Beachy, and Bruderhof representatives expressed shared convictions with those writing the report. In correspondence with the commission, these churches clearly stated the scriptural basis for nonresistance. A primary point of interest and concern was the possibility that both men and women may be expected to register for service. The final report from the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service was submitted to Congress in March 2020. To date, no action has been taken on any Commission recommendations. Congress may take up this discussion in 2021.

One hundred years after MCC's formation, a coalition of Anabaptist churches in the US remains committed to its *peculiar mission as a people who believe in saving life rather than destroying it.*

—Ken Sensenig



In 1955 Francis and Edith Shaeffer opened their home in Switzerland to people seeking legitimate answers to foundational questions as well as offer them the opportunity to experience a Christian environment. The result of the focus and work of the Schaeffers was called L'Abri Fellowship. L'Abri is a French word that means "shelter."

Years later, the Shaeffers sought

medical treatment at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. After Francis passed away in 1984, Edith stayed in Minnesota until 1999 when she returned to Europe to be near her family. L'Abri opened a retreat center near Rochester, Minnesota. Since then, one has opened near Boston, Massachusetts, and in rural, east-central Missouri as well as 8-10 centers in other countries. Recently, friends of our family spent most of a week at the L'Abri retreat center in Missouri.

There were nearly 10 persons there during their visit plus a host couple. People are free to stay for all or any part of the three-week term that the retreat was open this fall. Those who attend, experience a variety of activities, including group mealtimes and twice daily tea times, structured in such a way as to maximize interpersonal interactions. Roughly half of the day is blocked off for the personal study that each participant wishes to pursue. Some resource material is available for those who desire, but no formal classes were planned. During the other half of the day, each attendee contributes by working on the property or somewhere in the community. Some of the ladies worked in food preparation, laundry, or painting. Some of the men were busy cleaning up tree tops that were left following a logging operation on the property. This collaborative effort

is partly responsible for the fact that they are able to charge only \$20 per attendee per day to be there.

One of the attendees at the Missouri retreat center in October was using this time to familiarize herself with missionary stories. Other attendees used this time to try to research and to develop their understanding of a proper Christian approach to voting and non-voting. Those attending were encouraged to learn from each other by talking to each other about what they were learning. During the evenings when our friends were there, they played board games with others, and listened to the host reading James Harriet stories.

From the L'Abri website (<http://www.labri.org/history.html>), I noted this summary of four primary emphases on the teaching of L'Abri Fellowship.

“First, that Christianity is objectively true and that the Bible is God’s written Word to mankind. This means that biblical Christianity can be rationally defended, and honest questions are welcome.

Second, because Christianity is true, it speaks to all of life and not to some narrowly-religious sphere. Much of the material produced by L'Abri has been aimed at helping develop a Christian perspective on the arts, politics, and the social sciences.


Third, in the area of our relationship

with God, true spirituality is seen in lives which by grace are free to be fully human rather than in trying to live on some higher spiritual plane or in some grey negative way.

Fourth, the reality of the fall is taken seriously. Until Christ returns, we and the world we live in will be affected by the disfigurement of sin. Although the place of the mind is emphasized, L'Abri is not a place for 'intellectuals only'.

I remember Francis and Edith Shaeffer's names from my youth. My impression was that they were concerned that prevailing 20th century cultural pressures would not erode the Christian view of

non-negotiable tenets of faith like the sanctity of human life and the inerrancy of Scripture. I was also under the impression that Francis Shaeffer understood that Christian faith is intellectually credible and opens itself to sincere seekers. I'm not sure where all of my impressions of the Shaeffers came from and hadn't thought much about them for many years. I'm encouraged that the vision that Francis and Edith Shaeffer fostered lives on and continues to impact lives for Christ and the Kingdom today after they've both died.

-RJM 

## mission awareness

# What Shall We Teach?

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

**T**his season of the year we often contemplate on the marvelous wonder and **miraculous fact of the birth of Jesus Christ**. But some people in the evangelical church are alarmed concerning the drift and shift in the basic teachings of Scripture. Following are some statistics from Ligonier Ministries. A research was done among 3002 adults who were surveyed in March 2020. They call

it the "State of Theology" survey, which aims to "take the theological temperature of the United States to help Christians better understand today's culture and equip the church for discipleship."

"When asked about the doctrine of God, evangelical respondents were nearly unanimous in affirming that God is a perfect being (97%); that God is a Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (96%); and that God

cares about our day-to-day decisions (87%).

However, when it comes to whether God accepts worship from all religions, evangelicals are more divided, with 42% agreeing with it and 49% answering ‘no.’

Thirty percent do not believe that Jesus is God but instead think He is simply a ‘great teacher,’ which is ‘very concerning’ for the authors of the survey.

For the questions about the Holy Spirit, 46% of evangelicals pointed out that the Holy Spirit can instruct someone to do something that goes against Scripture while 78% think the Spirit is only a force but is not a personal being.”

Now I cannot quite get through with the statistics that 96% believe God is a Triune Being, yet 30% do not believe that Jesus is God, and 78% think that the Spirit is only a force. Possibly, could it be that many confessed only with their mouths from ancient creeds that God is a “Trinity of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” but have never been born again and experienced a living relationship with our Heavenly Father?

While the lack of being firmly grounded in the vital doctrine that **Jesus is God** among evangelicals is evident, these statistics should not reflect conservative anabaptists. Yet the fact remains that truth can

shrivel and be lost in a short span of time. I remember the precious story of creation and the marvelous miracles of Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit from when I was a child. I never doubted that **Jesus is God**. Somehow this basic fact of Scripture was securely established in my spirit and mind. Praise God for Christian parents and church and institutions of learning where this subject was never up for discussion as to “what is truth?” or weighed in the balances as to which argument tips the scales.

You are a missionary pastor searching for a Christmas message. Consider the deity of Jesus Christ or simply stated: “Jesus is Lord and God.” This message stretches from Genesis to Revelation. The name “God” (Elohim) appears thirty-two times in Genesis one. Elohim speaks of the Supreme God, Who has long-range goals and is well able to carry them out. Elohim depicts the plurality of God: *“And God said, Let us make man in our own image,”* (1:26a).

Abel’s offering was “more excellent” (Hebrews 11:4) than Cain’s. He brought the best that he had of the lambs (the “firstling” and the “fat”). His offering was a blood sacrifice and with a right attitude.

Isaac is a type of Jesus Christ surrendered on the altar. *“By faith Abraham . . . offered up Isaac, his only begotten son, Accounting that*

*God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure*” (Hebrews 11:17, 19). That figure was a type of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Fast forward to Exodus 12 and observe the four-day inspected lamb to make sure that it was without blemish. Jesus was scrutinized four days before His trial by the leaders of His day and behold, *“And no man was able to answer him a word . . .”* (Matthew 22:46). Even Pilate three times declared, *“I find no fault in Him.”* The lamb in Egypt was slain and the blood was a sign upon the houses. That blood was a beautiful picture of our precious Lord Jesus Whose blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins.

Isaiah 53 is like a snow-capped mountain towering above many other Scriptures. The prophet’s choice of words is so clear of our suffering Savior that our Jewish friends have chosen not to include this passage in their Sabbath Scripture readings. *“Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...”* (verse 10).

*“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made”* (John 1:1-3). How could a clearer

expression of Christ’s divinity be made! Later, John humbly spoke of the predicted Lamb foreshadowed in the Old Testament in types: *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29).

Of the last most endearing words in Scripture are recorded in Revelation 22:17: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

Now creeds that are Bible-based have value, but it is far more important to know the God of the creed than just the creed. Perhaps a recital of the Athanasian Creed would help keep us grounded of this eternal Bible doctrine: **the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit are one.**

### **The Athanasian Creed**

There is one person of the Father, and another person of the Son, and another person of the Holy Spirit. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one; the glory is equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost.

The Father is “uncreated”, the Son is “uncreated”, and the Holy Ghost is “uncreated.” The Father is infinite, the Son is infinite, and the Holy Ghost is infinite.

The Father is eternal, and the Son is eternal, and the Holy Ghost is eternal: yet there are not three “Eternals,” but

one Eternal. So there are not three “uncreated” and three infinite; but one created and one infinite.

So also the Father is Almighty, and the Son is Almighty, and the Holy Ghost is Almighty: yet there are not three “Almighties” but one Almighty. The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God: yet there

are not three Gods but one God.

And in this trinity, none is before, or after another; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together, and co-equal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in unity is to be worshiped.



## A Woman After God's Heart

### Bearing Jesus

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



It has been stated that Mary was the first member of the human race to accept Christ. This article is not a theological discussion about the accuracy of that statement, of course. Nor do we place a halo on Mary's head or call her the Mother of God. It's Mary's *Son* to Whom we gladly offer our worship and obedience. But when we ponder the mystery and conflict in Mary's story, her character qualities draw us in. She shows us how to embrace hard things—if we too, would bear Jesus within ourselves.

Picture a teenage girl anticipating her upcoming marriage to a worthy man, a *just* man. But, before the wedding celebration our young friend

shows up pregnant. And that in a culture where infidelity is punishable by stoning. That's the opening scene upon our introduction to Mary. I note carefully that when the angel appears to her for the very first time and unrolls the whole blazing plan onto her without an inch of warning, Mary ventures only one question, “But how can this be?” I'd like to assume that Mary's background in prophecy and the never-ending waiting of her people for their Deliverer Messiah began to pound loudly in her heart at this moment. We doubt whether she understood the full implications of Gabriel's announcement. Without asking for several days to deliberate, she

answered, "Behold the handmaiden of the Lord." Being interpreted in our terms today that calmly states, "Here I am, Lord. I'll serve in whatever way You choose."

Mary's prompt willingness challenges me. Do I need all the fine details explained before I say, "I am your servant, Lord?" True obedience is about embracing willingly what feels very undefined at the moment. Can I compose a praise hymn when the Father asks mysterious and hard things of me?

Mary accepted the will of God despite the public scandal she would become. She sacrificed her personal reputation (and risked voiding her marriage) to be able to bear the Personhood of Jesus Christ, the Messiah, in her own body. Am I willing to take the identity of Christ onto myself at those rare times when it could possibly damage my own reputation?

Approaching the time her baby was to be born, the anxious young couple traveled several days' journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem for the legal census. Their grueling journey up and down those hills could well have hastened the baby's arrival. Bethlehem lay in the shadow of the Herodian palace of the despot king they feared. She birthed her first baby away from her mother and midwife, in the animals' space in a cave-barn, and laid him in the feeding trough.

Can I sacrifice my personal comforts to walk in obedience to what the law of the land demands, or what my husband or God may ask of me? Comforts that seem logical, safe, prescribed, and absolutely necessary?

I picture the scruffy nighttime shepherds gazing wide-eyed at the newborn. They seemed gifted with an understanding that Mary was still unable to absorb completely. She pondered as she caressed the feather-soft cheek of her Creator. How could her baby be both fragile and powerful? Dependent on her, yet Divine? Later, they're surprised by the majestic travelers from the East with gifts of wealth unlike they had ever seen or imagined, for they'd always been small-town peasants. That all preceded their sudden flight to Egypt like refugees. Mary pondered all these things in her heart, it says. *Ponder* is a lovely word for women, I believe. We, who may prefer to prattle and discuss and process verbally what we feel and wonder about, would sometimes do better to ponder and reflect and meditate. Do I like to fill the nagging silence of uncertainty with words in an effort to hide how utterly bewildered I really am?

The puzzled wonderment continued in Mary's heart when her twelve-year-old son stayed behind in a bustling Jerusalem while the rest of the family traveled toward home. He told them that He had other business




to attend to, His Father's business. I wonder if Mary remembered the words of Simeon in the temple when he had said, "Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also." When I don't see into the big picture of what God is doing in my child's life, am I resistant and controlling? Do I understand that suffering in my child's life may be under his/her Father's direction? Do I guard God's sayings in my heart?

Mary's words to Jesus at the wedding in Cana, "They have no wine," impress me by their humble straightforwardness. She didn't give Him directives or a course of action. She simply stated the need. Sometimes I find myself praying and requesting of God that He would do this, that, and the other thing in order to fix a situation. Would it be better if I would simply tell Him my problem without telling Him *how* I'd like to have it remedied?

Mary stood near Jesus one day, asking for Him, yet Jesus, stretching His hands toward His disciples, asked, "Who is my mother? Who are my brethren?" I don't know if Mary misunderstood any tinge of rejection. Do I understand when my flesh and blood sons and daughters have a higher call on their lives than living close to me geographically? Do I feel replaced? Or do I rejoice because they belong to God first?

I don't suppose that Mary's

expectations for the salvation of Israel included a crown of thorns, a flogging, a crucifixion, and only three short years of ministry. Although a sword was piercing Mary's heart, she was present. Mary didn't run from the frightening darkness of reality, but huddled, weeping, at the foot of her firstborn's cross. But this was not how they'd pictured deliverance! Sometimes true devotion means the yielding of our flawed expectations and sacrificing them for God's plan. Too often we mistake religious feelings for devotion. True devotion is *active* obedience. It's showing up and being present, especially at times of death, pain, and tears. For it was there, at the foot of the cross, where she heard her Son's love for her when He enlisted John to care for her as his own mother.

Later she worshiped expectantly with the disciples as they gathered to await the Holy Spirit. I'd love to know more about how Mary's understanding grew. We ladies would enjoy reading about what transpired in her heart as she processed Jesus's birth, life, death, and resurrection. Obviously, those details weren't deemed necessary. So, I am satisfied to observe that from the time of the life-altering announcement in Nazareth to Pentecost in Jerusalem, Mary's devotion and obedience give us a moving picture of bearing Jesus and being carried by Jesus. 

## A Small Boy's Fears

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

The sky was filled with rolling dark clouds. The wind was blowing. Jagged flashes of lightning ripped through the sky. Thunder was rumbling in the distance and becoming louder. Four-year-old Mark heard the thunder. His heart was beating fast. He was afraid of storms. As the lightning flashed, and the thunder boomed louder, he raced to an old rocking chair in the corner of the living room and found shelter as he crouched behind it. Somehow, he felt safer there through the storm. When his mother saw him, she beckoned to him. The security of her arms was better yet than hiding behind the rocking chair.

When Mark was five or six, the Ivan Beachy family would sing during church services. One evening at the Shiloh Church, Mark was tired and fell asleep on the bench as he leaned against his dad. He woke with a start; the bench was empty. His family was up front singing. He did not know what to do and felt sad and left out.

It was an exciting day when the threshing machine drove in the lane of their farm in Sugarcreek. The big machine was hitched to a tractor.

Horse-drawn equipment pulled wagons that went out to the field to pick up the sheaves of wheat or barley. There was a lot of manpower to help. Sheaves were pitched onto the conveyor and went up into the machine.

The rotating knives grabbed the bundles and fed them into the clattering machine. The straw spewed out the back as the grain fell into a wagon. It was fun and fascinating for Mark to watch. But there was one man who came to help who always liked to tease the boys. He told Mark, "Shall I pitch you into the threshing machine?" Mark felt fearful; he raced away. He was afraid to be close to that man.

Farm boys have work to do. When Mark was eight he would climb the hill behind the house and bring the cows to the barn at milking time. When he was older he would get up at five in the morning to bring in the cows. It gave him a sense of security and trust to see his father kneeling in prayer in the living room. The mornings were dark. Often he could not find a flashlight that worked.


His three older brothers went camping up on the hill one evening

with friends. The next morning when Mark went for the cows he saw something move to his left. His heart was racing. He thought his brothers must be ready to jump out and scare him. He called their names, but there was no answer. Slowly he moved forward—something moved again. He stopped and called to them. All was quiet. He cautiously went on for the cows, but something moved again at the edge of the woods. Finally Mark realized the rays from the security light four hundred feet away was casting enough light that it was his shadow that moved every time he moved. Mark had been afraid of his own shadow.

God knows when we are afraid, He cares about our fears. Seventy-

five times in the Word of God, we are told, “*Fear not.*” Isaiah was told at various times, “*Fear not, for I am with you. Fear not, I have redeemed you. Fear not, I call you by name. Fear not, I will help you.*”

God watches over His children. He wants us to bring our fears to Him. He told Daniel, “*Fear not*” (Daniel 10:12). He spoke to Joseph in a dream, “*Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife*” (Matthew 1:20). To Mary, the angel said, “*Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favor with God*” (Luke 1:30). The angel told the women in the garden, “*Fear not ye, for I know that ye seek Jesus*” (Matthew 28:5).

Psalm 56:3 is a good verse to help small children memorize, “*What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee.*” 

## youth messages

# Trusting God in Uncertain Times

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

If Christ has not returned by the time you read this, the election will have been decided, a new Supreme Court Justice will most likely have been installed and much of the civil unrest leading up to the elections may or may not be continuing. It seems as though there

is turmoil everywhere. As Christians, how should we relate to the political jockeying, the civil conflicts, and the possible ramifications of economic down turns?

As Anabaptist people, we believe in the separation of church and state. Sadly, this past election put a lot of

pressure on plain people to “Make your vote count!” Recently, I had a work acquaintance question me as to why I don’t vote and am not interested in politics. The man was a professing Christian and said that my not voting against abortion is the same as condoning it. If youth are not disciplined in the idea of separation of church and state, they may fall for this logic. I know a few who have.

I’d like to share a quote from *The Doctrines of The Bible* in regard to our interaction with government. “The idea that it is the duty of the Church to take hold of Government and run things for God is neither taught in Scripture nor supported by the facts of history. The place for Christian people to take hold and work is in the Church, and the place of the most effective power is at the Throne. Lot is referred to in Scripture as a ‘righteous man’ (2 Peter 2:8). Yet this righteous man, taking an active part in the affairs of Sodom, not only failed in saving the city from destruction but actually exerted less influence there than did his uncle Abraham who had no relationship whatever with Sodom save that by the way of the Throne. When Christianity was adopted as the religion of State in Rome, the result was that Rome corrupted the Church instead of the Church purifying Rome. It is ever thus. Today the average church member in politics is not one whit

cleaner morally or better spiritually than is the average non-church member in politics. Christianity and world politics do not mix. Their spheres are essentially different. Both Government and Church are better off if each remains in its sphere. The ideas that the Christian can render substantial aid in the cause of righteousness by “mixing in politics” has often been proved a delusion.”<sup>1</sup>

Let’s step back and take a closer look at the situation in Sodom and Gomorrah. Even with intercession, the state of affairs in the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah has become so evil and out of control that destruction is imminent. When the angels come to Lot and tell him to leave, he is faced with a choice. When the men of the city come and demand that the visitors are turned over to them for their entertainment, Lot is faced with another choice. Rather than appeal to a higher power (God) for direction and trust that He will make a way, he offers his daughters up instead. The point is: turmoil isn’t new. When Lot allowed the stress of what was going on around him and its impact on his family and friends to cloud his judgment, he became an ineffective witness for God. What may have started out as a desire to serve God and be a witness for Him,


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1 Kauffman, Daniel. *Doctrines of the Bible*, p. 174

resulted in the loss of his wife, his honor, and the spiritual heritage for his children.

I love the point that this portion brought out, “The place for Christian people to take hold and work is in the Church, and the place of the most effective power is at the Throne.”<sup>2</sup> In conjunction with that, remember these words from Hebrews 11:13-16, “*These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.*” The writer of Hebrews here refers to the people of God which once only referred to the Israelite nation but now encompasses all true believers or “spiritual children of Abraham” (heirs and joint heirs with Christ, Romans 8:17a). As heirs, our focus should be on the “prepared city” in the “better country.” And as Abraham interceded for Sodom and Lot, we must do the same for our

world. As for political or economic uncertainties Jesus says, “*Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*” (Matthew 6:34). I love Jesus’s way of redirecting focus and energy. Live in the now. Be present and active today. When we focus on the world and its evils it causes worry, but keeping Christ in view helps us stay focused on what is important today. Tomorrow will come and with it will come its own difficulties and joys. Worrying about it will help no one.

As a youth, always remember Proverbs 3:5-6, “*Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.*” Solomon hit the nail on the head when it comes to how and why we are to trust the Lord. When we commit ALL to Him, and acknowledge Him in everything, it says that our paths will be directed by him. There are so many decisions to be made in life. It is more important that we trust and stay focused on our real end goal. As Helen Howarth penned almost 100 years ago “Turn your eyes upon Jesus, Look full in His wonderful face; And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace.”<sup>3</sup> 

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2 *ibid.*, p. 174

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3 Wikipedia

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*Abbreviations used: BL=Bottom Line; BR=Book Review;  
Ed=Editorial; GE=Guest Editorial; JM=Junior Messages,  
Med=Meditation; MA=Mission Awareness; Obs=Observations;  
P=Poem; RR=Reader Response; SM=School Matters;  
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NEVER BE AFRAID TO  
**trust an unknown future**  
TO A KNOWN GOD.

---

He who takes care of the present  
**WILL HAVE A GREAT FUTURE.**







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Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

Unhappiness always seeks to get—happiness always seeks to give.

• • • • •

The foolish man seeks happiness in tomorrow, but the wise man finds it today.

• • • • •

The happiest people are those who discover that what they should be doing and what they are doing are the same things.

• • • • •

Joy comes from giving to Christ—not getting from Him.

• • • • •

The roots of happiness grow deepest in the soil of service.

• • • • •

Some grin and bear it; others smile and change it.

• • • • •

Laughter is a mini vacation.

• • • • •

The city of happiness is in the state of the mind.

• • • • •

Happiness is not having and getting; it consists of giving and serving.

• • • • •

Real happiness is cheap enough, and yet we often pay dearly for its counterfeit.

• • • • •

The best possession one may have is a true friend.

• • • • •

Friendship doubles our joy and divides our grief.

• • • • •

The art of being a good guest is knowing when to leave.

• • • • •

There is no future in the past.