



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

APRIL 2021

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Calvary Messenger

April 2021

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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Corpus Christi

How can I ask Christ's church to be
Hale, whole, and sound in every limb
When faithful eyes still see in Him
The worthy wounds of Calvary?

This sleek safe self-preserving pride
Where have we learned thus to revere?
What bred our squeamishness and fear--
We, who are called to be His bride?

If that first body suffered shame
And wounding far beyond our guess,
Do not our groans and brokenness
Confirm the right to bear His name?

Pray boldly, then, and unafraid:
Nos membra confer effici
*Tui beata corporis**
Of bruised and bleeding members made.

Hannah Nisly, Altamont, KS 

* "Grant us membership in Thy blessed body"
(From Latin prayer 'O Nata Lux')

Just One Man

Walt walked down the streets of Philadelphia, PA, one day in the 1930s looking for young boys for his Sunday School class. Young Howard¹ wasn't interested in anything that had "school" in it, so Walt asked if he'd like to play a game of marbles. That was different! This tall, young, aspiring, Sunday School teacher whipped Howard in every game. Howard followed Walt to Sunday School and to a love for Jesus. **Just one man**, Walt, with barely a sixth-grade education, inspired his class of 13 young boys from the streets of Philadelphia so much that 12 of them eventually entered Christian ministry.

When a 99-year-old saint was laid to rest in a midwestern state some time ago, mention was made of the encouragement she was to her friends while still in her youth. By her example she encouraged her friends to walk faithfully with God.

Just one young woman was such an encouragement that her youthful efforts were remembered a lifetime later.

When the first world became so evil and wicked that God decided to destroy it, He found a man who heard His voice. It took just one man, Noah, to take the direction from God to build the ark. And in the meantime he was preaching and calling people to repentance and obedience.

Joseph's life was filled with bad things despite his faithful living. He was all alone in his difficulties, from the time in the pit before his brothers sold him to being alone with a seductive temptress. He faced his conviction and imprisonment alone. But it took just one man to refuse to sin against His God and be available for each of God's appointments for him. Without this one man, many people would have died of hunger as he said in Genesis 50:20b, ". . . *God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive.*"

¹ Howard Hendricks,
Apr. 5, 1924-Feb. 20, 2013

Moses reluctantly returned to Egypt to lead the children of Israel to the land of Canaan but faithfully led them for 40 years as God directed him. After their idolatry with a golden calf, God was angry and was ready to destroy them. But just one man pled with the Lord and saved the whole multitude. *“Therefore he [God] said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them”* (Psalm 106:23).

Daniel was torn from his homeland and called out by king Nebuchadnezzar to be acculturated in the language and wisdom of Babylon. While his three friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego also faithfully stood for God throughout their lives, it seems that Daniel led this faithful group. It took just one young man to graciously appeal to the king’s man for an exception to the commands of the king, and we have a wonderful example of faithfulness to God despite their captivity.

There are many young men and women in our churches who are brave enough to choose godly activities, giving courage to others to join them in following the Way. I have often recalled with gratitude the encouragement of a few peers in

my youth to choose godly activities and the fellowship we could enjoy together.

God has used faithful men and women in very public venues to turn hearts to Him. But you may not be a public figure or have many people in your care. Some of the most effective works of God have been wrought on a personal basis by just one person, young or old, who loves the Lord and the needy soul before him. It is easy to think that I am only one person among billions of people on this earth, and that is true. However, you and I were created in God’s image for His purpose in our own time and space. We may not agree with Edward Everett Hale’s theology, but I believe this quote of his is true, “I am only one, but I am one. I can’t do everything, but I can do something. The something I ought to do, I can do. And by the grace of God, I will.”

If you don’t think you can make a difference, here are a few suggestions:

When conversations turn critical and demeaning, it may only take one person to turn the tone to graciousness and gratefulness.

You or I could be the one person it takes to turn a volatile discussion to a peaceful outcome if we follow Proverbs 15:1, *“A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger.”*

God may want you to be the one person to graciously turn the conversation from gossip to looking for understanding in a person's struggles.

There have been times when just one smile has been powerful enough to keep a person from taking his own life.

You could be the one to begin a chain of goodwill by *paying forward* for the person in the line behind you.

It is likely to have an effect on a whole line of traffic if just one person graciously allows another vehicle to merge into his lane.

While the work of one person is important, we are not an island in this world. It is important to keep a proper perspective of our individuality in the midst of community. While each of us has his own spiritual responsibility before God and needs to communicate directly with Him, we also realize that it takes the community of believers to mellow and balance our personal opinions and convictions. A personal friend of mine who spent considerable time in a fellowship

where it was important to hear and share a personal word from the Lord noted that in the end there is no longer a body of believers. All have followed their own word from the Lord. He expressed value in being able to meld personal direction from God in a body. Christlike believers will complement each other and bring a fullness to the spiritual community to the glory of God.

As we remember Christ's death this month, let's remember that it was just one Man Who gave His life to redeem mankind. Although this Man was also God, He was faithfully doing the will of His Father. While our lives cannot redeem mankind, it is true that it often takes just one man or woman, young or old, to nudge a lost soul in the direction of our Savior. You may just be one, but you are one!

"And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezekiel 22:30).

—AY 

Those who bear the **CROSS**
may also be **sheltered** by it.

Acculturation

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

There always have been gains and losses in local congregational memberships as well as an increase or decrease in active or available members. Increase and decline are a part of life. It shows up in one's financial status as fixed income, liquid cash, or long-held assets. Our health, likewise, can either be improving or in decline.

We had a brother who posed the question in a previous issue of *Calvary Messenger* about the lack of response for applicants for our missions and voluntary service units despite a growing membership in our churches. I immediately had five things that came to mind to forward to our capable editor and to the writer. I changed my intent, so that currently it is perhaps safely stored away in my file.

Nahum Goldman was 82 when he retired as president of the World Jewish Congress. In 1977, Goldman expressed concern for the losses among themselves as a recognized Semitic people. In an aside to this article, I found an interesting idea

in the writing of my recent book, *Creation Principles*, where Noah's son, Shem, is spelled S-e-m in Luther's German (Genesis 5:32). In my boyhood, my dad referred to a local man who had the name of Sem Hershey. What a strange name, I thought. Now we know where that originates. The term "anti-Semitism" refers to hatred of the Jews who come from their ancestor Shem, also known as Sem.

Back to Mr. Goldman. He said that "The worldly successes achieved by the Jewish people in recent decades have brought them into a greater danger than was Nazism." Astounding! This piece was in the January 1978 issue of the *Sword and Trumpet*. It reported his further quote to say, "He attributes this decline to such factors as assimilation into the common culture, indifference of the young people to the Jewish people and history, loss of theological debate necessary to maintain faith, struggle for position, intermarriage, and concentration upon community organizational work." Goldman has

some parallels to my own tucked-away list that he made of their own people 40 years earlier. His comments were made only 32 years, or one generation, after the end of World War II.

I will take his list and give a few remarks on each of the six things he has enumerated.

1. Assimilation into the common culture

Our current church administrations are very slowly moving away from a covenant-based administration. The church standards are being replaced with brotherhood agreements that are updated every so many years to reflect where we are currently. The incremental changes are not noticed in any given year but can be noted rather in a five-year period. The move is toward a user-friendly relationship-based administration. The Amish, and other plainer churches, have a stronger covenant-based church administration.

2. Indifference to our current stand and our history

It is a grief of soul and spirit to hear a few people speak with disdain of the founders and pioneers of our churches or schools. It is like a leaven that, once it is mixed in, you can never remove. It happens in politics, family history, and church life. Acculturation picks up speed

when we mock and heap scorn on our forebears.

I have heard it at a Christian school meeting where it was stated how the founding fathers of our schools in the 1950s and 1960s did so poorly “compared to what we are doing today.” After dismissal at one school meeting, an aged pastor said, “Something did not sound or feel right tonight. What was it?” I pointed out the superior comments of the speaker, how he and his institution are doing so much better compared to our vision, sacrifice, and tears of 60 years ago. He agreed.

3. Loss of theological debate necessary to maintain faith

With history being gradually dismantled or disregarded, all that remains is to somehow turn off the spotlight on the future in order to fully enjoy ourselves by what is offered today. Whatever is unworthy of discussion can soon be seen as unneeded in our time.

The Jews were and are great on debates, and the original Anabaptists also could engage people in very lively, in-person debates. Conservative Anabaptists of today are more conversant on how one is related to others, on pick-ups and cars, guns and ammunition, and stock markets and politics rather than on Bible doctrine.

Mr. Goldman considered open discussion as a way “necessary to maintain faith.” Apparently, he saw how the lack of passion for doctrine will diminish faith in it until it dies altogether. Its death will relegate it to antiquated history, being despised in two generations. It has happened among the most liberal Mennonites in my time and can happen again among us, because history, it has been said, repeats itself.

4. Struggle for position

The push of the world is for putting mind and soul into higher education, and by that, to work one’s way up the ladder to higher paying jobs. Goldman calls it a struggle, for indeed it is. There are always others who provide no shortage of competition for that higher position, even in some large businesses owned by conservative Anabaptists of today.

We are happy to say that there are those who have instead chosen to opt out of that race. They say the demands of that desired position make too many demands of their time and energy which would have reduced their time and effort they wished to give to their family and church.

5. Intermarriage

This avenue has made some inroads through the typical years of marriage being spent in pursuing

higher education. We could also say some of that has happened by finding a non-Anabaptist marriage partner through travel, or else by being involved in some form of Christian service, especially if it involved a non-Anabaptist mission of some kind. Employment in offices and marketing have introduced some of our people to a more-than-casual acquaintance and interchange that has also led to marriage outside of our Anabaptist heritage.

6. Concentration upon community organizational work

Our equivalent to that point would be the parachurch organizations in our time and place. They have increased in the last 10-20 years; proliferated, as it would seem. They are led by visionaries, persons who are engaged with a passion, and can enlist our people as needed. New ministries can somehow be shown to be more exciting than our older established institutions and missions.


They typically had been started by one or several men, or as a special work by just one congregation. When they go to the field, they see so much work of their kind that could be done. To broaden out, they choose various church groups to be represented on their board, including someone from a Beachy church. These all want to give a “glowing” report at our annual

Beachy Minister's Meetings. We traditionally have invited anyone to give a report during the two-hour business meeting each day. Our older missions and Calvary Bible School hope to have some time for their reports and express current needs, but we are always told to "keep it short."

Everyone hopes for a slot on the first day because just before the business session on the last day a lot of people leave. It is what is called "voting with your feet." Would there not be other ways for the parachurch ministries to reach interested persons, through displays and brochures, perhaps? Some of us would prefer more time for fellowship, rather than taking up time to explain all these many ministry reports. Our own missions and service institutions deserve a forum that is more relaxed and expectant, freer and more open. If

the parachurch groups are not in competition with the older missions, as they say, why does it nonetheless appear that way?

The Bottom Line, as Mr. Goldman has stated his concern, and his question was even as is ours, that since our total membership is increasing, why does it become more difficult to receive the needed personnel? Perhaps Mr. Goldman has brought a few ideas for our consideration that seem to fit either our individual lives or our church life.

This short piece on Nahum Goldman concludes by saying, "The tragic contradiction is that at no time in Jewish life did we have so many intellectuals, scholars, professors, writers, and artists, as today, but most of them have little or nothing to do with Jewish life." Some of that is also happening to us today. 

*Obeying God is the
best prescription
for spiritual health.*



A Visionary and His Book (Part 2)

*A short biography of Thieleman J. van Braght,
(continued from the March issue)*

Evan M. Bender, Boyceville, WI

Van Braght's second main reason for producing the *Martyrs Mirror* was to trace the lineage of Anabaptism back to the time of Christ.¹ Why was this important? Many people were saying, "Hey, you Mennonites are just a bunch of religious upstarts! Just who do you think you are, saying that your understanding of the Bible is better than ours? After all, you people with your queer beliefs have not been around all that long." To which van Braght replied, in essence, "Sorry, folks, but people who believe and practice like we do have been around ever since the time of Christ.

1 This statement may be a surprise to some. It was to me when I first realized its significance. "This work, the *Martyrs Mirror*, comprises two works, each of them containing a different and independent topic. The first is a treatise of holy baptism and of that which pertains to it. The second is a historical account of the holy martyrs who suffered on account of baptism, or, generally, for the testimony of Jesus Christ." (van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, 15) "Because, as we have shown clearly, there have been persons in every century, from the beginning of the Gospel all along, who have believed . . . in the very same manner as the Anabaptists . . ." (van Braght, *Martyr's Mirror*, 18)

True, we haven't always carried the same name down through the centuries, and sure, there have been times when our people have been obscured, like the sun going behind clouds, but we never left. We've been here all along."² I'll add my two cents to that. Did you know that the term "Anabaptist" was first used in the early third century to refer to the Donatists, and that the first edict ever published against Anabaptists was in 413 A.D.³ As one man has said, "If Anabaptism would have started in Zurich, Switzerland, in 1525, it would have been nothing more than a work of men." The validity of the claims of Anabaptism rests on the fact that what some call the Anabaptist interpretation of Scripture is the original since the time of the apostles. The *Martyrs Mirror* is full of stories detailing how that all ties together. I will

2 See the author's Introduction to the *Martyrs Mirror*.

3 Thieleman J. van Braght, *Martyrs Mirror*, 16, 198

let you read it for yourselves.⁴ I do not believe that we are doing ourselves any favor by neglecting to familiarize ourselves with the vision, theology, and commitment level of our forefathers. It seems likely that the primary reason for the loss of conservative Anabaptist culture as a visible Christian church is the prior loss of Anabaptist theology. Furthermore, as a study of the book of Judges will clearly indicate, people who have lost their theology have first forgotten their history.

Just four years after the *Martyrs Mirror* was published, Thieleman J. van Braght died on October 7, 1664, at age 39. He did not live long, but after his death, his writings, especially the *Martyrs Mirror*, have had arguably greater impact than any other book except the Bible among the Anabaptist peoples. He did not live to see what happened as a result of the affluence and freedoms the Dutch Mennonites now enjoyed. If he could have, it would have broken his heart.

What did become of van Braght's people, the Dutch Mennonites? Surely

a work like the *Martyrs Mirror* must have had some effect on the creeping worldliness he saw infiltrating the church! Well, I can't say it didn't have any effect, but I do know that within 150 years, the number of Mennonites in the Netherlands had dropped by 83%.⁵ In one of the sadder cases of Anabaptist history, almost the entire group of Dutch Mennonites allowed themselves to forget the faith that their fathers had died for. Business was good. There was religious freedom. Discipleship and cross-bearing were uncomfortable. And there was no need to be so stuffy and old-fashioned as to believe that Christ had any claim on my everyday life! Seminaries were established to professionally train ministers, and gradually all that was uniquely Anabaptist was watered-down to a sort of Protestant hybrid.⁶ Are there still Mennonites in Holland? Yes, but you can no longer tell them apart from anyone else.⁷

I am now switching centuries and continents. In the mid-20th century,

5 John C. Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, 84

6 John C. Wenger, *Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine*, 84; Michael S. Martin, *Cup & Cross*, 159-162

7 This sentence is very nearly a direct quote from a native of Holland who knew Mennonites there. Eventually, he moved to America and joined the Anabaptists.

4 I will even be considerate enough to give a few hints! A footnote on page 416 of the *Martyrs Mirror* states that Michael Sattler was also a Waldensian. This fact should be of great interest to any serious student of history. Another interesting story can be found on pages 365-366.

the wheel rolled around again, this time in America. The same faulty theology was expounded once again. “What is on the outside doesn’t matter as much as what is in the heart. If the heart is right, if the right spirit is there, who are we to interfere and demand that they conform to some man-made code?! Besides, you should really be more loving and not so quick to judge others. Remember, God seeth not as man seeth, but He looks on the heart.” Let me insert here that although the standards in our little standard booklet are a man-made code, I want to draw your attention to Titus 1:14. “*Not giving heed to Jewish fables, and commandments of men, that turn from the truth.*” Do the “commandments of men” we have detract from or enhance the truth? I shall leave that up to you to decide.

If any of this teaching is sounding vaguely familiar, there’s probably a reason for that. As one of my great-uncles, the late David L. Miller, used to say, “The main thing we learn from history is that we don’t learn from history.” Our parents and grandparents heard the lie, saw the worldliness permeating the various Conference Mennonite churches as a result of this teaching, and left.⁸

8 If you have not yet read *God and Uncle Dale*, you owe it to yourself to do so.

Pulled out. Started over. Joined themselves with others who thought like they did, and the rest is history. Stale. Boring. Unimportant. Except, history has a habit of repeating itself! The same doctrines that caused our parents and grandparents to pull out of the Conference are resurfacing today. We can see both in the Dutch Mennonites and the Conference churches what the result of such teaching is: a complete loss of anything uniquely Anabaptist, watered-down to a sort of Protestant hybrid. Maintaining the Anabaptist vision is a choice that comes to each generation. Before we can maintain this vision, we must know what it is.⁹ We cannot hope to propagate a vision we do not know or do not embrace.

“People who do not know where they came from do not know where they are going.” Thieleman J. van Braght recognized this truth and spent years detailing Anabaptist history in the *Martyrs Mirror*, giving his people a glimpse of where they came from and what their forefathers suffered for Christ. He wrote, hoping to rekindle the dying embers of faith, embers that were quickly being quenched by increasing freedoms and unprecedented prosperity.

9 Read *The Anabaptist Vision* by Harold S. Bender.

What about us? I think we do ourselves a favor if we know what God's people have suffered in years past and are still suffering today. Martyrs, and stories of costly discipleship, are not just a remnant of the past. On a global scale, persecution is more intense now than it has ever been. Did you know that from 2013-2015, more than three times as many Anabaptist Christians were killed in Nigeria by the extremist Islamic group, Boko Haram, as were martyred in all the persecutions of 16th century Europe!?! By the summer of 2015, Boko Haram had killed more than 10,000 Nigerian Anabaptist Christians. Boko Haram was the group that abducted 276 schoolgirls in April 2014. At least 178 of those girls were Anabaptist.¹⁰ During just one month in the spring of 2014, 40 Egyptian churches were burned to the ground, Iranian house-church leaders were sentenced to the infamous Evin Prison, 80 Christians in North Korea were murdered for merely owning a Bible, and Christians were crucified in Syria.¹¹ After that, it got much worse. ISIS became highly active in the summer of 2014. I don't need to tell you what

all they have done. Since the stoning of Stephen, more than 70 million other Christians have also been martyred for their faith,¹² more than half of these in the 20th century.¹³ In the 21st century, an average of 100,000 to 160,000 Christians have been killed each year.¹⁴ Approximately 1,093,000 Christians were martyred between 2000 and 2010.¹⁵ According to fairly recent information, during the average month (and these are probably low estimates) 322 Christians are killed, 214 churches and Christian properties are destroyed, and 772 acts of violence (beatings, kidnappings, rape, arrest, etc.) are committed against Christians.¹⁶ More than 300 million Christians around the globe, approximately one out of every seven professing Christians, live in a country that tolerates or encourages some form of persecution.^{17 18}

10 Charles E. Moore and Timothy Keiderling, *Bearing Witness*, 207-208

11 Tom Doyle with Greg Webster, *Killing Christians*, Preface ix

12 Gordon-Conwell Resources

13 About 45 million, according to a 2012 report by the Center for the Study of Global Christianity.

14 Gordon-Conwell Resources; World Christian Database

15 World Christian Database

16 estherproject.com

17 churchinneed.org

18 As a general observation by Bill Muehlenberg, there are five basic stages of persecution.

Paul told Timothy, “*Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.*” That includes us. Our ancestors lived for Christ, suffered for Christ, and sometimes died horrible deaths rather than renounce Him because they knew He was worthy, and they loved not their lives unto death. Clarence Jordan said, “Faith is not belief in spite of the evidence, but a life in scorn of the consequences.” When we examine the life of Thieleman J. van Braght and the deaths of those he wrote about, we see total commitment to our Lord Jesus Christ because of what He has done for them! We see

- a. Stereotyping the targeted group.
- b. Vilifying the targeted group for alleged crimes or misconduct.
- c. Marginalizing the targeted group’s role in society.
- d. Criminalizing the targeted group or its works.
- e. Persecuting the targeted group outright.

passion for the Kingdom and loving obedience to King Jesus. Does God require less of us today? Isn’t total surrender and commitment of all of our lives to His service still a requirement for us today?

Stanimir Katanic, a man from Yugoslavia who suffered much for refusing to bear arms, was asked, “On reflection upon all the years spent behind bars during the prime years of your life in harsh conditions, apart from your home and family and son, would you have done anything differently?” Stanimir replied, “I never look for shortcuts in my faith—and neither should you.” Rather than looking for shortcuts, may we be able to say, (to quote Harold S. Bender in *The Anabaptist Vision*) “. . . we shall practice what He [Christ] taught, believing that where He walked we can by His grace follow in His steps.”



He who **knows**
the way of the **Lord**
can **find** it in the dark.



marriages

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

Fisher-Groff

Bro. Jeremy David, son of Jonathan Lee and Sadie Fisher, Lott, TX, and Sis. Rosalind Martha, daughter of Brad and Grace Groff, Russellville, KY, on October 24, 2020, at Providence Fellowship for Franklin Mennonite by Jonathan Lee Fisher.

Peachey-Overholt

Bro. Justus Louie, son of Louie Jr. and Olive Peachey, Woodville, NY, and Sis. Veronica Rose, daughter of Wayne and Elva Overholt, Russellville, KY, on September 26, 2020, at Franklin Mennonite by Luke Troyer.

Stoltzfus-Troyer


Bro. Lynden, son of Jay Ivan and Ruth Ann Stoltzfus, Pocomoke City, MD, and Sis. Hannah, daughter of Hosea and Bernice Troyer, Mission Home, VA, on January 16, 2021, at Grace Evangelical Church, Galloway, OH, for Bethesda Fellowship, Plain City, OH, by Elmer Stoltzfus.

Swartzentruber-Weaver

Bro. Ricky, son of Ernie and Jean Swartzentruber, Montezuma, GA, and Sis. Katelyn, daughter of Irvin Jr. and Laverda Weaver, Denmark, SC, on October 24, 2020, at Barnwell First

Baptist for Calvary Fellowship by Ken Kanagy.

Witmer-King

Bro. Ernest Witmer, Los Angeles, CA, and Sis. Yvonne (Yoder) King, Guys Mills, PA, on February 27, 2021, at United EV Free Church, Guys Mills, PA, for Plainview Gospel Church by Roy Hershberger. 

cradle roll

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

Bontrager, Wayne and Linda (Miller), Parsons, KS, sixth child, third daughter, Savannah Kate, January 24, 2021.

Byers, Nevin and Jessica (Mast), Pulaski, TN, first child and son, Isaac Chace, January 12, 2021.

Byler, Joseph and Dianne (Overholt), Auburn, KY, sixth child, first daughter, Adrianna Kate, January 25, 2021.

Farmwald, Ryan and Lori (Otto), Arthur, IL, first child and son, Colsen Hayes, February 4, 2021.

Glick, Allen and Judith (Marner), Bridgeton, NJ, second child and daughter, Riahna Brynn, January 11, 2021.

Kanagy, Benji and Esther (Riehl), LaGrange, IN, second child and daughter, Elora Rose, February 6, 2021.

Kauffman, Justin and Renita (Zook), Burgettstown, PA, first child and son, Jack August, January 29, 2021.

Knepp, Norman and Debora (Schmidt), McArthur, OH, fifth child, third daughter, Brooklyn Kate, December 10, 2020.

Mast, Lindale and Gale (Wagler), Ossian, IN, second child, first son, Chandler Dale, December 29, 2020.

Miller, Bradley and Charity (Yoder), Millersburg, OH, second child and son, Thaddeus Jordan, February 9, 2021.

Miller, Brandon and Rosanna (Stoltzfus), Sugarcreek, OH, fifth child, third daughter, one son deceased, Charlotte Rose, January 20, 2021.

Miller, Jesley and Rhonda (Yoder), Swanton, MD, first child and daughter, Chloe Elizabeth, February 6, 2021.

Miller, Lyndon and Lynette (Derstine), Paynesville, MN, first child and son, Terry Joe, January 24, 2021.

Miller, Mervin and Erika (Miller), Auburn, KY, first and second children and sons, Grant Colson and Brock Cayson, January 27, 2021.

Mullet, Joseph and Rhoda (Miller), Owenton, KY, fifth child, fourth daughter, Natalie Peace, February 14, 2021.

Ramer, Kendric and Tara (Miller),

Nappanee, IN, first child and son, Dawson Brooks, February 6, 2021.

Stoll, Marlin and Marietta (Miller), Summersville, KY, seventh child, sixth son, Caleb Dale, June 10, 2020.

Wagler, Tim and Jolene (Weaver), Summersville, KY, third child and son, Bryson Dale, February 3, 2021.

Weaver, Jon Anthony and Jen (Borntrager), Jackson, OH, second child and son, Kaden Joel, October 20, 2020.

Weaver, Phil and Marsha (Graber), Summersville, KY, second child and son, Jasper Zane, October 9, 2020.


Yoder, Aaron and Megan (Miller), Oswego, KS, third child, first daughter, Kirsten Marie, February 8, 2021.

Yoder, Jesse and Teresa (Yoder), Owenton, KY, seventh child, fourth son, Darrel Jim, January 22, 2021.

Yoder, Michael and Emma (Stoller), Bluffton, IN, third child, second son, Justus Michael, November 25, 2020.


Corrections:

Stoltzfus, Arlin and Charissa (Barkman), Atglen, PA, third child and daughter, Alexis Faith, December 5, 2020.

Yoder, Mike and Sarah (Shank), Aroda, VA, fifth child, second daughter, Mary Kate, November 3, 2020. 

ordination

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

Bro. Matthew Brenneman, 30, (wife, Hannah Miller), Millersburg, Ohio, was ordained deacon for Messiah Amish Mennonite Church on February 21, 2021. Preordination messages were given by Earl Peachey. The charge was given by Philip Miller, assisted by Paul Leroy Miller and James B. Mullet. Benjamin Beachy shared the lot. 



obituaries

Miller, Eli E. Jr., “Red”, 84, Newcomerstown, OH, passed away peacefully January 5, 2021, at his home. He was born in Holmes County, OH, August 4, 1936, to the late Eli J.C. and Clara (Weaver) Miller.

He is survived by his wife, Carol Jean Kaufman, with whom he shared 61 years of marriage. Eli was a faithful member and minister at the Salem Amish Mennonite Church in Bakersville, Ohio. He was also chaplain at Knox County Jail and was involved in prison ministry for a number of years.

In addition to his wife, Carol, he is survived by his 12 children: Marilyn Miller, Newcomerstown; Wanda (late Dennis) Eash, Romney, WV; Paul (Irma), Newcomerstown; Titus (Carol), Sugarcreek; Naomi (Dan) Stoltzfus, Romney, WV; Sharon (Josias) Miller, Baltic; Mark (Maureen), Newcomerstown; Chris, Newark; Mary

Ann Miller (friend Harley), Millersburg; Rachel (Philip) Troyer, Stone Creek; Ryan (Erica), New Philadelphia; Heather (Ryan) Miller, Sugarcreek; 34 grandchildren; 17 great-grandchildren; a sister, Ada (Jacob) Nisley; and a sister-in-law, Clara (late Emanuel) Miller.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his son-in-law, Dennis Eash; brothers: Crist, Aden, Emanuel; and sisters: Susie (Jacob) Mullet and Effie (Eli) Yoder.

The funeral service was held at the Maranatha Fellowship Church, January 7, 2021, with Bobby Miller officiating. Burial followed at the Salem Amish Mennonite Church Cemetery.

Yoder, Owen Edward, 79, Pratts, VA, died January 3, 2021, at home surrounded by his family. He was born September 28, 1941, in Virginia Beach, VA, to J. Elmer and Amanda

(Hochstetler) Yoder.

He married Erma Yoder on August 28, 1965. He worked as a mason and later as administrator at Mountain View Nursing Home from 1967 to 1987. Owen and Erma started Yoder's Bulk Foods in 1986 at their home on Elly Road, Aroda, which later became Yoder's Country Market in Pratts, VA. Owen enjoyed grilling, metal work, fishing, singing, and travel, to name a few interests.

He was instrumental in the beginnings of the Choice Books ministry and served on several other mission and nonprofit administrative boards. He was also active in jail ministry at the Orange County Jail for many years and volunteered with the Madison County Rescue Squad as first responder and chaplain. He was a faithful member of Oak Grove Mennonite Church. He loved God with all his heart and prayed daily for his children and grandchildren who will all miss him greatly.

He is survived by his wife, Erma, Pratts; Dorcas (Loyal) Martin, Lancaster, PA, and their children Gabriel, Conrad, and Serenity; Steven (Daisy), Pratts, and their children Annika, Johanna, Heidi, Elisabeth, Christian, and Benjamin; Joel (Crystal), Elmhurst, NY, and their children Kristen, Janae, Kendall, Kurt, and Jerrica; Michael (Heather), Aroda, and their children Glorianna, Shiloh, and Holly. He is also survived by brothers: Roy (Mary) Yoder, Harrisonburg; Omar (Esther) Yoder, New Holland, PA; and Eldon (Paula) Yoder, Pratts; sisters: Marie (David) Yoder, Stanardsville; Leora (Mervin) Overholt, Russellville, KY; and Elmina Yoder, Aroda; as well as numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

He was predeceased by sisters, Treva (Bill) Zook and Viola Yoder.

The funeral service was held at the Oak Grove Mennonite Church on January 6, 2021, with Lamar Hochstetler officiating, followed by the committal and burial at the church cemetery.

Zook, Lomie E., 96, Belleville, PA, passed away January 22, 2021, at her home. Born November 5, 1924, in Belleville, she was a daughter of the late Jonas and Annie (Yoder) Peachey. On October 26, 1944, she married Moses J. Zook who passed away on October 22, 2013.

Surviving are her children: Paul (Miriam), Belleville; Ruth (Harold Dean) Miller, Clarkson, KY; Raymond (Debbie), McVeytown; daughter-in-law, Gloria Zook, Belleville; 16 grandchildren, 57 great-grandchildren, and five great-great grandchildren.

Along with her parents and husband, she was also preceded in death by a son, Mark, two great-grandsons, and her siblings, making her the last of her immediate family.

Lomie was primarily a homemaker. She was a member of Valley View Amish Mennonite Church. She enjoyed cooking, crocheting, reading, watching the birds, and tending to her flower and vegetable gardens. But most of all, she enjoyed spending time with her children, grandchildren, and church family.

Her memorial service was held January 25, 2021, at Valley View Amish Mennonite Church with Eli King, Leroy Yoder, and Earl Peachey officiating. A private burial took place at Locust Grove Cemetery.



The USA maintains a supply of several commodities, including petroleum and grain, to safeguard against unforeseen supply disruptions. This functions a bit like insurance against the effects of unanticipated shortages. Keith Reeves with the Center for Virology and Vaccine Research commented recently to the *New York Times* that a shortage of lab monkeys negatively affected the COVID-19 vaccine development process. So, in response to this recent history, there is talk of establishing and maintaining a “strategic monkey reserve” similar to the commodity reserves that have been around a long time. Who knows, maybe monkey ranching will be the next popular niche-agriculture market, following yesteryear’s ostrich, emu, and earthworm booms.

• • • • •

Lisa Miller and Janet Jenkins were a same-gender couple legally joined in a civil ceremony in the early 2000s. Lisa had a baby girl in April of 2002 while the two women were together. At some point Lisa repented of the wrong relationship that she and Janet were involved in and the two women separated. As is often the

case when a legal union is dissolved, the details surrounding the custody and well-being of minors affected by the separation became a contentious issue. Janet was granted visitation rights despite the fact that she never adopted Isabella, the little girl who was born to Lisa. At some point, Lisa felt she needed to remove herself and her daughter from the difficulty that ongoing contact with Janet brought to her and Isabella. With the help of others she traveled to Nicaragua with Isabella. At the time of her travel she had sole legal custody of her daughter. After she disappeared, the courts granted Janet Jenkins custody of Isabella, which made the case of her disappearance one of parental kidnapping. Ken Miller of Virginia, Tim Miller currently from Pennsylvania, and Philip Zodiates, Virginia, were all sentenced to serve time for their role in assisting in Lisa and Isabella’s 2009 disappearance.

Early in 2021, Lisa Miller and her daughter Isabella walked into the US embassy in Nicaragua where Lisa turned herself in. Isabella had her 18th birthday in April of 2020. There is no formal extradition agreement between the Nicaraguan government and the USA. For some days it was

unclear exactly what would happen. But Lisa Miller ended up traveling to the USA where she awaits legal proceedings related to the crimes she is charged with. Isabella, of course, has not been charged with any crime. She has taken legal steps to remove her name from any motions filed on her behalf. She states clearly that she was very well taken care of by her mother and that she is happy. So, now that she is legally an adult and is able to speak for herself, those filings on her behalf are being withdrawn. She also stated that if and when she chooses to travel to the USA it will be at her discretion.

I had the privilege of visiting with brother Ken Miller for a while recently about this situation. The collective attention of much of the conservative Anabaptist community was riveted on this case some years ago. We often prayed for Ken, Timo, Lisa, Isabella, Janet, Philip, the judges, and attorneys involved, etc. But Ken and Timo are no longer incarcerated. I had no idea regarding Lisa and Isabella's whereabouts, except that they were last known to be in Nicaragua. So, for a distant observer like me, this case sort of faded from memory. But these recent developments serve as reminders to continue to pray. I have a few suggestions regarding how we

might pray:

1. Pray for grace for Lisa. Her detention and separation from her daughter is a heavy burden to bear. Pray that the love of Christ would characterize her response and interactions with others. Pray that she would find the presence of Christ sufficient and abundant while she is experiencing physical isolation from her faith family.

2. Pray for Isabella. Her childhood is now finished. There continue to be ways she will find opportunity to apply God's grace to her situation. She does not know her biological father. Now her mother is in the USA and she is in Nicaragua. Her 19th birthday is April 16, 2021. In his epistle James reminds us that one of the hallmarks of true faith involves an interest of the affliction of widows and fatherless. She is entitled to the love and support of God's people. A card shower in honor of her 19th birthday is being organized. Wouldn't it be nice for Isabella to understand a bit of the love and support of God's people via an abundant shower of birthday cards? If you'd like to share an encouraging birthday card with Isabella, please mail it to:

Isabella Miller
Pilgrim Fellowship Church
P. O. Box 946
Stuarts Draft, VA 24477

3. Pray for Janet Jenkins. God loves her and that means that His people should too. I know nothing regarding her current situation, but God does. Let's pray for her well-being—remembering, of course, to let God define well-being.

4. Pray for the attorneys and judges involved in the legal proceedings. It's sad that people who take a stand for God's plan in these situations have often been portrayed as being bigoted, contentious, defensive, and otherwise hostile. Sometimes this portrayal is legitimately earned and sometimes it isn't. I believe God was honored by the response of Ken and Timo to the legal system. Let's pray that God continues to be glorified as Lisa's case winds its way through the courts.

5. Let's pray that God's people everywhere would remember the words of Jesus who said we should be "*wise as serpents and harmless as doves.*" Heavenly wisdom is always needed. Sometimes we're more keenly aware of it than at other times.

My conversation with Ken jogged my memory regarding one more detail regarding this case. Andrew Harmon, who was a journalist for the *Atlantic*, wrote a piece entitled, "Man of Sorrows: The Minister Who Helped a Woman Kidnap a Child" for the *Atlantic* dated

March 4, 2013. He writes poignantly regarding the unlikely friendship that had developed between Ken and himself. As an active member of the gay community, Mr. Harmon obviously brought a perspective to these proceedings that I don't share. Ken's family and Mr. Harmon had the opportunity to interact in a variety of ways, including Mr. Harmon spending the night in Ken and Linda's home.

I reread this article this morning, and I rejoiced. I rejoiced that God was able to show his love to Mr. Harmon through Ken, his family, and Pilgrim Fellowship Church in rural Stuarts Draft, Virginia. I also rejoice that in recent months Mr. Harmon contacted Ken to touch base again. He told Ken that he has now come to Christ! Praise the Lord! Let's be faithful in whatever path the Lord has laid out for us, remembering that His grace sustains us wherever He calls us.



I remember a number of years ago when a new church started, there was keen interest among the congregants that they would not operate in ways limited by tradition. One way that they chose to operate free from tradition was that they decided they would not begin the Sunday morning service by singing two songs as was

customary in the congregation where they worshiped earlier. One of the charter members of this new church observed after some time that in their priority to avoid the old tradition of two hymns, they had inadvertently developed a new one—that of singing three hymns at the beginning of the service.

I'm thinking of a few words that are essentially neutral but often carry unwelcome connotation with normal usage. I'm thinking of the words tradition, bias, and spin.

Tradition can be defined simply as a customary way of doing things. Traditions can be good and bad. Most of life's routines and schedules can be understood as tradition. So, oftentimes when a person feels compelled to weigh in against tradition, the real objection is against how tradition is practiced rather than tradition itself. Faith tradition has benefit when it helps shape behaviors into godly patterns. It is problematic when tradition is seen as life-giving, rather than pointing us to the Source of Life. Jesus said, "I am the Resurrection and the Life."

Bias is often understood as something negative. However, bias can also be understood as the set of assumptions through which we interpret the world around us. I propose that believers should operate

with a bias that displays an awareness that Christ is the reference point for all of life. I'm comfortable with that bias.

Spin is often thought as something devious. When a person chooses to avoid certain facts and present other facts with the desire to shape perception, this is thought of as "spin." Inasmuch as spin is deceptive, we should avoid it.

However, not all spin is deceptive. There is an element of spin that should characterize the life of the believer. What people observe in our lives should be a composite of Spirit fruit, absent of carnality—that is winsome. This puts a positive "spin" on the gospel. Titus 2:10 says, "***Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.***" Is it possible that part of adorning the doctrine of Christ is trying to avoid leaving a sour taste in the lives of the observing world regarding our faith and putting a favorable spin on the message? I think so.

I thought of some of these things when a sample copy of a news media publication showed up in my mailbox. On the front page was this introduction: "Inside, you'll find traditional, honest journalism without any spin, false narratives,

or hidden agendas.” A perusal of the sample edition led me to several conclusions:

1. The producers regard tradition as good and things that they agree with.

2. I found plenty of spin. There was selective representation of facts and events. Maybe they were accurate, but they were incomplete. I can’t discern motives, but the tone leads me to think that the facts that were omitted and chosen seemed designed to influence people’s opinions. I’m not commenting on the legitimacy, just that in my estimation abundant spin was present.

I make no judgment regarding the sincerity of these folks. I commend them for trying to be straightforward and honest. But the needle they strive to thread is a very elusive

one—probably it is not actually an ideal goal.

3. The dissonance between the stated objective and the content leads me to agree with a brother who commented to me about this paper. He said something along this line, “If these producers actually think what they are producing is free of spin, this lack of self-awareness erodes my confidence in their judgments regarding the news they report.”

As Christians, we bring a framework and a lens through which we view and interpret our world. The challenge is that this perspective needs to have a sanctified, Christian bent, rather than to be sterilized from any tradition, bias, or spin. We need Jesus-inspired traditions, bias, and spin on things.

—RJM 

At the Last it Biteth Like A Serpent

Stephen Zook, Eldon, MO

The drinking of wine has been a problem for thousands of years. We read that Noah was drunk with wine in Genesis 9, and Lot was drunk in Genesis 19.

The Proverb writer declares in his final chapter that wine is not for kings or princes. Again, in Proverbs 23, he

says, “*The drunkard and the glutton shall come to poverty.*”

In 1 Samuel 1, Eli thought Hannah was drunk and rebuked her for it.

Queen Vashti lost her position as queen because of a drunken husband in Esther 1.

“*Woe unto them that are mighty to*

drink wine” (Isaiah 5:22a).

“*Whoredom and wine and new wine take away the heart*” (Hosea 4:11).

“*Awake, ye drunkards, and weep; and howl, all ye drinkers of wine* (Joel 1:5). Also, in Joel 3:3, “*And they have cast lots for my people; and have given a boy for an harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.*”

“*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbor drink, that putteth the bottle to him, and maketh him drunken also, that thou mayest look on his nakedness!*” (Habakkuk 2:15).

Jesus said, “*Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged... with drunkenness... And so that day come upon you unawares*” (Luke 21:34).

Paul said to the Ephesians, “*Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess*” (Ephesians 5:18).

Still today in 2019 you read the local news and inevitably drinking has caused some fight, accident, or death.

The word wine in our King James Bibles has different meanings. Wine is sometimes simply from crushed grapes and at other times it refers directly to fermented grape juice.

Wine and strong drink are referred to as two separate drinks in many verses through the Bible, such as in Proverbs 20:1a, “*Wine is a mocker,*

strong drink is raging.” What is this strong drink?

Apparently, the intoxicating wine in the Bible refers only to wine from grapes or other fruit. First the grapes would be pressed into juice and then the juice was fermented. Lastly, they allowed the wine to age which developed its flavor.

Perhaps the strong drink referred to in these verses was the “liquor of grapes” referred to in Numbers 6:3. If so, this “strong drink” would simply be steeped juice which would have been a “strong wine.”

This means that wine and strong drink as mentioned in the Bible would be very comparable to wine that you and I could purchase today which contains 7-24% alcohol.

Most other intoxicating drinks fall under the classification of liquor. Liquor is made by a distillation process which was not commonly used until after the thirteen hundreds.

Brandy, gin, rum, vodka, whiskey, and bourbon would all be examples of modern liquor which contains 30-50% alcohol.

“*Who hath woe? who hath sorrow? who hath contentions? who hath babbling? who hath wounds without cause? who hath redness of eyes? They that tarry long at wine; they that go to seek mixed wine. Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth*

colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright” (Proverbs 32:29-31).

What would Jesus say today about our hearts being over-charged with even small amounts of modern liquor that contains twice as much alcohol as the Bible wine?

What would Jesus say about the estimated one hundred thousand Americans who die each year from alcohol-related accidents, disease, and criminal behavior?

What would Jesus say about the twenty million alcoholics in the United States today? Truly the bite of strong drink is devastating.

What does God really think should be done with drunkards? Deuteronomy 21:20-21, *“And they shall say unto the elders of his city, this our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die. So shalt thou put evil away from among you.”*

What will God do with drunkards? 1 Corinthians 6:10 clearly says that no drunkard can enter heaven. God will deliver drunkards to the torments of hell. Truly at the last it does bite like a serpent!

But what about social drinking? What if I can control my moderate use of strong drink and never truly get drunk? Is it wrong to have a little

to drink in the evening to take the edge off, so I can cope with life?

Let’s go back to the twenty million alcoholics in the United States today. How many of them started with just one drink? Is it worth the risk? Maybe I can handle it, but what if my son cannot?

Our discipline states that “Members are not allowed to manufacture, use, sell, or distribute intoxicating drinks.”

Some would say we are too strict with our standard and are going further than the Bible requires of us. After all, Paul does say in 1 Timothy 5:23, *“Drink no longer water, but use a little wine for thy stomach’s sake.”* He also says in Romans 14:21, *“It is good neither...to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.”*

What about keeping small amounts of wine or liquor on hand to use as medicine? Is it worth the risk?

What do you honestly think Jesus would have to say about drinking just a little? What would He say about the ever-increasing percentage of alcohol in wines and liquors today?

Our fathers and grandfathers were wise when they agreed on the statement in our discipline; the safest way is to never touch a drop!

“One day President Lincoln was riding in a coach with a colonel from Kentucky. The colonel took a bottle of

whiskey out of his pocket. He offered Mr. Lincoln a drink. Mr. Lincoln said, 'No, thank you, Colonel. I never drink whiskey.' ”

“Then Mr. Lincoln said, ‘I want to tell you a story. One day when I was nine years old, my mother called me to her bed. She was very sick. She said, “Abe, the doctor tells me that I’m not going to get well. I want you to be a good boy. I want you to promise me before I go that you will never use whiskey or tobacco as long as you

live.” I promised my mother that I never would, and up to this hour, I have kept this promise! Would you advise me to break that promise?”

Perhaps we need more mothers like this. What dangers did she see in strong drink that brought her to this conclusion?

Truly, she knew that at the last, strong drink does bite like a serpent.



[Reprinted from the October 2019 issue of Pilgrim Witness. Used by permission.]

I Love My Church

Kathleen Carter, Bastrop, TX

How many times have you heard someone say this? How many times have you said it? We tend to hear only the negative things about our churches. It isn't isolated to Mennonite churches; it is everywhere. People are unhappy or discontented about their church, job, family, etc. But discontentment is an article for another time.

Like other churches, we have had our share of issues, and some families have left. Some have returned. The core that is left is strong, cooperative, and willing. The intent of this article is not to lure people into our church, although they would be welcomed, but to hopefully encourage readers

to be bold about declaring what they love about their own church and to help others look for the good and not the negative.

I read a story once about a king who sent out two servants to survey his kingdom. (It probably is not a true story, but it illustrates my point so I'm going to use it.) The first was sent out to report on the condition of the flowers in the kingdom; the second to report on the weeds. When they returned months later, the first was asked the status of the flowers. He reported that the kingdom was full of the most beautiful and aromatic flowers. When asked about weeds, the servant said he didn't see any.

The second servant reported that the kingdom was full of weeds, and he didn't see any flowers. Isn't that like humankind? When we look for the negative, that's what we find. When we look for the positive, that is what we find. But when negativity is the only thing discussed within a church, it affects not only the discontented ones but the community as a whole and our youth in particular. Children who only hear complaints about church are not likely to stay in the church when they are adults. That is too dear a price to pay!

Here are a few of the things I love about my church. See if you can see things you love about your own.

1. The sermons are personal. They address issues we all face in a way that cause us to pause and reflect, but without the condemnation some sermons give. Am I guilty of this? Is my heart right toward God? Is my heart right toward my brothers and sisters? We never leave services without feeling spiritually nourished and thinking about the substance of the message.

2. Our leadership works in a collaborative manner, addressing issues prayerfully, scripturally, and in a way that is sensitive to the needs of the membership. Each minister is ready to admit if he has failed in some way to reflect the character of

Jesus and asks forgiveness. This is leading by example and is supremely important in any community or home. They may not always desire the same things for the church, but the heart of every minister is for the good of the church. For this reason they are able to dialog about an issue and come to an agreement without arguing.

3. Singing and devotions minister to each of us. We have had some amazing devotions that are positive, encouraging, and thought-provoking. Although developed in isolation from the main message, the devotions and selected songs always complement the message, so the entire service is cohesive and nourishing. Our church is a singing church. The harmonies are so lovely and sincere. What a blessing to hear vibrant singing especially in these times of social unrest.

4. Our Christian school is such a blessing. Students are given an excellent education and individual attention to facilitate better learning. Slower learners are given special attention and encouraged to learn at their pace rather than forced to learn at an accelerated pace. We currently have several students who would be considered "special needs," but you would never know it to see them interact. No one is isolated or

picked on. Everyone is encouraged by the other students in games and schoolwork. It is beautiful to see. That doesn't mean our children are perfect. Far from it since we are all human. But with parents and teachers working together, misbehavior has consequences that cross the line between school and home. Our teachers are knowledgeable and compassionate. They walk with the Lord, and it is obvious in their lives.

5. Compassion fills our community. Whenever we've had surgeries, illness, accidents, fires, etc., the entire community immediately responds with food, chores, financial help, encouragement, or whatever is needed. Sometimes just a listening ear and a compassionate heart are all that is needed. Other times the needs are greater, but no one goes without that support. The sisters' sewing is not as large as other churches, but everyone pitches in whenever able. The conversations are joyful, uplifting, kind, and focused on the needs around us.

6. Our church is mission-minded, not only at a church level; many of our families are missionaries at an individual level. Some volunteer at

food pantries, help the elderly with chores, or counsel someone in pain or despair. We have families from our membership in the mission field in Kenya and Guatemala.

What about your church? Can you list the things you love about it and the church family? If not, is it possible you are looking for weeds and not flowers? If your church has lost the vigor and fire it once had, what can you do to re-ignite it? Try to be the change you want to see in your church. Appreciate the things that are good about it. If you have an issue with a brother or sister, have you approached them in a Matthew 18 way and said, "Can we talk," then clear the air? It could be you don't have a complete picture of the situation. When we jump to conclusions we are often wrong and only partially understand the situation.

The world today is so full of anger, intolerance, and hatred. We cannot allow these trends to infiltrate our churches. Let us seek first to understand, and then to be understood. Bind us together, Lord!

Malachi 3:1-3



Christ's *sacrifice was exactly what*
God **desired** *and we* **required.**

Communion



I feel alone,
The course is long.
Uphill my trail and wearisome;
My heart no longer sings its song,
And all my tasks are drearisome.
Where is the Shepherd?

My ankle twists.
The curve ahead conceals my path,
I stifle a disbelieving laugh -
I see not the rod and staff.
Where is the rest He promised?
I cannot see my Shepherd.

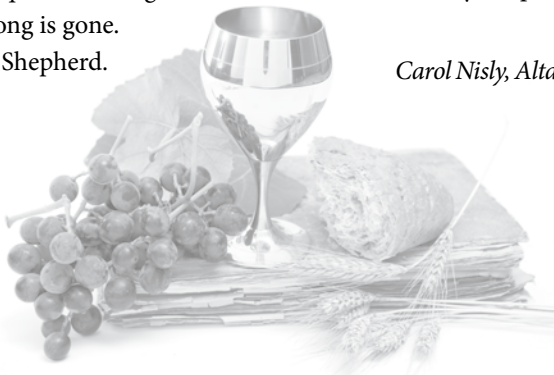
My soul is parched.
Stung by a thousand buzzing fears,
I gasp and pant without a glimpse of
Him:
I plod and sweat, and struggle on -
I dare not quit e'en though
my song is gone.
Oh, Shepherd.

Just one more step. And then
I round the bend. I lift my head
Astonished by the view:
A quiet brook, a spreading tree,
A blanket spread with feast for two.
Communion with my Shepherd.

He beckons me to sup,
And scarred hands offer me the cup.
My head hangs low in shame.
I am not worthy of Your Name,
Dear Shepherd.

He watches me with patient calm,
Gently soothes my stings with balm.
I dry the flood of tears.
Gone are the weariness, welts, and
dread.
I feast on Living Bread -
My Shepherd.

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS



Tidbits from Travels to South America

*[From the diary of the late Jacob J. Hershberger, Virginia Beach, VA,
October 31- November 12, 1960. Edited by Floyd Stoltzfus.]*

Brother Jake and brother Elam Kauffman were both on the Amish Mennonite Aid Board at this time. The work in Germany was in operation for several years. It is assumed that the brothers took this journey to investigate the possibility of starting a new mission. The missions in Central America were not launched until 1962. Both of these brethren had a burden for souls and a vision for missions. They desired that our churches would be more intensely involved for the cause of the Great Commission. It appears that Satan is active in attempting to hinder the spread of the Gospel, but God is triumphant. -FS

“Good-bye, mother and children. May God keep us and watch over us until we meet again.’ This is another chapter in the life of the writer. I left my home in Norfolk, Virginia. I was soon on board a train. Just when the sobering fact of having said ‘good-bye’ to my loved ones began to settle on my heart, here comes a train porter asking, ‘Where are you going?’ After telling him that I am on

my way to Miami and then to South America, he asks, ‘Are you a traveling evangelist?’ After explaining to him that I am a minister of the gospel who travels and I might be called by that title, he says, ‘Well, I wish you Godspeed. I cannot wish everyone that, only God’s children.’ ”

“After thanking him for his kind words, I also wished him God’s blessing. I wondered if God had already sent a brother to give me encouragement. At any rate, I am taking the words of my friend as a good omen for this trip.”

“The first part of this journey is by train from Norfolk to Miami, and as I settle down for the night in a comfortable roomette, I meditate that travel on this train, ‘Silver Star,’ is a bit like traveling on the ‘Glory Train.’ You have to make your reservations in advance.”

“While plans had been made for me to travel to Miami by plane, for several reasons, I am going by train instead. Not the least is that some of my friends frown on plane travel. So why not go some other way and keep

peace with my friends?”

“Oh yes, the train porter also asked me what I preached about yesterday. I replied, ‘That we serve a living God. We have in our hands the living Word and possess the living Water!’ Really tonight, I am thankful that we also have access to God by a ‘new and living way!’ I wonder if I really preached enough about that great truth?”

Jake continues with his diary on November 1-12. “Tonight, I can truly thank God for His protecting hand. Were it not for His care over us, our bodies could be in the bottom of the Caribbean Sea somewhere east of Cuba.”

“Elam Kauffman and I left Miami Airport at 4:00 P.M. Before we got very far one motor of our four-motor plane ‘Super Constellation’ conked out, considerably lowering the aircraft. Our pilot, however, kept the vessel in good control until suddenly one motor on the other side flared up in fire just outside my window. But what an answer to prayer! The fire died down soon. So with one motor dead and another faltering the pilot headed for the nearest airport. We landed safely in Ciudad Trujillo, Dominican Republic. There we stayed with the fifty-plus traveling companions as guests in a hotel for several days

until the plane was repaired. The D.R. is one of the islands Columbus discovered. We visited the oldest cathedral and monastery (400 years old) in the western hemisphere. Here is where Columbus’s tomb is located with a large casket containing his remains.”

“Surely, we should be thankful to God for His providence and care. Now the question comes to us, did God have a reason for this delay? Is there something He desires to show us? One thing, this day has brought us into close fellowship with a Catholic friend. He left a good job behind and is on the way to Brazil to see what he can do to bring about some economic changes. He is evidently a wealthy man, and is taking upon himself the task of investigating and making contacts with people in the interest of setting up manufacturing plants, canning factories, and so on. His aim is not to make money, but to use his money and talents towards benefiting others. This friend of ours is a sincere Christian. He claims the pope is human like all of us and is not infallible. He accepts others as Christians outside Catholicism if they have received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.”

Here are some tidbits of “first sights” in Brazil. “Today, we looked around in Belém and found it an old

city. Here we met Herb Minnich. He was from a certain mission in Brazil and was our guide. We met some folks with diseases, bandaged, and running sores. We walked along the river docks. The farmers, fishermen, and jungle natives were there with boats trying to sell melons, tomatoes, berries, bananas, pigs, chickens, and more things lying on piles. Some food was rotting. Dozens of vultures sat around looking for a scrap. It was not very appetizing!”

“All through the city, you saw where someone had set up a stove and was cooking noodles, shrimp, gruel, and other food, selling it for so much a bowl. Of course, you ate out of the same bowl as many others had and no washing in between. Diseases and epidemics take a daily toll.”

“We relied heavily on the Lord in our travels, and our prayers were often answered in marvelous ways. We flew 500 miles over Amazon jungles to meet the Rohrer family near a city called Araguacenia. After a delicious meal in a small restaurant, we loaded a large number of supplies on the boat that the Rohrers bought and headed for the city.”


“We attended and enjoyed the Sunday School with the Rohrers, conducted by the nationals, even though we did not understand Spanish. The attendance was 115

and the offering was around \$5.25 in USD. Herb took us around to visit a number of converts. One of these natives was José Brito, who has nine children. He is a humble brother and talented Christian. A problem here is marriage relationships. Brazil does not grant divorce, so folks simply live together unmarried or marry again without divorcing. This creates a real problem when converts come for baptism.”

“In Araguacenia, we attended an evening church service with Herb, the Rohrers, and the national church in preparation for communion. After a sermon on the significance of communion and self-examination, four questions were asked: Do you have peace with God? Do you have victory over sin and the carnal, fleshly desires? Do you have peace, as far as possible, with your fellow men? Do you wish to partake in communion? Later Elam and I also joined this fellowship of believers in communion and feet washing. This service was as impressive a communion as I have ever attended.”

“Another highlight of our Brazilian trip was visiting two villages by small airplane where a number of workers from Araguacenia had gone several times in the last year. While it took us only thirty minutes by plane, the usual trip by mule takes these

missionaries two or three days. In the one village we were greeted by señor Emanuel who was one of the first converts. In this village of around 250 people there was no church, and seventeen souls were thrilled with the message of salvation. I was moved to leave \$100.00 with the

missionaries in Araguacenia to assist in constructing a church building in bringing the gospel to those who never heard it.” 

Used by permission from Mrs. Edna Nisly, widow of the late Lester Nisly (SC).

junior messages

The Peace Oak (Part 2)

Love and Mercy to Friend and Foe

[Continued from last month.]

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

What joy filled the Christian homes on the Salm plateau when the men returned safely from Paris! What prayers of gratitude and rejoicing rose up to their Heavenly Father! They had testified of their faith and had been granted a “Mandate of Exemption From War.”

The Mandate¹ read: “*The Anabaptists of France have sent several of their number to us to explain that their fear of God and church discipline forbids them to bear arms and requested that they be assigned to other duties in the army.*”

“We have observed in them, honest hearts, and therefore, believing that a good government should promote all virtues that are upbuilding to the community, we advise you to treat the Anabaptists with the same gentleness and non-violence which they themselves display, to prevent them from being persecuted, and to permit them to serve their army terms as they may desire, in such duties as building fortifications, working on the roads, transporting supplies, or if they wish, by payment of an exemption fee.”

On a spring evening in 1794, a group of believers gathered at a clearing on the edge of bishop Jacob’s forest. Jacob had a small oak tree. It was to be planted, an oak of

¹ The Mandate, Leroy Beachy, *Unser Leit*, 2011, Goodly Heritage Books, page 146, used by permission.

peace, in celebration and memory of the mandate that granted them exemption from having any part in the military.

Bishop Jacob spoke, “We will call this tree the Peace Oak. It will be in remembrance of our exemption from military participation. We want to always follow Jesus, the Prince of Peace. May this Peace Oak help us and our children to remember to be kind and merciful to friend or foe. This tree will be a memorial to us as were the twelve stones Joshua set up by the river of Jordan so many years ago to help the children of Israel remember the miraculous crossing of the Jordan (Joshua 4). They wanted their children to see the stones, hear the story, and learn about God. My deep desire as your leader is that you teach your children the way of peace. Before we plant the tree, we want to sing several verses of number three in the *Ausbund*.”

That song, known and loved, and sung by memory, again wafted to the skies, a praise to God for granting them peace and life in the midst of a bloody war, disease, and difficult times.

Brother Jacob showed the youth where to dig with the hoe and helped them plant the small sapling which they called the peace oak. The sun set in glorious fiery splendor. The group

of believers rejoiced as they returned to their quiet mountain homes.

A Test

On a sunny spring day Christian was working briskly at his loom. Nearby, Anna’s spinning wheel hummed, a backdrop of steady sound as Anna sang number three of the *Ausbund*, her favorite song of commitment to God. Little Peter played on the floor with scraps of wood.

Hearing a sound at the door, Christian opened it and was startled to see several men from Senones. His thoughts ran wild, and he wondered if their exemption from war had been taken away? He courteously bade them good morning and asked what he could do for them?

The deputy gruffly spoke, “We have orders to seize all the fabric, shoes, and clothing we can find. Show us what you have!” Christian led the red-capped men to his upstairs storage room and informed them, “Take whatever you wish.”

The men looked at him in doubtful surprise and wondered if they had heard correctly? “Go ahead, help yourselves,” Christian repeated. He gathered an armful and waited for them to take all the piles of cloth they had woven that winter.

“Give me your shoes,” the deputy commanded, “Most of the army is barefoot, and they need shoes more

than you do. I want your coat and cap too.”

Christian gave all that he was ordered to give and then went the second mile, saying, “Wait, I will get more.” He went in the bedroom and came back with an older cloak and cap. The deputy grabbed the clothing and quickly left.

“What will you wear now, Christian?” his good wife queried.

“I will be okay with an extra shirt or two; spring is coming, and I will be fine,” Christian consoled her.

Christian resumed his work at the loom, and Anna went back to her weaving and her singing. Both knew in their hearts that today they had lived out their faith and heaped coals of fire on the enemies’ heads. They knew that God would take care of them. God’s love and peace thrived in their hearts.


The Peace Oak was also growing and thriving. God saw that tree; He watched over it and His followers on the Salm Plateau.

Years later in 1829, military exemption was not granted in France. Eventually, those who wished to continue to follow the Biblical pattern to live in peace and show love and mercy to friend or foe migrated to America.

Over many years, sheltered by God through many a storm, the Peace

Oak grew large and strong and it still stands. James D. Hershberger visited France in 2002. He traveled to the Salm Plateau and saw the massive Peace Oak. He confirmed, “It takes four men to touch fingers around the girth of the ancient Peace Oak today.” He obtained acorns from the Peace Oak and amazingly, a new Peace Oak from France, which James planted, grows on the grounds at Behalt, Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center, in Berlin, Ohio. May this living Peace Oak memorial remind us of God’s faithfulness to His children who embrace love and nonresistance.

Behalt houses a large colorful cyclorama, depicting the history of believers from the time of Christ to the present. Take time to visit and learn more about the children of God and their spiritual journey.

May the Word of God take root in our lives that we too may show love and mercy to friend or foe. Our heritage is not so much about blood lines but of faith lines. Strong faith that lasts through storms is firmly anchored in Jehovah God and  unchanging Word.

Resources: Joanna F Martin, The Shepherd of Salm, Rod and Staff Publishers, 2014

Leroy Beachy, Unser Leit, 2011, Goodly Heritage Books, page 146-147

Somebody Follows You

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

Fiercely loyal, but at times tattletales. They love to get into our belongings but only because they want to be like us. Sometimes they are hard to live with, but it's difficult to imagine life without them. They always want to tag along, and a little attention goes a long way. Have you figured out who or what I'm talking about? Many of us have been blessed with little people in our lives. The short time we have with these little people quickly disappears as they get older. While what is shared here may seem focused more toward those with younger siblings, never underestimate your influence on the little people in your life—nieces and nephews, cousins, or the random child from church who takes a shine to you.

Many of us don't realize the influence that we have on those younger than us, especially our siblings. I'd like to share an excerpt from an article I read recently: *"Younger siblings, on the other hand, tend to be more 'older sibling*

*oriented,' modeling their development and achievements after big brother or big sister. As a result, they have a much smaller developmental gap to overcome, less to prove and fewer self-imposed achievement pressures. For better or worse they look to older siblings for information on how to behave, respond, and relate – often regardless of what parents teach. According to Laurie Kramer, a professor of applied family studies at the University of Illinois, siblings also play a much more influential role in developing 'street smarts' or understanding and negotiating 'playground politics' than parents."*¹

Growing up in a family with nine children (I was exactly in the middle), I can remember being on both sides of this topic. I enjoyed spending time with my siblings, and the relationships I built with my siblings have carried on into our adult lives. I looked up to my older siblings and took cues from them on how to navigate my world. I copied their choices in clothing and music

¹ Cornerstonesforparents.com

and loved hanging around when their friends came to visit. As a result, I got to know their friends and count them as my own. Of course, my older siblings weren't perfect, but I'd like to share some of the positive memories and experiences that I had with them.

As a young adolescent, one thing I really appreciated was the involvement that I had with my older siblings and their friends. Rarely was I excluded if friends visited. Their friends also were kind and accepting even if I may have annoyed them. There were times when I was asked to leave them alone, but I don't remember ever being demeaned or embarrassed by my older siblings. Regardless of how they felt about my hanging around, I was always treated with kindness and respect. To be embarrassed in front of my older siblings' friends would have been extremely cruel. I don't remember their friends ever being cruel to me. Regardless of the situation or how you are feeling about the little people in your life, always treat them with kindness. They will never forget it, and they will treat those younger than themselves with the same respect. We also spent a fair amount of time working together. I have many fond memories of working with my siblings. We spent many


hours together outside. Be willing to allow your siblings to help you with a project or hobby, and take the time to help them if there is work to be done. An older sister and I once went into partnership on a calf that we raised and then sold for profit. My brother and I used to feed and milk the quickly-multiplying goats that we had purchased for "weed control." I remember various summers where I worked with my older brother mowing lawns or doing chores for someone. I was always treated as a partner and was paid well.

Another thing I really enjoyed was going to town with my siblings. Whether we were just running a few errands or making a special shopping trip, I remember many times they paid for my meals and drinks since I didn't have a job and was still in school. It made me feel pretty special to spend that time with them. I used to think PT Cruisers were the neatest cars, and one day my older sister got permission from her boss to borrow her PT Cruiser and take me out to lunch and a tour of the college she was attending. It meant the world to me. It's not about the money you spend on them, but it's about the time spent with them and the way you treat them that has the biggest impact on their lives.

Something that was especially important to me was being able to “talk” with my siblings. Late night talks with my older siblings are memories that I will always treasure. Maybe you think your younger siblings’ problems aren’t a big deal, but they are to them, and some advice and interest in their lives goes a long way. Now that my siblings and I are adults and live in different communities with different schedules, the opportunities to have those conversations are few and far between. Tell your younger siblings that you are there for them and available to talk. Don’t pass up those opportunities to talk—you never know if you’ll have another chance.

As was mentioned, children tend to emulate what their older siblings (or the people they look up to if they don’t have siblings) do, say, and show interest in. What a tremendous opportunity we have to influence them for the Lord. Take the time to read Bible stories to them if they’re that age group. Help them study memory verses. Challenge them to read the Bible with you, and be vocal about your relationship with God, how He has answered prayer and blessed your life. In another article I read, it was mentioned that sibling relationships are on average the longest-lasting relationships

of our lives. When you put it in that perspective, it drives home the importance of cultivating and maintaining the relationships we have with our siblings. Imagine the blessing of having a constant positive spiritual influence in your life and the impact that can have. Don’t let petty squabbles or money get between you and your siblings. Life is too short, and eternity is far too long to risk messing that up. Do your best to keep your relationships close.

Look around yourself, not only at your own siblings but also at the other little people in your life. Whether they are two years old or 14, when you take the time to acknowledge and interact with them, you are influencing them positively. I know we don’t often use the word “hero,” but that may very well be what you become to the little people in your life. They are watching every move you make and hearing every word you say. They watch your response to authority and see the things that you value and how you spend your time. They are the generation of tomorrow. Take the time today to have a positive influence in their lives. The choices you make, however personal they may be, will have an impact on those around you. Choose wisely; somebody follows you. 

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