



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

DECEMBER 2021

Meditation

Good Tidings of Great Joy 1

Editorial

Goodwill Toward Men..... 2

The Bottom Line

I Am Samuel Lee..... 5

Observations 7

Christmas Giving..... 9

Glory to God in the Highest 10

Tomorrow 13

Marriages..... 14

Cradle Roll..... 14

Obituaries 15

Masters of Fate and Victims of Circumstance 18

Blessed are the Pure in Heart..... 20

Tolerance Within the Brotherhood..... 21

Mission Awareness

Crisis in Haiti..... 29

A Woman After God's Heart

Broken Places 32

Junior Messages

A Lesson in Gratefulness 33

Youth Messages

Bread Upon the Waters (Part 2)..... 35

Thought Gems back cover

Calvary Messenger

December 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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Good Tidings of Great Joy!

And there were in the same country
shepherds abiding in the field,
keeping watch over their flock by night.
And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them,
and the glory of the Lord shone round about them:
and they were sore afraid.
And the angel said unto them,
Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy,
which shall be to all people.
For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour,
which is Christ the Lord.
And this shall be a sign unto you;
Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.
And suddenly there was with the angel
a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,
Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace,
good will toward men. And it came to pass,
as the angels were gone away from them into heaven,
the shepherds said one to another,
Let us now go even unto Bethlehem,
and see this thing which is come to pass,
which the Lord hath made known unto us.
And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph,
and the babe lying in a manger.

Luke 2:8-16 

Goodwill Toward Men

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men”
 Luke 2:14.

It was wintertime in Berlin, Ohio, in the 1970s. The MCC canner had arrived in the community for the week. My father and I joined forces with a houseful of volunteers in the nearly-new building constructed for this specific purpose. We stood around tables and cut up meat from quarters of beef that were then processed and canned in the traveling canner semi-trailer that made its rounds across the country.

The conversations probably covered all the topics that are normal for such occasions. But at the table where the late Yost Miller was working, the conversation turned to deeper subjects. In discussing the Incarnation of the Son of God, I remember Brother Yost asking a thought-provoking question, as he was wont to do. “Where was the Son of God during the nine months before baby Jesus was born?” He was specifically talking about the stage when there were only a few cells of His being. I do not believe that a

definitive answer was expected or given, but that discussion centered on the wonder of God’s gracious Gift of the Incarnation to fallen mankind—God becoming flesh and living as a man in this sin-cursed world.

Matthew writes in chapter 1:23, *“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, **God with us.**”* Why would the infinite God want to send of His Person to this earth? Why would the Son of God be willing to be a man and offer up His life for the whole world? It is only because of the great love of our God and His *goodwill toward men.*

Immediately after the first couple lost the intimate relationship with their Creator by their disobedience, God promised hope for mankind in His curse upon the serpent. He promised that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied that the *goodwill* of our God would reach out in love and bring peace to fallen and sinful man. In Isaiah

9:6 he wrote, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”* He promised restoration, healing, and peace in chapter 57:17-18, *“I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him and to his mourners. I create the fruit of the lips; Peace, peace to him that is far off, and to him that is near, saith the LORD; and I will heal him.”*

The loving heart of our Father God was revealed when the father of John the Baptist prophesied by the Holy Ghost how his newborn son would prepare the way for the Redeemer and Prince of Peace. *“And thou, child [John the Baptist], shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, through the **tender mercy of our God**; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:76-79). It was through the tender mercy of our God that the Light came to this dark world and showed us the Prince of Peace.

God Incarnate Himself told the searching master in Israel of God’s goodwill to all men when he came under cover of darkness to ask questions he did not understand. Jesus, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer, and Saviour of all who believe in Him, expressed the heart of the Godhead when He said, *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life”* (John 3:16). *“Good will toward men!”*

The epistles are loaded with descriptions of the blessings that are ours because of God’s rich love and mercy! The apostle Paul writes, *“But God, who is **rich in mercy**, for **his great love** wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: **it is the gift of God”*** (Ephesians 2: 4-8).

It was of this goodwill to men that the heavenly host spoke on that breathtaking evening when they appeared to the shepherds outside


the city of David. It is impossible to imagine the sight this was when “*the glory of the Lord shone round about them.*” And while the good tidings of great joy were to all people, our loving God promised a personal Saviour when the angel said, “*For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord*” (Luke 2:11).

This is all ours for the asking. “*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God*” (Romans 5:1-2). “*To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the*

riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:6-7).

“When men become reconciled to God through the death of his Son, they love one another. They have peace with God; peace in their own consciences; and peace with their neighbors: good will dwells among them, speaks in them, and works by them. Well might this state of salvation be represented under the notion of the kingdom of God, a counterpart of eternal felicity.” Adam Clarke

“*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*” (I John 4:11).

In this season of celebration of Christ’s birth, however we may celebrate, may the goodwill of our merciful and gracious God flow from our lives to all of our fellow men. 

– AY

Announcement

The Shepherds’ Institute

February 21-25, 2022

Harvest Mennonite Church

Fortuna, MO

To register or for more information, contact:

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I am Samuel Lee

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Part One: Samuel Lee

The dairyman on our home farm had just begun to use his two newly-installed robot milkers for his 120-cow herd. I stopped in the parlor to see how automation has taken over where I had labored to help milk 13 cows by hand as a boy, then 20 cows with bucket milkers, then for my main farming career, 42 cows using a very modern, state-of-the-art (sigh!) pipeline in a totally new cow stable. In only one generation, all of that is gone! Out with the old, in with the new.

I had been sick for two months this past summer, scarcely having seen this transition take shape in my barn. I stepped inside, and here is this prestigious company technician overseeing the installation of the robots. He is there to correct anything amiss, if needed. The circuitry for these robots appears huge and complex. It would take much schooling and experience to know what is taking place.

The smiling technician first of

all says, “I am Samuel Lee. Do you remember me?”

“Yes, of course,” I exclaimed! Samuel Lee was born several miles away on the far side of our country block. We used to take him and many other Amish children along to our two-week summer Bible School at Weavertown Church.

Samuel Lee also attended school at Weavertown. He was born, as the Amish said back then, in “inconvenient circumstances” to a single mom. The guilty dad skipped, so Samuel Lee was without the foundation of a father figure.

He was chubby and soon learned how to throw this weight around. He was naughty, only partially cooperative, having fits of anger and was a non-achiever in school. I was on the school board during those years.

In his late teens, he came to rent a vehicle, being in dire straits. I let him use my VW Rabbit for a fee. But he never paid his bill despite sending monthly statements plus finance charges. I supposed it to be my loss.

A few years later, he shows up at my door. He told me that he has been saved, therefore he wants to pay his bill. But he has another problem; he does not have the money.

“What can you pay,” I inquired?

“I figured I could give you five dollars a month,” he replied.

Even now, I again need to hold back my tears. Of course, I agreed.

Near the end of November, Samuel Lee called and asked if he could skip paying the five dollars for December, “so my wife and I could have a little Christmas.” By May, he had reached my personal pre-planned threshold in which I forgave the rest of the payments.

Part Two: Fred*

Thirty years ago, I had a fleet of 12 vans as a van rental business. I used the honor system. Fred used my vans several times and always paid promptly. Then he used a van for quite some time and did not return it as promised. At least there was hope of getting my van back, but after a while I wasn't so sure. One day he quickly dropped it off but without coming by to get his bill. Over time, I sent bills, made numerous phone calls, even traveled 50 miles round-trip to his house five times at different times of the day. He never gave any least little bit of response. I supposed it to be a business loss of over \$1000.

Some years later, there was knock on my front door. “Fred!”

“I came to pay my bill.”

“Sure. Come in.”

He paid his bill in full, without asking for a hardship discount or cash deduction.

Then he said, “Now, Mr. Lapp, I want to tell you a bit of my story. My wife and I were continually fighting and our baby was sick. Life was a daily grind and grief. In our desperation, come Easter morning, we decided to try the church.” They went to the local Calvary Church. The pastor preached on the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, then gave an invitation to anyone to come forward in repentance and confession of sin.

Fred said, “My wife and I and our baby went forward. I was saved; therefore, I came to pay my bill.”

The Bottom Line this month is a short list:

1. The Christian church must cheerfully bear losses at times.
2. Injustices will test the sincerity of our claim to be non-resistant.
3. When I met Samuel Lee many years later, I could see he was free.
4. God evidently blessed Samuel Lee, being well paid in his later years.
5. Fred also gained a double benefit, freedom from sin and freedom from debt.

6. Neither of these men were Anabaptist, yet they teach a much-needed lesson to some conservative Anabaptists in our day.

7. If being saved helps people to be more conscientious about responding in some way to neglected and long overdue bills, there would be certain businessmen in our community who would wish to see certain

very conservative people being saved. Making promises for business purchases and not keeping them (“I was able to get it cheaper somewhere else”), and being irresponsible for outstanding bills, go hand-in-hand. These two things alone can more than take away from a Christian witness. It makes plain dress repulsive.

*not his real name



observations

The National Today data science team did a survey regarding America’s snack preference. The most-consumed snack in America by volume is popcorn. Even though those conducting the survey didn’t ask me, I would have strengthened those numbers if they had asked. The top eight popcorn flavors are these, listed in order of preference: butter, white cheese, caramel, kettle corn, cheddar cheese, garlic, peanut butter caramel, chocolate chip, and plain.

Many folks find popcorn delicious and aromatically very inviting. However, the fact that popcorn is relatively inexpensive and healthful before adding flavor enhancers adds to its appeal.

This talk about popcorn leaves me feeling like it would be a good

evening to pop a bowl of popcorn.

••••••••••

It was recently reported that the median price of a home in the USA passed \$400,000 for the first time. Even economists struggle to correctly understand the many factors that influence these numbers. However, it seems certain that inflation plays some role in this milestone. I don’t have conclusive numbers, but our recent experience in the grocery store and hardware store, etc., makes me tend to agree with those who affirm that inflation is alive and well for us in America today.

••••••••••

Yesterday I had a conversation with one of our county sheriff officers. Part of his job is to inspect vehicles that come from out of state for people seeking to tag them

in local Labette County. In 2003 when our family moved here, the population was reported to be a bit over 22,000. The 2020 census reports just over 20,000 which constitutes a population erosion of about 10%. Those numbers are consistent with my impressions. If the Mennonites and Amish wouldn't have moved into the county during that time frame, the population reduction would have been considerably higher. It is those numbers that make the comments of Sheriff Davis regarding a recent local trend so interesting.

He said he is inspecting a lot of vehicles for people who are moving into this area from out of state. He related a bunch of stories about recent arrivals.

One family decided to list their home in a city in Utah. It sold 13 minutes after listing for \$600,000. They found something local they liked better for much less.

Another person related that he was paying \$3,900 rent at his previous residence. He moved here and found a job similar to his previous one and is renting a house in the country and a few acres for \$800 rent and loves it.

Then there are the retirees in their 60s who lived their entire lives in the Bronx. They went on the real estate website Zillow and ended up buying a house in Altamont, Kansas, and love

sitting on their porch, drinking coffee in their quiet, new town.

He talked about folks who have moved here from New Mexico, California, Texas, Alabama, and other states. He meets these people when they come to have their vehicles inspected for Labette County tags.

I haven't bought a house recently, but I'm pretty sure that the real estate prices in our area pull the national median price down. The lower prices of property and cost of living must be part of the equation for some folks. While I obviously don't know, I'm guessing what Sheriff Davis talked about happening in this county is representative of a broader shift for a few folks from the appeal of urban and suburban residence to small town and rural advantages.




As of this writing, it has been almost two weeks since 17 missionaries were abducted in Haiti. Many folks have given themselves to prayer and fasting for this situation. I would be delighted if this situation would have been peacefully resolved long before you read this. But we have no guarantee that this will be the case.

But we do have a few guarantees. We are guaranteed that God will never forsake His children. We can be assured that grace sufficient to the task is available for every Christian.

This in no way should be understood to trivialize the difficulty for those adversely affected by these events.

But God's provision, while infinite and unique, doesn't guarantee physical safety for us. It doesn't guarantee that bad things can't happen to good people.

When I ponder God's sovereignty and His omnipotence in such a time

as this, I am forcefully reminded and comforted by the fact that even though we live in a sin-scarred world with sin-scarred people, God provides for His people wherever He calls them. He doesn't remove the difficulty in every situation, but He provides for His children in the difficulties that we encounter when we walk with Him. 

Christmas Giving

Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX

Have you ever considered what it would be like if one of us was invited to a birthday party in our honor and everyone attending is celebrating by giving gifts to each other while we sit in the shadows practically ignored? Try to imagine with me the mixture of emotions this would arouse within us!

In pondering this scenario, perhaps we can understand in some measure how Jesus must feel during the Christmas season. We claim to be celebrating His entry into this world, yet so much of our festivities center around family and friends. While we are enjoying His birthday party by giving one another gifts, Jesus is sitting in the background longing to be invited as the Guest of Honor at our celebration.

Now it is not wrong to give to meet the material needs of our fellow humans. But in observing our Christmas giving, for the most part it is very superfluous and superficial. It is superfluous because the gifts are given to people who often have more than they need. And it is superficial because the giving is often in expectation of receiving a gift in return. This is evidenced by exchanging names within families or in the workplace for the purpose of making sure no one gets left out. Quite simply, it lacks the biblical principle of sacrificial giving.

What does it mean to give sacrificially? First of all, it is giving ourselves to each other. Once we have truly done so there is no sacrifice too great to undergo for our fellow brother or sister. This is exactly what

God did in sending His Son into our world. He did not spare anything to procure our salvation!

Another problem with the Christmas giving is that the main emphasis is placed on the gifts instead of the giver. Unfortunately, this concept carries over into our Christianity. We rejoice in God's salvation and all the perks associated with it and yet so easily neglect the Giver Himself. Our Father God's heart yearns for us to set our love

upon Him as the Giver and receive His Son Jesus Christ as the Gift. Spiritually speaking, it is impossible to obtain salvation's blessings apart from the Gift. However, when we in faith accept the Gift, then the gifts become ours by virtue of birthright.

Will you commit yourself, along with me, to honor Jesus as the Preeminent One of your life, not just today but every day? This is, undoubtedly, the greatest gift we can give to our Creator and to each other!



Glory to God in the Highest!

Frank Reed, Manheim, PA

"Glory to God in the Highest!" Luke 2:1-40

World Politics
God used and uses world politics to bring about His will for mankind. Jesus's parents traveled to obey the law of the land and to fulfill the purposes of God. Galatians 4:4 says, *"In the fullness of time..."* God had prepared the world for the birth of His Son.

The Birth

The Lord Jesus Christ was born as a baby in Bethlehem; in the meanest of all places and because there was no room in the inn.

The Messengers

An angel and soon an entire army (host) of angels announced this most

notable of events in all of time. God became human and dwelt among His creation. The angels, who sang at the creation and watch over all that God did and does, now heralded the greatest news of all—Salvation!

The Message

Do not be afraid. Good tidings (the evangel), great joy, a Savior—Christ the Lord wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger. *"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!"*

The Recipients of the Message

Mary, Joseph, all people, shepherds, Simeon, and Anna.

The Character of the Recipients

Mary—highly favored—chosen as mother of Jesus—marveled;

Joseph—obedient, diligent, faithful—marveled; shepherds—obedient, trusting, believing, simple, knew that God was speaking to them—worked together; Simeon—led by the Holy Spirit, just, devout, patient, peace, knew the Scriptures—had spiritual perception and sight; Anna, the prophetess who lived in the temple—served God with fastings and prayers night and day, thankful—spoke the message of Jesus’s birth.

The Obedience to the Message

Mary’s pondering—Mary pondered in her heart all that was spoken to her of her Son. Joseph’s poverty—performed everything required by the law. Shepherds’ sharing—went with haste, made widely known (witnessed) what they saw; those whom they told marveled, praised, and glorified God for the message they received. Simeon’s prophecy—blessed God, and spoke for God; Anna’s fasting and prayers—night and day Anna fasted and prayed. Now she gave thanks and spoke of Jesus “*to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem.*” Jesus—“*And the Child grew and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon Him*” (Luke 2:40 NKJV). Jesus became the Message. The Creator became the Message!

Religious Politics

Simeon prophesied:

- A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles
- The glory of your people, Israel
- Prepared before the face of all people
- Blessed the family
- This child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel.
- He is a sign that will be spoken against.
- A sword will pierce through Mary’s soul.
- The thoughts of many persons will be revealed by their response to Jesus.

Simeon prophesied that Jesus would be the dividing personage of all of history. The thoughts of persons will be revealed by their acceptance or rejection of the angel’s message and the teachings of Jesus. People will rise and fall by their recognition of Jesus. Many speak against Him. Many will choose to live in darkness instead of accepting the light and glory of God. Church history and politics prove Simeon’s prophecy true over and over again.

Notes and Questions

Why did God choose these people to receive His message? There was a very powerful political process and formal religious structure. Why did God not speak to them? Actually, He had spoken to them through His

Scriptures. They had His written Word but missed His living Word.

Shepherds were earthy people who lived with the sheep with hard hands, a rough life, and were not accepted in society. Mary, Joseph, Simeon, and Anna were obscure personalities. They had no real power in the halls of human justice and religion. They were the simple believers of their day. They were the chosen of God to receive His message.

If God had asked or told the religious leaders to go to see the Messiah in a barn, what would they have done? He told shepherds to go see the Messiah in a barn. That was home to them. They were comfortable there. No problem.

Why does God cloak His working in seemingly unacceptable things? A virgin conceive? Who would believe that story? Why does God cloak His working in obscurity? Through whom and to whom is God speaking today? Are they being heard?

Lessons of the Angels of God for Christmas

“Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those with whom He is pleased” (Luke 2:14 ESV).

The message is clear. Glory to God is the highest calling for us. If we will give all glory to God, the result will be *“peace upon earth among those with*

whom He is pleased.”

Why would God be pleased? Because we are done with ourselves and our plans and politics, and because we are living our lives to the glory of God.

If you live for the glory of God the results will be peace, good will among men, great joy, salvation, and redemption.

If you do not live for the glory of God, the results will be living for your own glory, living for politics, and pleasing men. The thoughts of your heart will be revealed. You will live and speak against God’s purposes.

The glory of God or politics?

- What about you?
- What about your church?
- Which will it be?
- Which will it be for you?
- What will you decide?
- How do you make your decisions?
- There is no middle ground.
- You must decide either for or against Jesus.

- It is your decision today.

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God” (I Corinthians 10:31 NKJV).

[Used by permission]

<https://biblicalbrethrenfellowship.wordpress.com/2014/12/19/glory-to-god-in-the-highest/>



Tomorrow

He was going to be all that a mortal should be—
Tomorrow.

No one should be kinder or braver than he—
Tomorrow.

A friend who was troubled and weary he knew,
Who'd be glad for a lift, and who needed it too:
On him he would call and see what he could do—
Tomorrow.

Each morning he stacked up the letters he'd write—
Tomorrow.

And thought of the folks he would fill with delight—
Tomorrow.

It was too bad, indeed, he was busy today,
And hadn't a minute to stop on his way;
More time he would have to give others, he'd say—
Tomorrow.

The greatest of workers this man would have been—
Tomorrow.

The world would have known him would he ever have seen—
Tomorrow.

But the fact is, he died, and he faded from view,
And all that he left, when living was through,
Was a mountain of things he intended to do—
Tomorrow.

Edgar A. Guest
Public Domain



marriages

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

Coblentz-Troyer

Bro. Marlin, son of Leroy and Marilyn Coblentz, Millersburg, OH, and Sis. Jolene, daughter of Joe and Naomi Troyer, Millersburg, OH, on October 23, 2021, at Legacy Christian School for Grace Haven Fellowship by David Yoder.

Heagy-Mast

Bro. Josiah, son of Lynwood and the late Mary Heagy, Sugarcreek, OH, and Sis. Janelle, daughter of Elsie (Mast) Schrock and the late Lowell Mast, Guys Mills, PA, on October 16, 2021, at Plainview Gospel Church by Roy Hershberger.

Yoder-Gingerich

Bro. Steven Yoder, Bourbon, IN, and Sis. Rachel Gingerich, Mountain View, AR, on October 8, 2021, at Norrick Chapel for Shady Lawn Mennonite Church by the bride's father, Elmer Gingerich.

Wagler-Miller

Bro. Douglas, son of Leon and the late Marietta Wagler, Fredonia, KY, and Sis. Anita, daughter of Dewayne and Edna Miller, Fredonia, KY, on September 3, 2021, at North Side Baptist Church for Fredonia Mennonite Church by Titus Troyer.



cradle roll

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

Esh, Julian and Cathy (Wengerd), Charlotte, TN, third child, second daughter, Alayna Hope, October 10, 2021.

Eicher, Willis and Stacy (Hochstedler), Altamont, KS, first child and daughter, Oklyn Rayne, October 20, 2021.

Gerber, Trevor and Kathryn (Schmidt), Millbank, ON, fifth child, second son, Jephthah Paul, September 18, 2021.

Mast, James and Glenda (Hochstetler), Wesley, AR, fifth child, third son, Rylan Joel, September 14, 2021.

Mast, Nate and Marylou (Jantzi), Monkton, ON, fourth child, second son, Cole Xavier, September 29, 2021.

Miller, Anthony and Teneika (Zook), Malta, OH, first child and daughter, Annika Ruth, October 11, 2021.

Miller, Shane and Kayla (Yoder), Arlington, KS, first child and son, Jordan Shane, September 7, 2021.

Miller, Henry and Sharon (Miller), Auburn, KY, sixth child, third daughter, Alayna Faith, September 28, 2021.

Overholt, Josiah and Hannah (King), Charlotte, TN, second child, first son, Caleb Jaxton, September 19, 2021.

Peachey, Michael and Regina (Miller), Centerville, PA, sixth child, third daughter, Aleah Ruth, October 9, 2021.

Swartzentruber, Joshua and Krista (Yoder), Accident, MD, fourth child, first daughter, Kanisha Brielle, October 7, 2021.


Swartzentruber, Tyler and Larissa (Overholt), Abbeville, SC, first child and daughter, Brooklyn Kate, September 22, 2021.

Yoder, Edwin and Elizabeth (Keim), Fresno, OH, fourth child, third daughter, Angelina Faith, August 31, 2021.

Yoder, James and Liz (Kauffman), Middleburg, PA, first child and son, Jaxton Edwin, May 11, 2021.

Yoder, John and Sharon (Hostetler), Oswego, KS, seventh child, fifth son (one deceased), Davonte Charles, October 19, 2021.

Yoder, Loren and Kendra (Wagler), Abbeville, SC, second child and son, Greyson Flynn, September 7, 2021.

Zook, Ethan and Melissa (Hostetler), Abbeville, SC, second child and daughter, Charlotte Ann, August 2, 2021. 



obituaries

Beachy, Mary, 97, of Dundee, OH, went home to be with the Lord September 26, 2020, surrounded by her family following a period of declining health. She was born in Greentown, OH, on March 27, 1923, to the late Andy and Mary Ann (Yoder) Coblenz. On November 11, 1948, she married William M. Beachy. He preceded her in death on March 16, 1986.

Mary was a homemaker and a faithful member of the Living Waters Fellowship Church in Barrs Mills, Ohio.

Surviving are three sons and five daughters: Sarah Beachy of the home, Ada (Raymond) Miller, Uniontown;

Joe (Joanna), Auburn, KY; Wayne (Betty), Hartville; Leona (Benny) Mast, Campbellsville, KY; Esther Beachy of the home; James (Jolene), Fredericksburg; Marie (late Paul) Williams, Cumberland, MD; nine granddaughters, 11 grandsons, two step-granddaughters, 49 great-grandchildren, three step-great-grandchildren, and a step-great-great-grandson.

She was preceded in death by her infant son, Andrew, son-in-law, Paul Williams, grandson, Daren Beachy, two infant grandchildren; eight siblings (and spouses): Sarah, John, Elizabeth, Ada,

Moses, Noah, Raymond, and Menno; parents-in-law, Menno and Sarah (Stutzman) Beachy, as well as her husband William's siblings and their spouses.

The funeral service was held September 30, 2020, at the Mennonite Christian Assembly, Fredericksburg, with James B. Mullet officiating. Burial followed in the Shalom Christian Fellowship Cemetery.

Hostetler, Anna M., 89, of Belleville, PA, passed away July 19, 2021, at her home. Born January 13, 1932, in Belleville, she was a daughter of the late Samuel C. and Arie E. (Byler) Yoder. On November 27, 1951, she married Sollie D. Hostetler who preceded her in death on November 21, 2017.

Anna was a member of Pleasant View Amish Mennonite Church. She was a homemaker and enjoyed spending time with her children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Her hobbies were embroidering, reading, working on puzzles, and doing word searches.

She is survived by her children: Raymond S. (Tura); David T. (Julia); Rhoda K. (David J.) Peachey; Ruth A. Spicher, all of Belleville; Mark S. (Mary Ellen), Rock Stream, NY; Martin L. (Karen), Vienna, GA; 38 grandchildren, 53 great-grandchildren, siblings: Beulah (John) Kauffman; David W. (Sara); Frances R. (Leon) Kanagy; Marlin A. 'Mo' (Karen) Yoder; Raymond W. (Nancy); John M. (Joyce); and a brother-in-law, Elam Hostetler.

She was preceded in death by four sisters: Mary L. Kurtz, Esther R. Peachey,

Elsie R. Yoder, Arlene J. Spicher; brother, Samuel L., son-in-law, Jesse Lee Spicher, and a granddaughter, Sara Hostetler.

The funeral service was held July 22, 2021, at Pleasant View Amish Mennonite Church with Arlan Kurtz, Loren Yoder, D.J. Peachey, and David J. Peachey officiating. Burial was at the Locust Grove Cemetery.

Troyer, Oliver E. "Ollie", 86, died October 6, 2021, at Hutchinson Regional Medical Center. He was born May 16, 1935, in Plain City, Ohio, to Eli N. and Barbara (Borntrager) Troyer.

Ollie loved his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and was a charter member of Center Amish Mennonite Church where he remained active throughout his life.

Ollie was a dairy farmer for 40 years. He enjoyed welding, working on anything electrical, and genealogy. He loved to visit with people, even strangers, and teasing his grandchildren.

On August 16, 1959, he married Emma Miller at Hutchinson, Kansas. They shared over 62 years of marriage.

Ollie is survived by his wife, Emma, six children: Joyce (Matt) Buckels, Vincennes, IN; Leland (Mary), Kennedyville, MD; Karen (Dwight) Miller, Partridge; Marjorie (Sam) Miller, Haven; Wesley (Stacey), Kennedyville, MD; and Darrell (Teresa), Washington, IN; nine siblings: Wilma (Dan) Gingerich, OH; Perry (Edna), OH; Mary (late John) Yoder, OH; Lester, MD; Vernon (Leona), OH; Gertrude Troyer, D.C.; Sue (Mervin) Lapp, MD; Fannie (James) Weaver, MO;

and Marvin (Wilma), OH; sister-in-law, Anna Troyer, OH; 22 grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his parents, son, Lavern Jay, brothers, Ervin and Joseph, brother-in-law, John Yoder, and sister-in-law, Esther Troyer.

The funeral service was held October 10, 2021, at Center Amish Mennonite Church with LaVerne Miller, Gary Miller, and Dwight Miller serving. Julian Nisly conducted the committal at the West Center Cemetery.

Yoder, Edwin J., 60, of Mifflinburg, PA, entered into rest April 8, 2021, at Geisinger Medical Center. He was born December 15, 1960, in Belleville, PA, a son of Louis and Naomi Yoder. On June 30, 1983, he married Lavina R. Zook who survives.

Edwin was a 1978 graduate of Belleville Mennonite School. He was employed for many years as a salesman in the dairy supplies industry and most recently at Earl's Bicycle Shop, Lewisburg.

Edwin was a member of the Shady Grove Mennonite Church. He enjoyed singing and was involved for many years in the Light of Hope Prison Ministries.

Surviving in addition to his parents and his wife of 37 years are his children: Jonathan (Emily), Mifflinburg; James (Elizabeth), Middleburg; Jason (Elaine), Mifflinburg; Judith (Scott) Rose, Hillsboro, TX; siblings: Vernon (Nancy), John (Twila), Leora (Mike) Yoder, all of Belleville, Fern Brooks, Stuarts Draft, VA; Twila (Clayton) Beachy, Bastrop, TX; and two grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by one brother, Philip Yoder.

The funeral service held was April 12, 2021, at Shady Grove Church. Serving were Simon Bender, Linnford Bender, and Loren Yoder. Simon Bender conducted the committal at the church cemetery.

Zook, Bertha M., 93, of Belleville, PA, went to be with Jesus September 19, 2021, at her home surrounded by her family. She was born July 22, 1928, in Belleville, PA, to the late Alvin M. and Annie M. (Peachey) Yoder. On November 24, 1949, she married Stephen W. Zook Jr., who passed away on May 31, 2017.

Bertha was a homemaker and a member of Valley View Amish Mennonite Church. She was very well known for her hickory nut cakes. She enjoyed doing puzzles and word searches, but most of all she enjoyed spending time with her family.

Surviving are her children: Alvin D. (Sharon), Hartville, OH; Linda R. Zook, Anna Mary (Norman) Hostetler, Joseph M. (Erma), Rose M. (Raymond) Kauffman, all of Belleville; and Esther (Norman) Troyer, Millersburg, OH; 25 grandchildren, 24 great-grandchildren, brother-in-law, Sylvanus Peachey, and a sister-in-law, Catherine M. Zook.

She was preceded in death by an infant sister and a daughter-in-law, Anna Mary Zook.

The funeral service was held September 23, 2021, at Valley View Church with Matt Peachey, Jalon Zook, and Jesse Zook officiating. Burial was at Locust Grove Cemetery.



Masters of Fate and Victims of Circumstance

Peter Kauffman, Burkesville, KY

You choose. Oh, it's a fine phrase—think of the possibility in it.

Research is fond of telling us we make tens of thousands of choices a day, but I remember only two for today. Are we beings that bushwhack our way through the forest of options each day, or do we arrive at every opportunity with a predisposed notion that is the product of a larger choice? After all, you had the option of drinking your coffee with cream this morning, but you didn't because you never have before. Is that a choice or an option with a predetermined answer?

If I come to a crossroad and know that the North Road takes me where I want to go, are the other three options that I *could* take really choices? Or is the destination my choice, and all the turns only a product of the goal?

But let's not oversimplify the plethora of options that beset us. Have you tried to choose a paint color for your house recently? It's not that you don't know what you want; it's just that all those options are dither-inducing, and after all our thinking the decision is likely to

be tinged with regret. The trouble is not the choice but the exponential possibilities. Still, we came to the paint samples, and we wanted the color gray, but it's difficult to find the "one."

Recently, I heard again the urban legend of the two gunmen who walked into a church service and ordered, "Everyone willing to take a bullet for Jesus, stay. The rest may leave." Everyone left except six people at which point the gunmen said to the preacher, "Now that you got rid of the hypocrites, you may go on preaching."

As I sat listening to this apocryphal tale, I felt smugly confident I would have retained my equanimity and taken the bullet. However, I became aware of how the question was asked; the gunmen were not asking the parishioners to recant, only to take a bullet for Jesus. Sure, hypothetical questions deserve hypothetical answers, but likely I would have joined the rest jamming the exit while we all muttered plausible, moralistic excuses like "I can't just leave the children without their parent." Or, "I can't just leave my business

without training a replacement.” Or something as simple and practical as “the Lord gave us the good sense to get in out of the rain.”

In the short story *A Scandal in Bohemia* by Arthur Conan Doyle, the protagonist Sherlock Holmes is attempting to save the king of Bohemia from blackmail by finding an indiscreet letter he had mailed in his youth. In the usual ingenious way, Sherlock wangles his way into the house where the document is hidden, then has his colleague Dr. Watson throw in a plumber’s smoke rocket and raise the cry of fire. In a transport of fear, Irene Adler, the lady with the intentions of blackmail, reveals the hiding place by sliding back a secret compartment.

The point is made. During an emergency, humans save first the most important thing in their lives. It is admitted that in emergencies we become slaves of our impulses and subconscious forces. We will risk our lives only for a cause we love more than ourselves. The only way anyone would have remained in

the pew was if we loved Jesus more than anything else and jumped at the opportunity to die for Him and not merely the disgrace of denying him. Likely those six who remained would all be chanting, “*Me first.*”

In essence, our choices are results of our loves. Loves are the destination; they demarcate boundaries and lend impetus for decision, they are the North Star to the fugitive slave, the catalyst that activates the potential in the many possibilities. Our **choice** makes our choices. If we love something with our whole heart, it will be etched into the subconscious. If we love our neighbor more than ourselves we can lay down our lives in a house fire.

We call ourselves “master of fate” or “victim of circumstance,” depending on what we want. I suggest we are a little of both, and they are brothers. Even as “victims of circumstance,” we can be “masters of fate.” As “masters of fate” we become the victims to our own circumstances. If the indifferent world lends us a crippling blow, we still have control of how we finish.



Don't be so wrapped
up in *God's gifts*

that you forget the **Giver.**

Blessed are the Pure in Heart

Earl Koch, New Hamburg, Ontario

The heart is the center of our being, the control for our will, feelings, attitudes, and motives. Out of the heart are the issues of life. A pure heart is one that has unmixed motives, is free from contamination, and is clean. It is operating with a clean conscience. David's prayer "*Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me*" is a good one for every Christian.

The heart of the natural man is impure, unclean, full of lustful thoughts, covetous, deceitful, and desperately wicked. It needs to be cleansed of its wickedness. It needs renewing by the Holy Spirit.

Everyone knows what pure substances are: pure honey, pure maple syrup, pure orange juice—no additives or contamination. What do impure motives look like? Doing good deeds with the hope that they will be done for you. Attending

church to keep good standing in the community rather than worship or learning holiness. Studying the Scriptures so you can feel superior. Giving to charities to get a tax reduction. Being of good behavior in public, but harsh at home, or privately indulging in impure things, practicing secret sins, and lustful thoughts, contaminating what God really intends for us.

Blessed are the pure in heart who are dedicated to God, and seek to please God above all else. They shall see God. They will observe Him working in their lives and circumstances. They will be expectantly awaiting His coming in glory and power. And when He appears [they] shall be like Him, for [they] shall see Him as He is.

And every man that hath this hope in him, purifies himself, even as He is pure.

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A **smile** is the whisper
of a **laugh**.



Tolerance Within the Brotherhood

Phares Fisher, Meyerstown, PA

What goes through your mind when you think of the word “tolerance?”

(This title was not original with me; I was asked to preach it at another congregation.) I thought it means to put up with something less than ideal. Like you might have an old car or an old piece of machinery that has some problems. It’s too old to really fix up, but it has some useful life left. So you tolerate it; you put up with it. Is this how it is in the church—we just put up with each other?

I consulted the dictionary, and I discovered that I was both right and wrong. The dictionary defines tolerance as to “bear or put up with someone or something not especially liked.” But that’s not all; it also said, “being tolerant, especially of views, beliefs, practices, etc. of others that differ from our own.”

Let’s see what the Bible says about tolerance; but first let’s see what it says about unity. “Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (Philippians 2:2). “...that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27b).

In light of these verses, and of others promoting unity, can we afford to be tolerant of others’ beliefs and practices that differ from our own? Sure, we’re tolerant toward other church groups whose beliefs and practices differ from our own, but that’s not our subject. Today we’re talking about tolerance *within* the brotherhood.

Romans also has things to say about unity. “*Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Jesus Christ: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Romans 15:5-6). Can we be tolerant and remain scriptural?

Let’s see what else Romans has to say. Read Romans 14:1-6. Can we be tolerant toward beliefs and practices that differ from our own? ABSOLUTELY. In fact, I will make that stronger; we cannot be intolerant and remain scriptural. According to Romans 14, there is obviously room for some difference. How then do we correlate these two seemingly contradictory Bible principles: unity and tolerance?

There are no contradictory

principles in the Bible. If they seem to be so, we need to see them as complementary. Biblical unity and biblical tolerance are not opposites, or contradictory; they are compatible, and complementary. In fact, intolerance produces disunity. Our unity depends upon a certain amount of tolerance. Both are vital ingredients for harmonious brotherhood relationships. There is the danger of promoting either at the expense of the other. It is possible to promote unity until we have no tolerance left, and it is possible to be so tolerant we have no more unity. It requires a balance.

Why do we need tolerance? Simply because sometimes we have different opinions, and yes, we do need tolerance toward each other's flat spots, but that is not our subject.

In Mennonite church history, disagreements arose causing strife on things such as whether or not to have Sunday School, revival meetings, automobiles, pulpits, and on and on. In our own settings there are constantly issues arising that have potential for disagreements. How do we relate to new issues, such as computers and internet, or differing opinions on keeping the Lord's day, nonconformity, music, eschatology, herbs, vitamins, alternate health practices, etc.?

The setting in Romans 14 includes both Jewish and Gentile Christians. Verse 2 mentions eating herbs, and later it talks about eating meats; verse 5 talks about keeping days. The Jews refrained from eating certain meats, the days are probably talking about Old Testament feasts, and the converted Gentiles had no regard for either. So the situation was somewhat ripe for contention.

Are there any parallels to our own present church settings? Most of our churches are made up of various backgrounds. At one time I counted thirteen different church backgrounds in our own congregation. I included different Mennonite groups as well as those who weren't Mennonite. We are a product of our upbringing and backgrounds. Our opinions will vary, having been molded by our upbringing.

In Romans 14 we find good practical lessons for us in light of our varied backgrounds. This can be especially true in a new congregation when people move in from various backgrounds.

God has richly blessed us in this area; not that we have no room to grow, but we are thankful that we have learned to blend our convictions to a general unity in practice, and we have a healthy tolerance toward each

other's differences.

Six principles help us to be tolerant

1. Love. *"...Love thy neighbor as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbor: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law"* (Romans 13:9a-10). Brotherhood implies love, but tolerance within the brotherhood will be reality only when there is love. Love will consider a brother's opinion. Love will consider a brother's feelings. Love will refrain from "eating meat" if it isn't appreciated by the brotherhood.

2. Patience and forbearance. Do not despise or look down on those whose practices differ from yours. Verse 3 is important; *"for God has received him."* There is room for differences. Recognize and accept the fact that not everyone will do everything like you do. We must accept the fact that they have that right. We have no right to judge our equal (verses 4, 10). We will all need to answer to God (verses 12-13).

How can we have patience and tolerance toward each other? Recognize there are some things neither right nor wrong in themselves. We call these non-moral or amoral issues. One brother, promoting the beard, said there's no such thing as a non-moral issue, everything is either right or wrong (he later apologized).

Not according to Romans 14. We become intolerant when we attempt to categorize everything as either right or wrong.

When I was teaching the book of Romans at Bible school, I shared the conversation about the beard. One brother was emphatic—we should not allow beards. "Beards destroy unity. If a brother has the conviction for a beard, let him go to a church that allows the beard." Another brother, equally emphatic, said, "I think we should allow the beard. It should be personal choice." I told them they both very beautifully illustrated my point. There will be differences of opinion, and we had better be tolerant and charitable.

Why didn't Paul say, "Get your heads together and decide which day to keep, so you can all be alike?" (verse 5). He recognized there is room for some differences. Another definition for tolerance is *"to recognize and respect others' beliefs, practices, etc. without sharing them."* I like that. We cannot possibly share everyone's beliefs and practices, yet we can still respect them.

3. Principle of personal conviction (verse 5b). While there will be some differences, I had better know what I believe for myself and where I stand, so I am not tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine. Verse 5 says,

“Let every man,” not group, *“be fully persuaded in his own mind.”*

I am thankful to be part of a church that allows for some breathing room in our convictions or choices. What guidelines should we employ in expressing personal convictions and personal choices? My question implies we need to exercise some restraint. In our tolerance, we cannot have an “anything goes” mentality.

We must not violate scriptural principle or discipline. As I mentioned, some things are neither right nor wrong in themselves. However, if your church takes a position on an issue then it becomes a moral issue. The beard is one example.

Our personal convictions must not be disruptive. Do not be a misfit or individualistic. We should not promote our own personal opinion if it is different from group practice. There may be those more conservative than the mainstream, and I have no problem with that providing they don't make an issue over it. On the other hand, when they begin to promote their personal agenda, they can make a nuisance out of themselves; they can develop and display a holier-than-thou attitude and hold the brotherhood at arm's length because they think the rest of the church is just too

liberal. They may be guilty of sowing discord among the brotherhood. While they do it in the name of promoting conservatism, it can actually be counterproductive. I want to be understood: I have no problem with someone wanting to be more conservative than most, but I do have a problem with the intolerance that sometimes goes along with that.

4. Principle of considering our brother's opinion (verse 15). As I mentioned earlier, this subject requires a delicate balance. We are promoting tolerance toward others, but let us not presume upon the tolerance of others toward us if we knowingly do things that the brotherhood will not appreciate (verse 19). This can get a little touchy because we cannot please everybody; we cannot always jump or respond to every opinion of every brother.

But Paul teaches that it is commendable to refrain from a practice that disturbs others. Now we may say, “if the brotherhood would exercise more tolerance, then I could do thus and thus.” That is not a right attitude.

We do need each other. We need the brotherhood to help us discern and decide what is acceptable practice. And if others are not as tolerant with us as we think they should be, then it is our turn to exercise tolerance

toward their intolerance.

I confess that after studying for this subject, I became aware that I was becoming increasingly intolerant of people with no tolerance. In other words, I have become critical of people who are critical. But that's not the right attitude. We need to be tolerant toward those who lack tolerance.

5. Principle of acceptance (Romans 15:7, 14:3b). Acceptance and tolerance are synonymous. "*Receive ye one another*" was a command given to Jewish and Gentile Christians. Why didn't the Jews have their church and the Gentiles theirs? Wouldn't that have been better? Each could have done their own thing and avoided conflict. Instead, I like to think they could help each other be balanced. What doctrinal issue did the Jewish Christians struggle with? Keeping the law. Judaizers could have become lopsided because they could have promoted keeping the law to be saved. But there could have been a danger—losing sight of our real source of salvation.

Closer home we have our different backgrounds. Are they helpful or a hindrance? I think our backgrounds contribute to the quality of our church life. I was never part of a conference. Those who were warn us about the things that contributed to

the conference going wrong, things that I would be slow to see as a problem. On the other hand, my Old Order Amish background was strong on formalism and traditionalism. There is nothing wrong with form and tradition in its place, but I left my former setting because of unbalanced emphasis on external form and tradition. I'm a little sensitive when I see signs of those same tendencies in our circles. Sometimes that tries my tolerance. The point is, we need each other to keep us balanced.

As we blend our convictions and lessons learned from former settings, varied backgrounds can be an asset.

I mentioned weaknesses of my former setting. The other side of that is the Amish have some strong points we do well to emulate. One example is the way they care for their elderly. In Mennonite circles frequently if parents are unable to care for themselves, the family's response is, "We just can't take care of Father or Mother anymore," and off they go to a nursing home. Somehow, the Amish usually manage to care for their own despite the lack of conveniences. My own mother was bedfast for two years, and my sisters were there for her 24 / 7.

While our varied backgrounds have the potential for causing conflict, they can add to our strength if we

have tolerance. We can learn from both the strengths and weaknesses of our former settings.

I like to look at differences as being positive instead of negative.

Quote: *“Differences were meant by God not to divide but to enrich. When we allow differences to enrich us, we open ourselves to the wealth of diversity. Allow people to do things their way and see what you can learn from it.”*

Having said what I did about the value of differences, we would be unbalanced if we would not warn of the danger of extremes.

Years ago we moved to a new community and met our neighbors, two families who were extreme opposites in dress. We were surprised to discover they went to the same church. They had tolerance—a lot of it—but at the expense of unity.

I appreciate our unity (although we have a degree of diversity). We have a general unity in belief and practice, so that if we meet someone we don't know, we can usually tell if they're part of an Eastern [Pennsylvania Mennonite] church.

Our varied backgrounds can be a source of strength, suggesting they also help us to be tolerant. When my wife and I decided to join the Eastern church we did so being fully aware that there were a few things not the

way we were used to doing things and not according to our preferences. But we decided up front that we would be tolerant, coming with a mindset that we would accept them. We were not going on a campaign to change the church. We had learned to be tolerant.

Some years ago we attended a wedding in a more liberal setting with a few things happening we would consider inappropriate. On the way home one of our children remarked, “Now I understand why our ministers hold such a tight line on wedding practices.” They observed what can happen if you don't.

6. Principle of not being judgmental (14:10). This is closely related to the principle of acceptance. A critical judgmental spirit is an enemy of tolerance. Here are some things to remember that will help us avoid a critical spirit.

We all need to answer to God. One thief on the cross mocked Jesus. The other thief said, *“Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?”*

Jesus talked about attempting to remove a mote from our brother's eye while there's a beam in our own eye. We have a natural tendency to be more critical of others than ourselves and of people who do things we wouldn't do.

A brother once told me he used to have a secret longing, a deep interest in big league ball games. He was keenly interested in who was playing whom—who was winning or losing. On a certain day there was a game he badly wanted to watch, so he planned a shopping trip for that day. He knew sometimes the ballgame was playing on television at the department store. He thought he would take a peek and see what's going on. As he made his way toward the appliances he saw something that shocked him and stopped him in his tracks. A brother from his church was standing there watching television. He thought, "How can he do this? The hypocrite! In public! Watching television!" Then he caught himself, "Oh, he's only doing what I myself had intended to do."

We often give ourselves more room than we give others.

When I'm tempted to be judgmental, it helps me to remember there are things I do that others wouldn't do. This helps me to be gracious with others.

Here is another definition for tolerance: "*The amount of variation allowed from a standard or from accuracy.*" I am not a carpenter or a framer. I understand a 2x4 or 2x6 wall with 16" centers can still be acceptable if it is one-fourth inch off.

How about a finish carpenter with ¼ inch gap in the trim?

In church life and brotherhood, how much tolerance or variation can we have and still be acceptable? It depends. We don't have much tolerance for obvious violation of Scripture or willful violation of church discipline, although I am not equating the two. Still, our discipline is an agreed-upon practice, and if we start allowing too much tolerance we may lose our unity.

On the other hand, we have more tolerance toward those things the church has not spoken on. There are many areas where we tolerate different expressions of personal convictions, although these are not always a matter of conviction but of preference. For sake of illustration I will mention the covering strings. This is a non-moral issue. In our church it's acceptable to wear strings or not. We generally associate covering strings with conservatism, and there are some reasons for that. However, since we allow both, it is not always fair to categorize sisters as liberal or conservative on the basis of whether or not they wear covering strings.

I want you to make that same application to other areas where it fits.

We can have both unity and

tolerance at the same time, and they are compatible. How can that be? That is possible if we remember the real basis for our unity.

What is the basis for unity? It is not our external practices (15:5), but our oneness in Christ—the fact that we have been redeemed by His blood. That is not to say that our practice has nothing to do with our unity, for it is an integral part of unity, but it is not the *basis* for unity.

If our unity is no deeper than our external, visible practice (meat and drink, 14:17) we have missed the mark. If we remember that Jesus is the basis for unity, it helps us be tolerant. We will not let differences in externals destroy our unity.

Having promoted tolerance, I am keenly aware that this can be taken too far, and I may have been misunderstood, especially if you pick up only certain things I have said. We need to be balanced.

One more illustration to help us be unified despite some diversity; you know the saying, “we want to make sure we’re on the same page.” We communicate and make sure we’re thinking together, in the same things related to our plans, to avoid misunderstandings.

I never knew what it meant to be on the same page, except to make sure we’re together, until someone

said to me, “Just wanted to make sure we’re singing from the same page.” That illustrates beautiful applications in church life. Our singing can be beautiful, harmonious, and we understand the message. Suppose after the song is announced one person would decide, “I don’t like that song, I will sing a different song.” That would be a bit disruptive.

Worse yet, suppose he would’ve told his neighbors, “I don’t like that song, let’s sing this song,” and if the word spread down the line among the whole bench or more, that would have destroyed the harmony, beauty, and the message of the song, and no one would enjoy singing.

Now we wouldn’t think of doing that—of course not. Is that ever done in church life? It is not as disruptive if one person decides to be a misfit or sing a different song. While that is bad enough, it is a whole lot worse if he influences others to not fit in. The church loses her unity, beauty, harmony, and her message. Moreover, nobody enjoys that kind of church life, not even those who successfully influence others to sing with them from a different page.


To have unity and God’s blessings and an enjoyable, satisfying church life, we must be singing the same song.

Today our singing was not in

unison; we have four-part singing, and the song leader did not tell us what part to sing. He left that up to us. Everyone has the liberty to sing the part he or she feels most comfortable with. Singing the different parts, rather than in unison, adds to the beauty.

I like to think of church life as our singing. Diversity adds to the beauty

of the brotherhood as long as it's in harmony with the rest of the church, just as four-part music adds to the beauty of singing as long as everyone is singing the same song on the same key.

[This sermon was preached at Maranatha Fellowship, Bangor, CA, on August 29, 2021. Submitted by Paul Sommers. Used by permission.] 

mission awareness

Crisis in Haiti

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

This is the 15th day that our 17 friends (missionaries under Christian Aid Ministries) are held hostage in Haiti. I would estimate that thousands of people are praying across the world for the protection and release of these captives. We can only imagine the torture that these people are enduring during these tough times! Could it be that God is interested in spreading the beautiful gospel of Jesus Christ across the world through these unpleasant circumstances?

Trials and difficulties should not surprise us as Christians in the western world. We have been largely spared physical harm and atrocities in relation to the Christian faith. But not always. Many of us keenly

remember the kidnapping of Eli Glick and several native girls in El Salvador (1993) after conducting a preaching service in a mountainous area. Oh, what a horrible night that was for Brother Eli being held at a ransom, tied in a stone, tomb-like enclosure under the dark sky. Ants found their way over Eli's weary body as he lay there. He asked for water, but the captors told him to "shut-up." Eli answered numerous times, "God bless you." But worse was to hear the sorrowful cries of the girls being abused late into the night. Finally, the following day, Eli was released from his miserable position as a good man. He got a sense of his whereabouts and walked home. He entered the church house which was located on their

property. People were on their knees praying and here comes Eli. Brother Eli had the privilege of visiting several of the men in prison, who had captured and tormented him that memorable night, and gave them food. (Read the entire story, *Deliver the Ransom Alone*, by Verda Glick).

Captivating books, *Angels Over Waslala* and others, were written during tense, troubling times when intruders and robbers entered the Pablo Yoder and Tim Schrock properties and homes. These fearful experiences took place after a bloody civil war. But souls were saved and churches were planted.

Many of us remember the spot where we were when the shocking message came that memorable day in October 2005, when five girls at the Nickel Mines Amish school were shot and died. The shooter also shot himself and died. Later that day forgiveness was expressed to the people related to the killer by the families of those who lost their loved ones. They backed up their words by attending the funeral of the murderer and giving gifts to his family. This heavenly message of forgiveness spread across the globe and caused many people to sit up and take notice. Who are these people who can honestly express such a heart conviction of forgiveness and

canceling the debt?

In Haiti and in other parts of the world, the method of demanding a ransom to release captives is not uncommon. The methods of persecution vary from country to another, but we have one violent, brutal enemy, who is out to steal, to kill, and to destroy. But praise God! Jesus said, *"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly"* (John 10:10). The devil is out to hinder and stop the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But could it be that some of this notorious group in Haiti might be in Heaven someday, washed in the Blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ, because of these faithful witnesses and our prayers?

We might question the feasibility of setting foot on Haitian soil to be involved in humanitarian aid and in preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ. Especially after thousands (and likely millions) of dollars have been poured into this third-world country during the last decades. It seems little changes. In fact, some say conditions are worsening. I counted 18 conservative Anabaptist mission organizations conducting some kind of ministry in this poor country. There are also numerous Protestant missions operating in Haiti. I would say there is hope for Haiti.

Some changes are clearly evident and real! In the mid-1990s a mission outreach station was established in a community called La Source in northern Haiti under Christian Aid Ministries. My wife's parents, Mervin and Mae Miller, served there three years. We visited them and helped dig the footer for a clinic building. Twenty-five years later this clinic is still thriving, widely known and greatly appreciated. In the 1990s there were very few trees in the area of LaSource. It was a barren and arid land. The mountains were practically bare. There was very little rain. We visited a community church on a Sunday. To say the least, it seemed lame and weak.

Several months ago Marilyn and I had the privilege of visiting LaSource again. What a change! Trees were found everywhere. Huge trees! The mountains were covered with trees. Soon after we arrived, a thunder storm rumbled through the community and there was a lovely, refreshing shower. More than all this was the surprise on Sunday morning when we worshiped at the Mennonite Church. Close to 100 people attended, including many children. People who had been steeped in the sinful, cultural practices of voodooism were cleansed and washed in the Blood of Jesus Christ. They were followers of

Jesus and embraced His teachings. You could hear it in their singing and feel the pulse of their hearts by the preaching of the Word and fellowship. (This Christian fellowship was started and supported by the Salem Amish Mennonite Church in Ohio.) Today there are two churches in the area, and they are conducting Christian schools.

Here is an excellent excerpt from Christian Aid Ministries' home office: *"This time of difficulty reminds us of the ongoing suffering of millions of Haitians. While our workers chose to serve in Haiti, our Haitian friends endure crisis after crisis, continual violence, and economic hardship. Despite the difficulties and dangers involved in working there, both our Haitian and American workers carry a vision to minister the love of Jesus in Haiti. Our goal is to seize opportunities around the world, even in difficult contexts, to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, who 'went about doing good'"* (Acts 10:38).

Let our hearts and lips echo what David prayed when he was in the cave fleeing from Saul: *"Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth"* (Psalm 57:5, 11). Yes, there is hope for Haiti.



Broken Places

Lucinda Hershberger, Georgetown, OH



Another pain sears through me. One of a thousand, or so it seems. This convulsion feels stronger, mightier. I struggle to keep the end goal in sight. The strength of it wraps my body in a squeeze so tight I can scarcely breathe. I become aware of a departure and an arrival. Our son is birthed. The little life that once fluttered within a safe and quiet interior, now wails, arms flailing. I clutch him to myself. The birth breaks me, but I weep with joy at his new life.

Where are your broken places?

A sister carried numerous lives in her womb, yet her arms never cradled a slippery newborn. Her heart breaks with desire. Her arms are empty and open.

Another mourns the loss of relationship. Of hurts dispensed so quickly and candidly. She wonders if the shreds of her heart will ever trust again.

COVID-19 grabs a life in a small mission community. We wonder why? She was desperately needed in caring for the children of Washington, D.C. A dad is snatched in a horrific

trucking accident. Did God see that his wife and young family needed him? A young son, in the prime of his life, is taken without warning. Our hearts ache for the ones left in the wake of grief.

I observe a covenant broken and vows tossed aside. Lust leaves a trail of shrapnel. This sister's heart lies cracked, open, and bleeding.

Another sister longs for a spark to lighten the palpable darkness. This blackness makes her despair of life. Suicide? No! No! No! Chaotic thought patterns race inside her. Should a Christian even struggle with depression? Her throat tightens. Does anyone know how it feels? Her brain muddles through the options of vitamins, counseling, or anti-depressants. She feels alone and so exhausted.

The bonds between child and mother are threatened when she grapples with the choices her child makes. She feels guilt, wondering where she missed it. The gulf widens over the years. She struggles to trust. She wonders if God sees and hears.

Broken places? I think of Mary.

An angel statement? Now pregnant; how can it be? Mocked and scorned. Alone and in a sheep shed. Her body breaks. And she brings forth Life.

We wait and wait, and still we wait. The broken places around us threaten to choke us. Will the broken places bleed our lives away? These sisters and I, we wait some more. We join voices and sing, "Come, Thou long expected Jesus, born to set His people free."

Another hymn says it this way, "God is His own interpreter." Could it be that in eternity, the broken will become beautifully whole? Ah then, our fragments will be consummated by the Joy of every longing heart!

Come, Thou long expected Jesus,
Born to set Thy people free;
From our fears and sins release us,
Let us find our rest in Thee.

Israel's strength and consolation,
Hope of all the earth Thou art;
Dear Desire of every nation,
Joy of every longing heart.

Born Thy people to deliver,
Born a child and yet a King,
Born to reign in us forever,
Now Thy gracious kingdom bring.

By Thine own eternal Spirit
Rule in all our hearts alone;
By Thine all sufficient merit,
Raise us to Thy glorious throne.

Charles Wesley, Public Domain



junior messages

A Lesson in Gratefulness

Mason Jackson, Nicaragua

[This short account depicts a piece of life in a foreign land. Mason realized he had huge opportunities. A Christian family, parents who loved him, a comfortable house, plenty of food, and the privilege to attend a good school are blessings many people in the world do not have. The Benji and Karin Jackson family live and work in Nicaragua under CAM. They

leave us an example of reaching out to neighbor boys.]

Mason Jackson writes:

Ileaned against the fence, basking in the warm tropical sunshine and pondering on the difference between my side of the fence and the village on the other. The houses on the other side of the fence were small and poorly made. However,

it seemed the people who occupied them were happy and lighthearted even though they didn't have all the opportunities I had.

"Sure, you may come over," I said in mangled Spanish. Before me stood six Nicaraguan boys who were around my age. We had invited them over for a game of soccer a year before, and now they asked to come play at our house almost every Sunday. Usually, they would come over around 4:00 and stay until dark.

This Sunday, my brother Carter and I decided to teach them a new game. We had recently bought a shuffleboard game and had painted a shuffleboard court on the concrete by the kitchen. I figured that since it was a rainy day it would be a good time to teach them how to play.

When they arrived at 4:00, we went straight to the spacious concrete pad where the shuffleboard court was located. I didn't expect to have much trouble teaching them how to play. I was badly mistaken.

First, I played a game with my dad to show them the basics of the game. Then I carefully explained the rules, and we started to play. Vismar, the oldest of the group, a mop-headed boy of 16, caught on quickly. The others, however, could not understand how canceling out or negative numbers work.

After playing for several hours, most of them had acquired some skills, but Vismar was still the only one who understood how to keep score. Then it dawned on me. The reason that most of the boys could not figure out how to keep score was not because they weren't smart, but because they didn't have the opportunity to go to a good school like I did.

It was a powerful reminder to me of all the blessings I have that I so often take for granted.

[Here is a poem also written by Mason.]

Who But God?

Who but God could make pure light,
That driveth out the dreary night,
Clear cold water that doth give
What all creatures need to live?

Seeds when placed beneath the sod,
Given rain and light by God,
Sprout and grow, their fruits provide
Food for man to live, abide?

Who but God could give to man
An inbuilt conscience that well can
Detect the awful sin and wrong
That within us tries to throng?

A soul that never will de cease
But shall forever live in peace,
If its owner, while here on Earth
Doth experience a new birth?



Bread Upon the Waters (Part 2)

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

As we look at the second part of this interview, keep in mind that this interview was done before the Haitian missionary hostage crisis. As of writing this, the missionaries have been held hostage for two weeks and we don't yet know what will happen. It isn't always safe to spread the Gospel, as the brother referred to here in his answers. Do we look at serving in missions and dangerous countries differently because we may come to bodily harm? I know some of these brothers and sisters personally, and we have spent much time praying and weeping for their situation. By the time this is printed, Lord willing, there will be a conclusion to the situation that we can have peace about. If not, does that change our willingness to serve? The people of God have faced persecution before, and we will again. Are we asking God, "Why us?" Or are we asking, "Why not us?" Keep your hearts open to God's leading in your life, don't let fear control you. 1 John 4:4 "Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater

is he that is in you, than he that is in the world." JK

9. How do you reconcile respecting government authorities and civil laws with spreading God's Word?

Romans 13 teaches us clearly that respect and obedience to higher powers are part of obedience to God. This passage does not specify which higher powers are spoken of or how much they may demand of us. We find no disqualifier of respect for a higher power such as an evil dictator, Marxist leader, or atheist communist government. We do not believe that there is ever an occasion for disrespect to authority, even if they try to insult or intimidate us. We strongly encourage our courier teams to be as respectful as possible, using interrogation as an opportunity to give a testimony and share simple truth with the officer they face.

Obedience is also imperative where men's laws, no matter how unreasonable, do not cross God's laws. We have many biblical examples of

places where men's laws contradicted God's laws. In Acts 4, Peter and John were threatened and commanded "not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus." They responded respectfully to these authorities then entreated God to give them boldness in continuing to speak His Word. In the following chapter they were again arrested and threatened for preaching in Christ's name. Peter and the other apostles answered, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Putting copies of God's Word into the hands of those who hunger for it is an essential part of teaching all nations to observe all things. A teacher may come and go, but unless the hearers have God's Word in their hands, how can they continue to be fed and follow the example of the Bereans who "searched the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so" (Acts 17:11)?

10. At what point does Org. X consider it too dangerous to continue smuggling into an area?

The answer has far more to do with the level of risk for our friends in a target country than it does with the risks we take. If a contact is requesting material and feels it is safe to meet us in person, we will usually attempt to go there even if they are in an area of great surveillance and restriction.

We depend very much on what our contacts say.

The border-crossing work is now indefinitely on hold. We brought this part of the work to a halt in the winter of 2019, before any of these other travel restrictions and quarantines. We had three main reasons:

1. Because of "bad weather" in their areas, many of our friends were hesitant to meet us in person. If there's any hesitancy, we hold off until they request us to come again. Contact with foreigners can go down as a black mark against them, particularly if they are already known to be believers.

2. A lot of time and funds were being spent for only a small trickle of material to enter the country. In addition we had multiple team members black-listed from re-entering China.

3. Other methods of shipping material, once it was across the border, were also becoming more limited and involving greater and greater risk both for those shipping boxes and those receiving them.

11. Can you briefly describe an experience you've had with Org. X that you'll never forget?

At 4:20 a.m. three brothers and a pastor slipped out of his apartment, down the concrete stairs, and onto a quiet street. We soon entered a tiny

back room to find a little group of believers kneeling there. They came, several days a week, in the early morning hours, to kneel and intercede for their country and their brothers and sisters under test.

“What can we pray for you?” they asked. Only a few days before, the youngest brother of one of my close friends had drowned. This was heavy on my heart. Though communication with these people was limited, I was able to tell them enough that they understood. Concern and sorrow registered on their faces. Again they cried out to God, this time for a family they’d never met, yet cared about and loved with the love of Christ.

Time spent with the people, as they share their burdens and open their hearts, is the kind of experience that has been the most meaningful, challenging, and life-changing for me.

12. What advice would you have for someone who is interested in being involved in the work at Org. X?

As mentioned above, the courier work is on hold for an indefinite time. This has been our main area of opportunity for short-term workers. If you are interested in longer-term service among a given people, start studying the language!

If God opens the door again for us

to deliver written copies of His Word across the border, I share this advice to those who come: this work is not about scheming, conniving, outwitting officials, or sneaking through borders. Rather, it’s about trusting, resting, praying, and learning to lean harder on God’s promises. Come praying and surrendered, yes, with goals and hopes of success, but remembering that this is the Lord’s work, not our own.

Finally, remember that the meaning of “mission field” has little to do with sailing across an ocean, flying across a border, or relocating to a place where another language is spoken. The true meaning of “mission” is an assignment, a charge, or a focus. “Mission” is a purpose for living.

In Matthew 13:38 Jesus said, “The field is the world...” As you read this, you are in the field. Are you living with a mission right now in your part of the field? Perhaps God is calling you to another part of the field. God bless you in that! As you go or come, come with an open heart, ready to give, but also open to receive and learn far more than you ever expected from those you come to minister among!

[Author’s note: If you are interested in finding out more about Organization X or signing up for their newsletter, please contact me, and I will get you in contact with the correct people.]



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To stand right with Christ one must learn to walk with Christ.

• • • • •

Poverty is often a state of mind induced by a neighbor's new car.

• • • • •

A cheerful loser is always a winner.

• • • • •

To lift others, you must be on higher ground yourself.

• • • • •

A great oak is only a little nut that held its ground.

• • • • •

At Christmas consider not so much the gift of a friend
but the friendship of the giver.

• • • • •

Your greatest Christmas cheer comes when you dispense cheer.

• • • • •

A smile will go a long way, but you will have to start it on its journey.

• • • • •

If you share another's burden, both of you will walk straighter.

• • • • •

Peace on earth and goodwill to all men begins within your own heart.

• • • • •

You will never truly enjoy Christmas until you look into the face of the
Father and tell Him you have received His Christmas Gift.