



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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2005

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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 Saviour;
 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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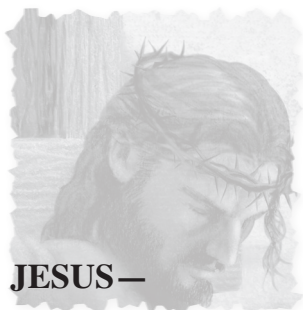
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Risk

Anne Yoder

El Resbaladero, El Salvador

JESUS—

When You stepped out
to bridge the gap
between man's wretchedness
and Your abundant provision...
Did You know what was at stake?

GOD—

You lavished mercy on humanity,
and suffered excruciating agony
As You watched Your Son being
betrayed mocked, crucified
Abandoned by Your own Self.
Did You think it would be this
hard?

FATHER AND SON—

As You look across the world,
full of injustice, hatred, evil,
people who reject Your love,
slapping You in the face, as it were,
while innocent victims suffer
and die
because of the actions of wicked
men...
Is it worth the pain?

You've given men the ability
to choose,

To accept Your love or run
away from it.

How Your heart must ache
to see so many turn away!

Yet, You keep pursuing the
souls of men,

loving, calling them, inviting them
to find rest and sweet communion
In Your abiding presence.

Yes, in Your all-knowing wisdom,
You knew redemption bore an
exorbitant price tag.

You knew it was worth the pain,
the tears, the heartache...

You took the risks.

Your choices have made all
the difference.



Watch Out!

Wild animals can really surprise you! You are driving along and suddenly, a deer appears and tries to cross the road in front of your rapidly moving vehicle! In this part of the country, one Whitetail is often followed by a second one. The surprises deer spring on motorists cause much carnage for deer and great expense for drivers and insurance companies. Riders in a small vehicle may get hurt.

This morning at dawn (1-11-05) I was driving down a gravel road with patchy ice. Suddenly a deer appeared and ran across the road in front of me. It was quickly followed by another—THEN ANOTHER, each one rushing more than the one ahead of it. Because of the ice, these otherwise nimble creatures had trouble getting good traction on the road. For the same reason, I couldn't brake well and almost hit the third one. Had there been a fourth deer, it could not possibly have made it across.

It scared me—and “No. 3” looked mighty wide-eyed, too. It was all over very quickly. *Whew! That was close! I gasped, But, I guess all's well that ends well.* In single file, all three

deer bounded easily over a barbed wire fence and quickly disappeared. I sat up a little straighter and continued on my way.

The trait in deer that interests me is the narrow follow-the-one-ahead mentality that ignores danger. It seems that deer, with instinctive compulsion, think: *If the one ahead of me is crossing the road, I can too.* In this morning's case, I think “Papa Deer” was being followed by “Mama Deer” and “Junior Deer” (nearly full-grown). What shall Mama do if Papa's going? Surely, it's obvious what Junior must do if both Papa and Mama already went.

We won't change these wild animals. They will follow their instincts and they will follow each other. Some will escape and some will die. The more important problem I wish to identify here is not found only in deer. People seem to use deer logic when someone says, “If he can do it, I can too,” and forget to look for danger.

Let's take a hard look at the decisions people make with regard to what's safe and what's risky. Let's not merely ask, “Shall we or shall

we not?” on the basis of what others are doing. That’s not consulting God’s absolutes but mere humanistic reasoning. We must ask, “Is it right or is it wrong?” In an imperfect world it’s not surprising that some people make good choices while others make bad choices. **The important question we must ask is not how many people are doing something, but whether or not it is right.**

God’s absolutes are designed for our benefit. Disregard for His absolutes that regulate behavior sets the stage for bad decisions. When God gave the Ten Commandments, for instance, He did not do so simply to show people He’s boss. The Decalogue, in fact, the whole Word of God, provides life-saving absolutes which are sometimes mistakenly viewed as pleasure-robbing prohibitions. God has lovingly designed them for our benefit. We must realize that if we defy His commands, grave danger lurks and we will miss out on the greater joys He would give us, both here and hereafter.

We were created for noble living. We love God our Maker, when we realize that He first loved us. He gives us the ability to love and respect our neighbors. If God and our neighbors

are not important to us, we will likely hear majority opinion proclaiming loudly that it’s each person’s privilege to decide what’s right. God’s Word has a different take on that. It tells us that:

God’s judgment is coming and no one will escape. We might as well not try to outrun it, dodge it, or “jump over a fence” in an attempt to evade it. We cannot possibly hide from God’s all-seeing eye.

Jesus said, “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” (Matt. 7:13,14). Jesus indicated that most people prefer the popular path, the easy path, but He also said it’s the wrong path and so leads to the wrong destination.

We humans are born with a wild streak. Fortunately, by the grace of God, we can stop running like deer, heedless of danger. Let us look carefully where we are going, for we are “bought with a [dear] price;” let us “therefore glorify God in our body and in our spirit, which are God’s” (1 Cor. 6:20). —PLM



.. A man is usually as young as he feels, but seldom as important ..

The Terrible Price of Darkness

My wife and I wonder why this book was returned as unworthy to be read. (January, 2005, page 5). We have read it several times and heartily endorse it. It describes difficult spiritual battles and health trials with which we can identify. Our deliverance came after serious searching, along with prayer and fasting and renouncing our involvements in these questionable things.

While our experiences were not exactly like the author's, in our case, when we fully cast ourselves on the Lord, He allowed us to be tested. Then He gave a miracle of healing shortly after we had fully committed our case to Him and requested anointing with oil. Now our spiritual healing seems even more precious than does our physical healing. We just can't thank God enough!

Name withheld

(From a telephone conversation with the editor, Jan. 10, 2005.)



Dear friends,

I also read the book, *The Terrible Price of Darkness*. There were good points in it, but as a whole, I would not want my brothers and sisters to read it, so I got rid of it. This woman

has depression or other nerve problems, which a lot of other people have that don't practice [powwow-ing]. I completely agree with the chapter, entitled: "The Study of Doubtful Practices."

Hey Peachey was also a nice book.

[Name withheld by the editor]



Paul,

Virginia (my wife) read the book, *The Terrible Price of Darkness*, (I haven't had opportunity yet) and we passed it around to a number of our church family and have received favorable responses to it.

Why, or what are the reasons for someone to object to it? That certainly "raises red flags" for us!

God bless,
Duane Troyer
Leesburg, OH

Bro. Duane: No reason was given.
PLM



Coverings

(January, 2005, page 5)

Once I was discussing the statement in 1 Corinthians 11:15, "The hair is given for a covering" with someone who seemed unsure that an

additional covering is God's intention. Then I offered the comment, "God has done His part. He gave the hair. Now Christian sisters do their part by covering that hair."

It seemed to be used of God to stop doubt and start obedience.

Harold B. Emswiler
Broadway, VA

• • • • •

Dear Bro. Paul,

I wish to commend you and thank you for the *Calvary Messenger*. I read it monthly with interest and find it a blessing. Though I'm not of the Beachy constituency, I have great respect for you all, stemming back to the 1970's and Calvary Bible School.

You invited comments on the headship veiling. I agree with the brother that 1 Corinthians 11 surely teaches that sisters' heads should be well covered, that the covered head (not a symbolic covering) is the symbol of headship order.

My observation is that it is a hindrance to best follow the Scripture when these take priority over obedience to Scripture: love of the traditional and difficulty in wearing a covering/veiling larger than feels and looks normal.

Our church recently went through a transition of adopting hanging veils...[We see] some improvement

in covering the head well. Changes made because of scriptural conviction are not dangerous....

Thanks again for CM.
Sonny (Ernest) Yoder
Gladys, VA

• • • • •

Coverings; Vaccinations; Reconciliation

(I failed to acknowledge the fact that some vaccines were originally derived from aborted fetal tissue. I understood that while that has been the case, it is not the only source of culture for these vaccines. I was remiss in not giving recognition to this regrettable fact. Dr. Wolfgang, Miggiani, MD, Ingalls, KS, pointed out this problem with what he calls "tainted vaccines." The following letter also includes succinct comments in the same vein.—PLM)

• • • • •

Dear Editor:

One note about how literally a covering should cover. It is widely taught in conservative circles that the prayer veiling is not only a symbol, but is to be a literal covering. This teaching is used mainly in reference to size. Should a literal covering not only be big enough to qualify as a head covering, but also do its job well where it covers?

I also found it interesting that in

your reference to Dr. Nolan Byler, DO, and his thoughts concerning vaccinations, there is no reference made as to his convictions and practice concerning vaccinations. Considering that many serums are derived or have been originally derived from an aborted fetus, this debate takes on new ethical dimensions. All personal preferences and opinions, pros and cons aside, what about how God sees this? I understand that there are alternative vaccinations available that have been developed through other methods (Using animal embryos). A few, however, have no alternatives, such as chicken pox, rubella, hepatitis-A, ebola, and HIV in the US. With the government's push to have children vaccinated, would it not be advisable to publish Dr. Nolan's information to inform your readers of alternatives and build conviction and education in this area? *[I'm open to that. -PLM]* We had decided that the chicken pox shot was not one we wanted for our children, before we even knew about the fetal origin of the serum. Even so, the nurse in the local health unit had to be told NO several times before she gave up trying to convince my wife that our child needed that. Is it more important to eradicate disease, which is a result of the fall, or to follow God and His Word?

I also read with disgust the "rec-

onciliation" meeting accounts of the meeting between Anabaptists and Reformed leaders. The efforts to apologize are noble and are to be admired. However, I have to wonder, would our forefathers have stooped to such terms? Would we, if we were back in those Reformation times, have succumbed to reconciliation meetings? Maybe our diplomatic skills would have saved us from the flames of the stake, or the icy waters of the Limmat River. Shouldn't we, after all these years, be able to see more clearly than ever, what the truth is? After all, it's not us the Reformed Church needs to get right with. What about urging our Reformed friends to get it straight with God in heaven? to check out the Book more closely to see who really is/was right?

We enjoy the *Calvary Messenger*, and the many thought-provoking articles we read in it. Also, [we] can feel an openness to differing thoughts and ideas, which helps to keep reader interest, rather than squelching sincere questions.


An avid *Calvary Messenger* reader,
in Christian love,

Mark Auker
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[Last summer Nigeria, West Africa, reported a major outbreak of polio. The Hutchinson News (August

1, 2004) reported that of the 494 new cases worldwide since New Year, 2004, 430 were in Nigeria. After an 11-month ban there, immunizations then resumed. That ban had been imposed upon the UN-backed medical effort, when Muslim leaders alleged that foreign powers were spreading AIDS and infertility among their people with mass immunization for polio. Was it desirable to resume

vaccinations there? Under what conditions can immunization be encouraged? —PLM]

Editor's note: This column has been well received. We want Reader Response to be the reader's sounding board, however, we face the necessity of limiting the volume of material we can print. Please bear with us. 

God's Wake-up Call

Ervin N. Hershberger (1914-2003)

[Bro. Ervin's last book had just gotten his final touch-up before his death in September, 2003. It has now been published by Vision Publishers, Inc., P.O. Box 190, Harrisonburg, VA, 22803 (Phone: 540-437-1697). With their permission, we shall publish "God's Wake-up Call" (ten chapters, 130 pages) serially. I choose to leave out many Scripture references, which Bro. Ervin placed at the end of each chapter.

While he lived among us, Bro. Ervin was a diligent student of the Word. Unless the context indicated otherwise, he was inclined to understand the words of Scripture quite literally. However, those who disagreed with him seldom found him to be argumentative. Even though he was fully persuaded in his own mind,

he was committed, in his words, "to staying close enough to the fence to shake the hand of any disagreeing brother across the fence."

In all our best efforts, "we know [only] in part and we prophesy in part," (1 Cor. 13:9). This is a work to be treasured. By faithfulness Bro. Ervin gave this last fruit of devotion to the Lord he loved and served "and by it he being dead yet speaketh" (Heb. 11:4b). —PLM]

Preface

The Book of Hebrews impresses me as an epistle addressed especially to God's own people, which in the New Testament includes Christians of all nations as well as the seed of Abraham. In this epistle, six major warnings reveal

God's heart of love reaching out to reclaim those purchased loved ones who have grown careless, indifferent, lukewarm, or even cold. That observation is what prompted the writing of this booklet.

God's most basic attribute is *holiness*. Holiness is the motivating channel and controlling influence of all His moral attributes. God Himself is holiness personified. His holy love can neither approve nor simply ignore sin, lukewarmness, or indifference. That is why He so lovingly calls us to wake up, pay earnest attention to His written Word (the Bible), and exercise an unshakable faith in Him. God knows all about the past and the future as well as the present, and intensely cares for each one of us.

Although we have been saved by grace, we are always in need of constant cleansing, progressive sanctification, and a growing faith in God. The first two wake-up calls addressed in this book came from the lips of Jesus. Recorded in the Gospels, they are meant for everyone who chooses to be a disciple of Jesus. He lovingly warns us to beware of false prophets, who attack us from without, and covetousness, which springs from within, because He knows how susceptible we are. These are two typical examples of the many evils that attack us from without and

from within.

The next six warnings come from the Book of Hebrews, and each addresses a very pertinent danger. Neglect is always common among all who await a more convenient season. Unbelief is the very opposite of faith, and perhaps its greatest enemy. Falling away, sinning willfully, and drawing back are three of the saddest tragedies into which a soul could possibly plunge. Having been enlightened, having had a taste of saving grace, having been almost persuaded, yet lost forever probably is more torturous than heathen darkness where truth was never known.

The last warning in the book of Hebrews says, "Refuse not him that speaketh from heaven" (12:25). Many of the wake-up calls mentioned in this book bear the authority of Jesus Christ Himself. Eight times while here on earth in the flesh, He said, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Eight other times He spoke from heaven through the Apostle John, saying, "He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear."

The closing verses of The Revelation warn us not to add to or "take away from the words of the book of this prophecy." Living in a land of Bibles, we have no excuse to be ignorant of what God has said. "For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of

God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (1 Peter 1:21). It behooves us to be diligent students of the Bible, which calls us to an unshakable faith in a God who knows and cares.

We need to test our beliefs and doctrines, not by our human reasoning, but by God’s inspired Word. We need to examine our views prayerfully, correcting anything that conflicts with Bible prophecies or New Testament doctrine. Every prophecy of Christ’s first advent has been fulfilled literally. This should assure us that the prophecies of His second advent also will be fulfilled.

What then shall we do with the scores of prophetic passages throughout the Bible declaring the Messianic reign of Christ? We do not understand them all, but is it not safer to trust God and His Word than to distort the meaning of simple words to make them fit our own ideas? God expects us to believe His Word, trust-

ing Him by faith, even when we do not understand.

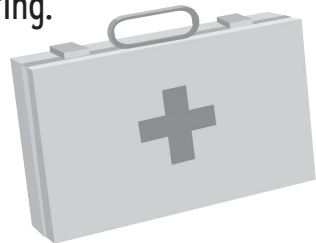
The Revelation foretells the rise of Satan’s trinity: the *dragon*, the *beast*, and the *false prophet*. Satan can never produce anything similar to God’s Trinity, but he will try his hardest to fake the trinity by which unbelievers and many halfhearted professing Christians may be deceived. The Revelation also reveals Satan’s final thrust, and the certainty of his eternal doom.

Praise God for making us aware of God’s Holy Trinity, the grand climax of all authority, by whom the universe and we have been created. That is the Trinity Whom we can fully trust for our protection and redemption.

Thank God for His wake-up calls today, and for His overruling victory and righteous judgment guaranteed to prevail at the end. “Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”



Forgiveness is a funny thing.
It warms the heart and cools the sting.



Connecting Horizontally by Giving

Aaron Lapp
Kinzers, PA

Everything that lives, gives. The flowers give their beauty; trees give fruit; soil gives increase; sun gives light, clouds give rain. All nature is inter-connected in its giving. Benefit and continuity result. All living matter is dependent on other living matter. Some call it the balance of nature.

Connecting within the church is done by receiving (see last month's column) and by giving. Receiving and giving are two sides of the same coin. Giving is rooted in the nature of God and is illustrated by interdependence in God's created world.

Giving is based on receiving. Receiving comes first. Giving follows. Jesus said, "Freely ye have received, freely give." Giving is a powerful way to connect in brotherhood fellowship. Some don't connect because they don't give. Some don't give because they think others should give to them. A giving spirit is evidence of being alive in Christ.

The Biblical "What" in Giving

"What is that in thine hand?" "A rod." "Use it." "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" The obvi-

ous answer is, "Everything I have, I have by some means received." It becomes a blanket statement from Scripture that underscores all our material goods and inherent abilities—all has been received. We store it in our memories, our brains, our houses, our businesses, or in the bank or some other investment.

Everything we have is either *in hand* or *on hand*. *In hand* is for some present use, and *on hand* is for later use. Kings and noblemen lay up treasures on earth. Long ago a delegation from Babylon came to King Hezekiah in something of a cultural exchange with letters of congratulation and a present. When they left, the prophet Isaiah paid a visit to King Hezekiah. He asked, "What have they seen in thy house?" The king said he showed them the sum total of everything. He had much gold and silver and precious ointments and armor. He had showed it all.

Isaiah told him his vain trespass in pride would put an end to his prosperity. His property would all be carried to Babylon some day, and his prosperity would come to an end,

and his sons would be made eunuchs in Babylon. He had much good *on hand*. It ended in certain judgment. (2 Kings 20)

The rich man in Luke 12 had much goods *on hand*. He died an untimely death. Jesus' warning in Matthew 6 about not laying up treasure on earth indicates that such bounty is left lying around for a long time in disuse and that moths and rust corrupt it. Hoarding is condemned in Scripture, for it is having much *on hand* without a plan for its use to some day take it *in hand* and do good with it.

Jesus said our example is the householder who takes things *in hand* and out of his treasure he utilizes things new and old. (Matthew 13) This passage indicates one is a good manager who saves enough in the time of surplus to have "the wherewithal" in time of need, either for himself or for others. It is better to be an asset than a liability. It is better to be in the black rather than in the red. We can be helping others who are helping others. We can take things *in hand* and let them bless others in some way.

Giving always begins with receiving. Connecting begins with receiving and is cemented with giving. Receiving and giving well means we will connect well in society. Doing so in the church will assure connection. Our model here begins

with receiving, then giving, resulting in a brotherly connection, followed by relationship and finally in fellowship.

The Biblical "How" in Giving

Something should be said about *how* we receive, for that is related to how we give. Jesus said we should give so as not to be seen by man. In Matthew 6:2, Jesus said our giving should be as our receiving—freely [generously]. In Matthew 10:8, the Bible says we should give with simplicity. In Romans 12:8—willingly; 2 Corinthians 8:12—cheerfully; 2 Corinthians 9:7—according to our ability; Acts 11:29—as God has prospered; 1 Corinthians 16:2—as the need requires; and in Ephesians 4:28—as the love in our hearts directs.

Our attitude in giving is important. How we give is a heart issue. We know *what* we give better than *how* we give. But how we give does not escape God's notice. Be available. Be glad to give. Be willing. Be personally active.

The Principle of Giving

Someone reported that in the 1980's, 34% of church members tithed, 40% gave 3% or less, and 26% gave virtually nothing. The 34% gave according to their means; the 40% gave according to their meanness, and the 26% gave by no means! One church posted this notice: "Those in

the habit of putting buttons instead of coins in the offering plate shall please put in their own buttons and not buttons from the church pews!" Yes, God observes what we give, and how we give, and why.

We are drawn to people who give. People are also drawn to those to whom they give. If you feel unconnected to your church people, try giving. Giving connects people most beautifully.

The Natural Aspect of Giving

Sharing is according to nature, according to psychological makeup, according to the Bible, and according to common sense and logic. The happiest people are those who give. Free persons are those who keep on giving. Giving carries with it a high sense of personal worth.

If you feel like your relationship in the church is somewhat unconnected, try giving.

Give some of your time. Give good cheer. Give compliments. Give thanks. Give tithes. Give according to what you have. Now that is naturally beautiful! Do you get the connection?

Give according to people's needs. Give a smile. Give hope. Give with glad eyes. Give with kind words. Give with thoughtful deeds. It's no

secret. It doesn't cost a fortune. It doesn't take a lot of time. It doesn't drain you mentally. It doesn't tax you physically. It doesn't take away from you socially. It doesn't rob you spiritually. It doesn't load you up with regrets. It doesn't keep you from going forward. It doesn't make you appear backward. It doesn't prevent you from going upward. Do you get the connection?

The Blessedness of Giving

Connecting horizontally in the brotherhood is done by graciously receiving and willingly giving. Not just the one. It takes both. Feeling a measure of unworthiness in receiving fosters a generous spirit of giving. We become indebted with all the receiving. We are humbled, therefore, we want to give. A farmer who was known for his generosity was once asked how he does it to always give so generously. He responded, "God shovels it into my bin and I just shovel it into the bins of others; but God has the bigger shovel!"

The bottom line is that to connect horizontally, we must first be a humble receiver, and next to that is simply to be a ready giver. Do both, and you will bless and be blest. Do you get the connection?

The best way to have friends is to be one.

Is Limiting Communion Privileges Protected by Law?

Simon Schrock

Fairfax, VA

The issue of open communion popped up on the screen of my mind while attending a one-day “Informing the Faithful” seminar sponsored by Christian Law Association. Why would it come to mind at such an unlikely meeting?

Church splits have been heavy on my mind, partly because of what I experienced when it happened in our congregation nearly a decade ago, and how frequently it continues to happen across the church. One of the issues in conservative Anabaptist congregations is who may be included in partaking of communion. The leaving group may cite the desire to practice “open communion” as one of the reasons for leaving. They want to make non-members feel welcome to become part of the church.

Before I explain why this issue came to mind at a meeting informing the church of current laws in our land, I ask: How biblically sound is it to start another church in order to offer open communion? Some believers promote giving communion to anyone who professes peace with God. The argument here is that they too belong to the body of Christ. When

this idea was promoted to me, I asked a number of questions:

1. How about a couple who comes to the church dressed in the fashions of the world, with the lady having cut hair and wearing no covering? The answer I was given: Yes, if they testify to having peace with God.

2. How about a person in the military and in uniform? Yes, if he or she has peace with God.

3. How about a couple in a divorce and remarriage relationship? Yes, if they have peace with God.

4. What if a homosexual couple comes to your door and wants to take communion? The answer: I’m not ready for that. I, too, must ask a lot of questions. Would open communion really be recommended? Or would this request be rejected?

Paul admonished the church to be discerning and alert about communion on two levels.

1. Self-examination. “But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup” (1 Cor. 11:28).

2. In 1 Corinthians 10:20-21, caution is given about who we par-

take with in taking the cup of the Lord. “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils, Ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table and the tables of devils.” A mere confession of having peace with God apart from some accountability to the local body does not meet New Testament standards. Neither does a person who is unwilling to submit to a body of believers. It is an open door to spiritual disaster to invite those to the Lord’s Table who refuse accountability.

Would the proponents of open communion welcome persons who are in the marital state of Episcopalian Bishop Robinson? He divorced his wife and took a male partner and became known as the first openly homosexual bishop in the Episcopal Church. He insisted God wanted to make him a bishop. Mr. Robinson gave this account of their divorce: “The two of us returned to the church where the marriage began and in the context of the Eucharist, released each other from our wedding vows, asked each other’s forgiveness, cried a lot, pledged ourselves to the joint raising of our children, and shared in the body and blood of Christ.” (*Washington Times*, June 8, 2003)

Apparently he believes that taking the Eucharist, or sacraments, covers it all. From my observation, here is a man living in open violation of Scripture and is depending on the

taking of communion to give him peace with God. Wouldn’t Paul say, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils”? (1 Cor. 10:21). This Scripture is a call to the true body of Christ to be discerning about with whom we drink the cup of communion. You may say this is “far out” and “extreme.” Maybe so, but we are called to be Christ’s disciples in a far out and extreme world.

Open communion proponents argue that the position of “close” or “restricted” communion makes other people feel judged. According to them, we are judging others and we shouldn’t do that. It also indicates a “better than thou” attitude. I disagree with that reasoning. It is the open communion proponent who will more likely find himself needing to pass judgment on an individual. When a congregation has an understood policy on communion, it is not aimed at any particular individual. The church that decides and clearly states that communion is open to members in good standing is simply drawing the line at an understood place. When our congregations offer communion to those of “like precious faith” that is understood to mean conservative Anabaptist in theology and is not passing judgment on an individual. It simply draws a line at a place well understood.

However, if someone living in a

relationship like Mr. Robinson and his partner shows up at the church with open communion, and the pastor begins to ask questions, the judging and discerning moves to the individual. Should the pastor go as far as allowing practicing homosexuals to commune? Should a person who trusts in the elements of communion for salvation be included? If the pastor turns him away, he has made a judgment call on an individual.

He may also fear that allowing the gay couple to the table could cause a split in the church. If you think the chance of that happening is next to nil, it's time to "pull your head out of the sand and wake up" to the perilous times in which we are living.

Let me tell you why this issue came up so vividly on the screen of my mind at the Christian Law Association's seminar. I listened to some of the laws that have been enacted in recent years and how they affected the church and "501(c)3" organizations. We have heard of law suits brought against churches, how people can bring complaints and make the church liable. I wondered, how about a church that would refuse to give communion to an openly "gay couple?" There are openly gay people who profess to be born again Christians and want to be accepted in the church. They want to given full rights, including communion. What

could happen if such a couple came to our church and asked to be included in communion and the request were denied. Could we be held legally liable and brought to court?

I made my way to the front during one of the breaks to ask one of the C.L.A. lawyers. I explained that I am part of a conservative Anabaptist church and that we practice "close" communion. What could happen, I asked, if a "gay" couple requested communion with us and we did not permit them to partake? The resource person informed me that he grew up in an even stricter church where communion was only for members of that congregation. He explained that if we have an official position that is clearly defined in a statement of faith, then there is no law at present that could brought against us for hate or discrimination on the basis of sexual preferences. However, if we claim an open communion position for "anyone who professes peace with God," and would refuse a "gay couple," we could be held liable under the law. If such a couple would choose to press charges, there would be no shortage of lawyers to take the case to court. Simply referring to a certain Scripture as our defense would not hold up in court. While you could quote 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, which says, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?"

Do not be deceived,...neither fornicators,...nor homosexuals...shall inherit the kingdom of God” (NASB). Your interpretation of Scripture will not stand up in court unless it is clearly stated in your statement of conduct before the issue arises.

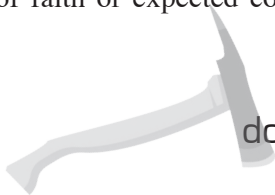
Why am I raising this issue as a concern? The CLA made us aware of the homosexual agenda. Their agenda seems to include pushing for acceptance in the media, the political realm, the corporate world, and apparently, in the church. We were reminded that the homosexual lifestyle is rapidly gaining acceptance in American culture. “More than half of Americans said homosexuality should be considered an acceptable lifestyle.” (CLA, *Informing the Faithful*, 2004.)

Sodomy is no longer a criminal offense, and the push is on for full marriage rights of gay couples. From there it will push into the church pews and onto membership lists. Other concerns include ministry employment, hate crime legislation, and loss of tax exemption. The “gays” are not shy in putting the church to the test in demanding their “rights.”

Why be concerned? If your statement of faith or expected conduct

is not clearly stated in your records, you could be brought to court and even found guilty. The stage is set for the possibility of our churches being brought into some ugly lawsuits. Some are accusations of hate crimes and some are jury media news stories of discrimination on the basis of showing sexual preferences. You can be relatively sure the news media would not be on our side. This could go ill for the body of Christ. Is communion in the church protected by the laws of the state? That depends!

For those practicing “close” or “closed” communion, check your statement of faith, or rule of discipline. Does it clearly state your conviction of principles? Does it state beliefs that cannot be construed as judging an individual? For those with an open communion policy, consider carefully the possibility of giving the world an opening to bring disgrace upon the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. While we still have religious freedom, the laws of the state and the Holy Spirit nudge us to be “ready always to give an answer to everyone that asketh [us] a reason for the hope that is in [us] with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15).



When you bury the hatchet,
don't bury it in your enemy's back.

Counseling Considerations

David L. Miller

Our five-man bishop committee*, at the 2004 ministers' meeting, acknowledged the need to cultivate an awareness of the needs in the area of Christian counseling. They have asked me to help nurture that awareness and to pool information to help move things toward helpful solutions. I have not found this to be easy. But the continuing need and their request seemed to mandate highlighting some of the pertinent issues before the 2005 meeting. This article was prepared in consultation with the bishop committee and several other people, who have an active interest in the subject.

We appreciate that this subject is being addressed from time to time in seminars to which our people have access. We also appreciate those among us who are gifted and committed to serve in this area. But it seems to be a matter of common knowledge that we often lack sufficient personnel and resources to fully meet the needs. This often creates an overload for the persons involved. In some cases it may cause persons to seek help from sources that are indifferent or unfriendly to some of the values we believe are important. The need for more qualified counselors

is obvious.

Perhaps the term "qualified" deserves clarification. The person without specific formal training who has a fervent love for God and his neighbor has the most basic qualification. To have a familiarity with the Word and the ability to apply it to specific needs is a valuable gift. It is assumed that a person will want to draw from experiences and studies which can safely be trusted.

A person with extensive formal training may be able to detect and diagnose conditions that would escape the notice of an untrained person. Some such cases require medication. But unless such a person is a Christian, he is unable to provide Christian counsel.

Many counselees may need only the kind of person who is willing to listen with genuine interest. Humility, gentleness, meekness and wisdom from above (James 3:17) would seem to provide the ideal combination.

It is very important that a counselor is able to discern when the needs of a counselee exceed his ability to help.

The following quote by a man well past middle age seems pertinent: "I also suffer from depression. It is rather severe at times. It was the love

of God that brought me through the darkest hours, but it is modern medical science that allows me to function normally on a daily basis. It is difficult for anyone, especially a man, to admit to depression. I only got the help I needed when the company I worked for sent me home and got me an appointment with a doctor.”

It would be wrong for medical people to feel that only they can be helpful. But the untrained person needs to remember that sometimes more than a caring spirit is needed.

Maybe at some point there should be a meeting of persons in our circles who are presently involved in counseling. But until then, let us note the following:

—Methods of counseling must never contradict the clear message of Scripture.

—It should be the aim of the Christian counselor to help the counselee to find wholeness in Christ.

—When there are broken human relationships, most likely in families, reconciliation should be pursued.

—Victims of abuse deserve gentleness and patience. Our gracious God is able to heal.

—Counselors should guard against needlessly complicating issues with psychological/intellectual considerations. The centrality of Christ and the authority of the Word are supremely important.

—The wise counselor will seek to discover support persons close to the counselee to provide ongoing therapy.

—It is not important that every counselor use exactly the same approach.

—Counselors should guard against the mentality that their preferred method is superior to and exclusive of methods that differ from their own. Counselees are the losers in such cases.

—Younger persons with a serious interest in counseling should not overlook the value of respect for age and experience. (This comment came from a brother several decades my junior.)

—Every counselor needs someone to whom he or she is accountable.

—Ideally, counselors do not want to be seen as an entity apart of the rest of the body. They want to be seen as bearing one another’s burden, so fulfilling the law of Christ. All of us can and should do some of that.

—Counselors are human beings who sometimes also need someone in whom to confide and from whom to receive counsel.

—We do well to remember that sometimes there are conditions that cannot be remedied with the best of counseling or medical expertise. But the grace of God is sufficient that the Christian may glorify Him even in

such circumstances.

—No counselor should consider himself above criticism. Every one of us should be an ally and supporter of this important ministry.

The use of wrecking tools does not require skill, nor does it build structures. Let us guard against fostering a critical spirit that is essentially negative. Surely there are helpful things for us to do rather than wasting our energies in negative exercises.

marriages

Graber-Yoder

Bro. Allen, son of Roman and Mary Ann Graber, Bloomfield, IN, and Sis. Rosa Lynn, daughter of Marvin and Esther Yoder, Roodhouse, IL, on Dec. 1, 2004, at Whitehall First Baptist Church, for Rehoboth A.M. Church by Marvin Yoder.


Kauffman-Yoder

Bro. Ervin, son of Kore and Erma Kauffman, Belleville, NY, and Sis. Edna Mae, daughter of Ben and Leah Yoder, Munnsville, NY, at Madison Mennonite Church on Nov. 5, 2004, by Wilmer Peachey.

Miller-Overholt

Bro. Luke, son of Marvin and Ruth Miller, Suceava, Romania, and Sis. Elizabeth, daughter of Titus and Ellen Overholt, Abbeville, SC, at Cold Spring Mennonite Church on Oct. 23, 2004, by Ernest Hochstetler.

Let us model mature Christianity in our attitudes toward counseling. It is good exercise for us. It is good for persons needing helpful counsel. God's grace is sufficient for these things. (See related item on page 26.)

*Those serving on this committee at the present time are Elmer Smucker, TX; David M. Yoder, KS; Glenn Yoder, IN; Joe Peachey, PA, and John U. Lapp, PA. 

Stutzman-Hackman

Bro. Elwyn, son of Joni and Ruby Stutzman, Kalona, IA, and Sis. Rhonda, dau. of Dale and Jean Hackman, Mt. Pleasant, IA, on Oct. 23, 2004, at Fairview Mennonite Church, by Gabriel Beachy.

Wagler-Gerber

Bro. Luke, son of Murray and Miriam Wagler, Millbank, ON, and Sis. Martha, daughter of Mahlon and Mary Gerber, Millbank, ON, on June 12, 2004, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church, by Arthur Gerber.

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

cradle roll

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

Barkman, Clement and Michelle (Troyer), McConnelsville, OH, sixth child, fourth son, Wynne Ramone, Dec. 29, 2004.

Chupp, Daryl and Elaine (Nissley), Sturgis, MI, fourth child and dau., Heather Danique, Jan. 19, 2005.

Eicher, Philip and Velda (Stutzman), Roodhouse, IL, fourth child, third son, Landon Joel, Dec. 18, 2004.

Esh, Eugene and Andrea (Mullet), Gordonville, PA, first child and dau., Elena Joy, Dec. 31, 2004.

Gerber, Wayne and Susan (Schmidt), Millbank, ON, second child, first dau., Lynette Sue, Dec. 29, 2004.

Hostetler, Edwin and Esther (Yoder), Auburn, KY, ninth child, sixth son, William Dale, Dec. 28, 2004.

Kratzer, Kenric and Becky (Stoltzfus), Millersburg, OH, first child and son, Austin Tyler, Dec. 29, 2004.

Mast, Mahlon and Rebeca (Mast), Auburn, KY, third child, second dau., Sarah Joan, Nov. 28, 2004.

Miller, Arlyn and Sharon (Hochstetler), LaGrange, IN, sixth child, fifth son, Austin Michael, Jan. 30, 2005.

Miller, Curtis and Lorene (Groff), Hutchinson, KS, seventh child, fourth dau., Kaitlin Brooke, Jan. 30, 2005.

Miller, Lucas and Julianna (Mullet), Aroda, VA, first child and son, Malachi Alvin, Jan. 4, 2005.

Miller, Shawn and Marnita (Beachy), Sugarcreek, OH, fourth child, first dau., Kate Alyson, Dec. 24, 2004.

Miller, Steven and Melissa (Yoder), Auburn, KY, fourth child, third son, Weston Daniel, Jan. 9, 2005.

Peachey, Roger and Heidi (Troyer), Plain City, OH, first child and son, Isaac Jeroam, Dec. 13, 2004.

Riehl, Ken and Vivian (Miller), Penn Yan, NY, third child, second son, Kendall James, Jan. 15, 2005.

Steckly, Shane and Sharon (Kuepfer), Brunner, ON, second child and son, Austin Blake, Dec. 20, 2004.

Stoll, Jeff and Hannah (Graber), Montgomery, IN, first child and dau., Patrece Ann, Jan. 20, 2005.

Stutzman, Leon and Katrina (Yoder), Roodhouse, IL, second child and dau., Marcia Anne, Nov. 13, 2004.

Weaver, Hans and Rochelle (Burkholder), Freeport, OH, second child, first dau., Mary Grace, Jan. 7, 2005.

obituaries

Albrecht, Irene Carolyn, 46, Brunner, ON, died Dec. 22, 2004, at Stratford General Hospital. She was born June 23, 1958, daughter of Katie (Jantzi) and the late Aaron Jantzi.

She was a member of Fair Haven Amish Mennonite Church, Milverton.

On April 23, 1983, she was married to Lloyd Albrecht, who survives. Also surviving are four children of the home: Lorianne, Angela, Leslie and Adrian.

Other survivors are siblings: Vernon (Linda), Warren; Donald (Mary Jane), Millbank; Nelson (Verna), Milverton; Darlene (Mrs. Merlin Jantzi), Wellesley; step siblings: Shirley and Wayne Lebold, Millbank; Elroy and Diane Wagler, Newton; parents-in-law, Simon and Lydia Albrecht, Newton, brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law, Lorne Albrecht, Mary and Steven Kuepfer, Newton; Catherine and Reuben Kuepfer, Gadshill; Laura and Raymond Kuepfer, Millbank; Israel and Marian Albrecht, Kentucky; John and Florence Albrecht, Teeswater; Beatrice and Larry Jantzi, Brunner, and a number of nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by an infant

Yoder, Everett and Elmina (Nissley), Paris, TN, sixth child, fourth son, Jeffery Alan, Oct. 4, 2004.

Yoder, Steven and Daisy (Beiler), Pratts, VA, first child and dau., Annika Lynn, Jan. 6, 2005.

son, Jonathan; father, Aaron Jantzi; and step father, Solomon K. Wagler, Jr.

Funeral services were held on Dec. 26 with Melvin Roes officiating. Interment followed in the Mornington A.M. Cemetery.

Bontrager, Elizabeth M., 87, Goshen, IN, died at her residence on Dec. 10, 2004, where she had been in declining health for nine months. She was born Dec. 24, 1916, at Yoder, KS, daughter of Milo J.F. and Polly (Bontrager) Yoder.

On April 21, 1938, she was married to Daniel S. Bontrager. He died June 27, 2004.

She was a homemaker and did volunteer quilt making for benefit and relief sales. She was a charter member of Woodlawn Amish Mennonite Church, where she was active in the sewing circle. She and her husband served as missionaries in Belgium in 1987-1989.

She is survived by four daughters: Loretta (Mrs. Noah Hochstetler), Belize; Frieda (Mrs. Paul H. Nisly), Hutchinson, KS; Ruth (Mrs. David Wickey), LaGrange, IN; Regina (Mrs. Harley Miller), Goshen, IN; four sons: Lavern

(Ruby) Bontrager; Ervin (Elma) Bontrager; Linford (Kay) Bontrager, all of Goshen, IN; and Thomas (Mollie) Bontrager, Shipshewana, IN; 27 grandchildren; 37 great grandchildren; two sisters: Anna (Mrs. Edwin Bontrager), Shipshewana, IN; and Edna (Mrs. Henry Yoder), Goshen, IN; a brother, Samuel (Frieda) Yoder, Nashwauk, MN.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her husband, two brothers, Joe and Ervin Yoder, five infant siblings and a granddaughter, Greta Wickey.

Funeral services were held Dec. 14, 2004, at Woodlawn A.M. church, with Elmer Miller, Glen Miller, Steve Miller and Ed Yoder serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Eicher, David, 84, Leo, IN, died as a result of congestive heart failure Nov. 18, 2004. He was born Nov. 5, 1920, at Woodburn, IN, the son of Noah and Christina (Schwartz) Eicher.

He was a member and minister since 1963 in Ridgeview A.M. Church, Grabill, IN.

On Feb. 13, 1947, he was married to Emma Gerig. She survives.

Also surviving are eight children: Howard (Teresa), Avilla, IN; Naomi (Mrs. David Schmucker), Grabill, IN; Miriam (Mrs. Joseph Schwartz), Grabill, IN; Steve (Marilyn), Hicksville, OH; Allen (Lisa), Leo, IN; Norman (Rosanna), Grabill; Twila (Mrs. Alva Steury), Grabill; also 36 grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

He is survived by brothers: Dan and Mike, both Grabill; Menno and Simon, both Woodburn; Raymond, Hicksville, OH; and sister, Rosa Witmer, Leo, IN.

He was preceded in death by one son, James; one great grandchild, his parents, three brothers and two sisters.

Funeral services were held Nov. 22, at Ridgeview Church with Lester R. Zehr and William R. Hochstetler serving. Burial was in the Schlatter Cemetery, with Nephew Tim Eicher serving.

Kauffman, Alice M., 80, Nappanee, IN, died from an aneurysm on Nov. 28, 2004. She was born July 7, 1924, at Centreville, MI, daughter of the late Eli P. and Carolina (Overholt) Miller.

She was married on Feb. 29, 1948, to David Leroy Kauffman. He died Nov. 7, 1994.

She was a member of the Fairview Mennonite Church. She enjoyed helping busy mothers, piecing comforter tops and embroidering when health permitted.

Survivors include four sons: Edward Leroy (Ruth Yoder), Dundee, OH; Omar Glen (Ruth Miller), Etna Green, IN; David Ray (Sara Etta Beachy), Topeka, IN; Frederick Allen (Barbara Kruzick), Mishawaka, IN; three daughters: Irene (Mrs. James Beachy), Auburn, KY; Carrie (Mrs. Amos Miller, Jr.), Nappanee, IN; Mary Kathryn (Mrs. Lester Smucker), Narvon, PA; and one brother: William Miller, Gladwin, MI.

She was preceded in death by her par-

ents and a brother, Omar Miller.

Funeral services were held December 3 at Fairview Mennonite Church with Loren Graber, Cornelius Beachy and Randy Miller serving. Burial was in the church cemetery.

Wagler, Omar, 76, died at his home in rural Wellesley, ON. He was born May 24, 1928, in Wellesley Township, son of Amos and Emma (Brenneman) Wagler.

He was a member of Cedar Grove A.M Church.

On May 26, 1954, he was married to Viola Roth, who survives.

Other survivors include: seven daughters: Ruthann (Mrs. Bruce Jantzi), Wellesley; Louise (Mrs. Simeon Hege), Free Union, VA; Verna (Mrs. James Jantzi), Teeswater; Barbara (Mrs. Stanley Steckly), Monkton; Rosemary (Mrs. Arnold Jantzi), Wellesley; Margaret (Mrs. Michael Holst), Wellesley; and Miriam (Mrs. Glenn Kuepfer), Wellesley; 31 grandchildren and one great grandchild.

Close relatives surviving: Norman Wagler, Wellesley; Daniel (Mary) Wagler, Stratford; Marie (Mrs. Earl Bender), Crosshill; Vera Dyck, Bancroft; Edna (Mrs. Elmer Ropp), Brunner; Esther (Mrs. Ray Scherer), Millbank; Joseph Zehr, Millbank; Florence (Mrs. Andrew Bergsma), B.C.; brothers-in-law: William and Cora Roth, Mahlon and Mary Roth, Samuel Roth, Ohmer Gerber; sisters-in-law: Mary (Mrs. Simeon Jantzi); Annie (Mrs. David Jantzi); Erma Roth; Eileen

(Mrs. David Roth) and Ruth (Mrs. Leon Shantz).

Preceding him in death were sister: Eileen Wagler; sister-in-law, Esther Wagler; brothers-in-law John Dyck and Simeon Jantzi; David Jantzi; Ivan and Luann Nafziger; Sarah Gerber; and Anna Mae Roth.

Funeral services were held at Cedar Grove with Arthur Gerber and Arnold Jantzi serving. Interment was in the church cemetery.

Yoder, Melvin M., 90, Partridge, KS, died Jan. 6, 2005. He was born in rural Reno County Kansas, July 10, 1914, son of Menno C. and Mary (Miller) Yoder.

He was a member of Center A.M. Mennonite Church, Hutchinson.

On June 27, 1937, he married Lydia Nisly. She survives.

Other survivors include five sons: Calvin (Ada), Kalona, IA; Menno (Tobie), Merriam, KS; Abe (Laura), Paynesville, MN; David (Susanna) and Joe (Twila), both Partridge; five daughters: Rosa Yoder and Marian Yoder, both of Partridge; Anna (Mrs. Clayton Weaver) and Wilma (Mrs. Paul Beachy), both of Bastrop, TX; and Judy (Mrs. Calvin King), Harrison, AR; a sister, Catherine, widow of Joe Miller, Paynesville, MN; 41 grandchildren and 43 great grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by a son, William, nine brothers: David, Dan, Albert, Menno, Harry, Jerry, Calvin, Roman and Abe; two sisters: Mary Wagler and Fannie Yoder, and a grandson,

Byron Yoder.

Funeral services were held at Center Church on January 9, with Gary Miller, Oren Yoder and David L. Miller serving. Paul L. Miller served in the committal at the West Center Cemetery.

Zehr, John L., 85, Wellesley, ON, died Oct. 28, 2004, at Freeport Health Care Center. He was born April 19, 1919, in Wellesley Twp., son of the late Moses and Veronica (Lichty) Zehr.

He was a member and deacon since 1963, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church, Wellesley.

On Sept. 10, 1944, he was married to Esther Jantzi. She died in 1977. Their children are: Mahlon (Frieda) Zehr, New Hamburg, ON; Laverne (Merrill) Zehr, Millbank; Mary Zehr, Crosshill, ON; and Florence (Mrs. John Albrecht), Lucknow, ON.

On Dec. 19, 1981, he married Mary Erb Steckly. Surviving is one step-

daughter, Beatrice (Mrs. Peter Petrovic), Wellesley; and two step-grandsons.

Close relatives surviving are, Norman and Amy Zehr, Stratford; Jacob and Alma Zehr, Millbank; Elmer and Ethel Zehr, New Hamburg; Emma Wagler and Mary Gerber, both Millbank; Laura Jantzi, Crosshill; Esther and Ohmer Jantzi, Wellesley. In-laws surviving include: Delmer and Eleanor Jantzi; Annie Jantzi; Katie and Eldon Swartzentruber, Madilene Gerber, Edna Jantzi, Annie Martin, Emma Steckly, Amy and Norman Zehr; Tina and Ira Nafziger.

Preceding him in death were brothers and sisters-in-law, Allan Wagler, Amos Gerber, Elmer Jantzi, David Jantzi, Ralph Gerber, Ray Gerber, Raymond Jantzi, Sylvester Martin, Esther Steckly, Katie and Chris Gerber and Dan Erb.

Funeral services were held at the Cedar Grove church Oct. 31, with Arthur Gerber, Mahlon Gerber, Larry Ropp and Paul Jantzi serving. Interment was in the church cemetery.

observations

Young people are not only the future church, they are a very important part of the present church. The stability and ideals of youth are important indicators of the church's future. Let us consider together some things that as parents and leaders, we should idealize for our dear young people.

—The Christian life begins with the new birth. Jesus said it plainly, “Ye

must be born again. Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Unless there is a new birth, there is no Christian life.

—Christian parents are enjoined to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. When children respond well to this kind of upbringing, it is a tremendous blessing. But good behavior must not be confused with the new birth. Let us idealize for our young people balanced growth. Luke 2:52 could be

paraphrased to say, “Jesus increased mentally, physically, spiritually and socially.” I believe there is significant danger that the spiritual development suffers when there is an inordinate emphasis on one or more of the other three dimensions. Intellectual growth (formal training), recreation (bodily exercise, such as sports), and social enjoyment can all provide a net value when they are regulated and prioritized by our commitment to the Lord and His church.

—Let us recognize the tremendous energy, vision and idealism of which young people are capable.

—Let us cultivate interactive relationships that build strong bonds of trust and confidence.

—Let us strive for that balance that gives young people room to breathe, exercise and grow. But let us also have expectations that build a sense of loyalty and accountability to parents and the local body of believers.

—Let us seek to clarify principle in such a way that makes application natural and easy. And I admit that this is idealistic, but it is, nonetheless, a reasonable and worthy ideal.

Let us now turn our attention to a situation that incubated the above thoughts. This report should not foster an attitude of smug self-satisfaction.

A certain teacher in a Mennonite college likes to bring his Anabaptist history class to the local Cedar Crest

and Center churches. Both the instructor and the students offered comments after a recent visit to Cedar Crest that are pertinent to the above discussion. Some of their comments have important things to say to us, assuming that we are teachable.

Positive comments included the following observations:

—They felt warmly received without judgmental messages.

—They noted that people seemed to know the Bible and to take it seriously.

—They expressed appreciation for the sermon and its Bible-centeredness.

—Some felt the congregational singing was a deeply worshipful and emotional experience.

—Family values, absence of divorce, and friendliness felt from the older generation were mentioned as positives.

—They also saw value in not having TV and radio, but said how hard it would be to give it up.

The instructor grew up in a more conservative setting and joined the Mennonites as an early teenager after responding to an invitation at a revival service. His parents joined the Mennonites soon after that. His comments include the following: “I am sad and pained that the Mennonite Church has become so acculturated [become like the culture]. TV, the movies, and

public education have all contributed to it. The loss of family life is also significant. Some of us are praying that genuine revival might come to the Mennonite Church. Church has little authority in people's lives. Individualism has taken over. There are some really dedicated young people in the church. I hope some interaction with more conservative Anabaptists will be helpful."

Perhaps someone is wondering why this report is being offered. I firmly believe that with our awareness coupled with God's faithfulness, what is being reported need not happen to us. But a disinterest or unwillingness to learn from history presents a different likelihood.

God forbid that these comments should foster in us a Laodicean spirit that would blind us to our own needs.

• • • • •

In an earlier column, I mentioned that the medical profession typically treats symptoms, rather than giving attention to good health habits of diet and lifestyle. A kind reader, who is a medical doctor, feels that this was an erroneous statement. He tells me that some medical schools do put a lot of emphasis on preventive health care.

As we talked, it became apparent that if patients wait to see their doctor until there is a specific problem, the doctor first wants to help the patient

become symptom-free. Such a situation could well be more of a "patient problem" than a "doctor problem."

I believe it is important and thank-worthy to have access to medical expertise when needed. I appreciate the kindness of a friend who called attention to this earlier statement that needed correction.

• • • • •

Elsewhere in this issue is an article entitled, "Counseling Considerations." The helpful interest and suggestions of others has added a great deal to the article. One such suggestion came too late to be included. But I believe it deserves our serious notice. In some church circles, there is a perceived stigma associated with the need or desire for counseling. Could we not agree that such a view itself needs corrective attention?

To stigmatize the hurts of others is to incur the possibility of offending those whose angels always behold the face of our Father which is in heaven. (Matt. 18:10) It could also have the effect of causing someone to bottle up and carry baggage that should be shared with a caring brother or sister. In some cases it might cause someone to seek help in a friendlier but not necessarily a safer climate.

Let us by God's grace seek to be persons and churches who are friendly and helpful to those who are hurting.

—DLM 

Preparing Young People for Christian Service

Floyd Stoltzfus

Come with me on a brief tour of Calvary Bible School. Nestled in the Ozark Mountains is this plot of ten acres with four major buildings, several cabins and two storage sheds. Presently (Feb. 1, 2005) more than 140 people occupy and enjoy the ample facilities that our supporting churches have made possible with skilled labor and finances.

The rising bell at 6:15 is a wake-up call with beautiful singing over the new telephone/intercom system. A short Scripture reading concludes the wake-up call. At 7, the kitchen and dining room's welcoming aroma of delicious food adds a new wake-up dimension and the day is on its way.

The chapel is the center of activity and the central meeting room for the students and faculty. The hard plaster walls and ceiling make this sanctuary an ideal acoustical facility for four-part harmony to ring with beauty and strength. It draws one to prayerful, sometimes tearful, worship in the presence of God's awesome holiness. In the daily schedule is a time for private student devotions in some secluded spot.


We have five, 55-minute class periods in the regular schedule, plus a time for chorus and a period for testimonies, Bible reading and prayer. These spiritual disciplines and the subjects offered are designed to prepare young people for Christian service.

Both Old and New Testament books are studied along with the basic studies about the Church with its Christian ordinances, biblical nonresistance, and separation and nonconformity. Other studies often chosen with interest are subjects like Current Music Issues, Victorious Christian Living, Rudiments of Music and more. We encourage students to study church history. Missions classes are appreciated in that they portray needs nearby and far away.

We thank God for calling young people from New York, Minnesota, California, Texas, Florida and states in between. Some also come from nearby Canada, others from more distant places like Romania, Liberia, Haiti, Belize and El Salvador. We welcome all who come for spiritual refreshment from God's Word and revival by the Holy Spirit.

We see ourselves as short-term assistants to Christian parents and ministers of the Gospel in the development of young people. One of our key objectives is to encourage whole-hearted commitment and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. Another goal is to establish a solid foundation and firm conviction for biblical doctrine and principles. Thus we seek to instill appreciation for our Anabaptist Christian heritage. We encourage these dear young people to return to their

home congregations with godly attitudes and devoted loyalty. Our prayer is that all may devote their lives to Christian service in and through the church, and some may even hear and heed the call to the regions beyond.

We desire to express a heartfelt thank you to all the churches and individuals who have generously given food, money, time, and prayers for this small effort in God's great vineyard. May it all redound "Unto the praise of His glory!" 

One Family's Affliction

John Plett

Boley, OK

[Having become aware of the John and Helena Plett family's unusual situation, I asked Bro. John, senior minister in the Kleine Gemeinde congregation near Boley, OK, to write this for Calvary Messenger. He had submitted a longer article to a German periodical, Die Post. After that article was translated, he sent it to me. I have chosen to condense it for CM. Our sincere sympathy goes to the Plett family. —PLM]

What compels me to write this is because we have gone through a very hard time with our children. We have gone through serious medical situations and it has cost a lot of money. Eventually, five of our adult children died, three of them within six months, all

of them from a rare disease, *Fanconi Anemia*.

Through all of this, we have received many sympathy cards, letters from places like Canada, USA, Mexico and Belize. Many prayers were offered and many donations were sent to help with the great expenses. We cannot possibly thank everyone personally or let each of you know how much we appreciate it.

My Childhood

I was born in Blumenort, Manitoba, on June 27, 1930. I was the seventh of ten children born to Cornelius and Maria R. Plett. We weren't as well off as young people usually are these days, but we never thought anything of it. I can't remember that we ever went hungry.

The first funeral I remember was my grandfather's, Abram L. Plett. He was 16 when he came with his parents from Russia. When I was only four, he died from having the car he was riding in, a Model A Ford, overturn, breaking his neck. It made a big impression on me. It seemed awful to bury Grandpa and I prayed that I'd never have to die.

I went to school for 8 years, mostly learning in English. I was not always nice and sometimes had to be punished. The hardest punishment I remember was once when I set fire to a field that had high weeds and lied about the fact that I had done it. The resulting punishment seemed very hard, but today I am thankful for the experience. I am thankful for my upbringing. My parents often sang and told us Bible stories. I learned from them to pray when I was a child.

One experience about praying I had as a child that I've never forgotten is when I tried to burn an old haystack. It was too windy and the fire suddenly spread. I tried to extinguish it, but soon realized it was impossible to stop it. I knelt on the ground and prayed. Soon the fire was out. I am convinced God did it.

I had a tender conscience. For some years I felt lost and often prayed that God wouldn't let me die before I was ready. I got tired of that and was converted at 16 years and baptized soon after that.

Mexico Bound

When World War II started, the Canadian government wanted all young men to serve in the war. Those who didn't want to go and were conscientious objectors could do other work for the government. They could work in the bush, at a hospital, on a farm—wherever they were needed most. Because of this, and also because the government was taking over the schools, half of our church conference decided to find another country where they could have more freedom of religion. That's why the part of the Kleine Gemeinde (Little Church) to which we belonged moved to Mexico.

In the summer of 1947, I found a girl I fell in love with. Helena was the third child of Isaac U. Kornelsens. In the fall of 1948, she and her family moved to Mexico. My parents wanted to move also, but their visas were for a little later. So it was a lonesome time for me, but we sent a lot of letters to each other. At Christmas, 1948, my dad and Uncle Abe Plett went to Mexico to check things out and I got to go along. My parents finally moved in March, 1950.

Married Life

On September 10, 1950, we got married. We started our married life with almost nothing except enthusiasm and joy. From her parents, we got a cow and from my parents we got the money that one cow might bring in

Canada. That money bought us two cows and a pig in Mexico. The first two years we had crop failure. For instance, we got about 50 bushels of oats from 100 acres. So we had more debts than assets. In the third year, we had a good crop, and things started to improve.

Soon we started raising laying hens, which gave us good income. After the big harvest mentioned above, we sold about 60 hogs and paid off our debt. Soon after that, our laying hens got sick, so we got out of that business. Then we started a dairy farm. Eventually we bought a milking machine. In 1979, when we moved to Boley, Oklahoma, we were milking about 30 cows.

At Boley we bought about 125 acres of land, with only about 35 acres tillable. We leased land to grow more of the feed for our cows. At Boley, with expenses high and income small, my sons and I worked as carpenters until we got the dairy going. We also made firewood from our land to sell. Our girls also went out to earn a little extra.

When we decided to get out of the dairy in 1997, we started the parakeet business for income. When we quit dairying, we had about 65 cows and some heifers. We have now, in 2003, sold the last of our cows and leased the land to others. Now we have only the parakeets. We never got rich but we have had a good life and we are

thankful to the Lord for His many blessings.

When we moved to Boley in 1979, I was the only preacher to come from Mexico. Since that we have elected two deacons and three other ministers. I served the congregation here as leader for 17 years until our son-in-law, Ben Dueck, became the new leader. I was able to do my spiritual work joyfully, for the most part. The hardest part of my work was when there was a church split and some families started their own church.

Our Family

Now I will list our family. Helena and I had 12 children. I will name them with the year of their birth following: Harold, 1951; Virginia, 1954; Ervin, 1956; Esther, 1958; Frieda, 1960; Luella, 1961; Benny, 1963, who lived for only 5 days (cause of death unknown); Larry, 1965; Elizabeth, 1966; Caroline, 1969; Elma, 1970; and Arden, 1972. Children are a blessing from God and we cherished them dearly. They were relatively healthy when they were young. There were accidents but never any broken bones.

The greatest joy for us was that the children all gave their lives to the Savior. One son and two sons-in-law serve as ministers of the Gospel. We cannot thank God enough for His grace. One verse I especially like is 3 John 4, "I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth."

On September 10, 2000, we cel-

ebredated our 50th wedding anniversary. All our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren were together for four days. There were 65 of us.

Our Experiences With Illness

Now I will describe our experiences with illness, which is the main reason that I'm writing this report. Esther was asked to teach German classes in Seminole, Texas, in 1986. After 1½ years, she got very sick. The doctors diagnosed her with stomach cancer and removed her whole stomach. Even with chemo treatments, which the doctor recommended, she died two weeks later, on March 21, 1988, when only 29 years old. It impacted my wife so much that it seemed her heart would give out. After several visits to a specialist, her condition stabilized. By taking heart medication regularly, she now does quite well.

In August, 1987, Luella, our daughter, and Ben Dueck had a premature daughter who spent nine months in the hospital and eventually died. It was hard to see her often poked with needles trying to find veins. It cost a lot of money, but Medicaid covered most of it. Their third child, Jerry, had to stay in the hospital for 2 ½ months before he could come home. Even at home, he has had to have a respirator but now does fairly well.

In October, 1999, we found out that Elma (Mrs. Kenneth Dueck) was not doing well. After many tests and a trip to New York, she was finally

diagnosed with a rare disease, called Fanconi Anemia (FA). After this, our whole family got blood tests, which were sent to NY, and it was discovered that both Helena and I are carriers of this illness, which doesn't affect us individually. We were told that probably 1 of 4 children born to a couple like us will have the disease. It happens that 5 of our 12 children, and most likely Esther also, had it.

There is no cure for FA except with a bone marrow transplant. Once this disease manifests itself, such people have to have blood transfusions until they can have a bone marrow transplant or the disease will result in cancer.

After October, 1999, Elma had to get blood transfusions every five weeks. After much soul searching, prayer, and anointing with oil, Ken and Elma decided that Elma would have a bone marrow transplant. In January, 2002, this was done in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Because her sister was the best match, she was chosen to be the marrow donor. The operation seemed to turn out well, but many complications arose and finally a muscle and nerve disease, Guillain Barre Syndrome, left her very weak and helpless. She had to be fed and totally cared for. Finally, however, Elma got enough better that she went home to Oklahoma on November 23, 2002.

Even in Oklahoma, she had to spend

time in the hospital and they gave up hope that she would ever get well and thus let her go home. She was placed on oxygen and lived for only part of a day at home. She flew into Jesus' arms on March 22, 2003, at 32 years old.

The total cost was very high. We had to pay \$220,000 before her surgery. Many donations came from far and wide. The medical fund which we have with other congregations carries a large sum. This medical fund was not set up to pay for transplants, but they did anyway. So with this fund and some borrowed money, they went to Minneapolis. But this amount wasn't nearly enough. Finally, a congregation in Minnesota paid for all the bills up to April 1st. But there was still \$100,000 left to pay from previous medical bills. They finally told us that if we'd send \$80,000, they would accept that as full payment. So that's what we did. We never were told what the total bill was, but figure it would have been more than \$1,000,000.

Frieda (Mrs. Jake Martens) also got sick. Frieda and Jake had been married in February, 1993. They were unable to have their own children, so they adopted a son, Jason, in November, 2001. Frieda's blood test showed that she also had FA. In January, 2002, she had her teeth extracted because of gum disease. Even after she had her dentures, she never got rid of pain in her gums. Later hit with a serious mouth infection, which spread to her

toes and fingers, she was hospitalized. She went to the hospital, but we saw that she was losing out and she died December 18, 2002, at 42 years old.

Our son, Larry, married Lydia Friesen, on September 9, 1990, in Chihuahua, Mexico. They moved to Boley and worked with us on the farm until they moved to Lott, Texas, in 1999. They transferred their membership to Faith Mennonite Fellowship there. Before they moved, they adopted a daughter and after they were there, they adopted two more.

In March of 2002, they realized that FA was his problem and in May, he already had leukemia. After he realized he had leukemia, he tried to make sure that the parakeet business could continue making a living for Lydia and the children. It has worked well.

One man Larry visited in jail came to visit him when he was sick, even though this man was not a Christian. He said he had no better friend on earth than Larry.

Larry had serious struggles with assurance of forgiveness from God for his sins. We visited Larry and Lydia the entire last week of his life. One day he suddenly had a doubt about his salvation. I tried to encourage him. A few days later when I asked him if he had peace, he said "Yes." He died on January 22, 2003, at 37 years of age. The funeral was held in the Beachy church in Lott and the burial was in the big graveyard in Friedhof, west


of Lott.

I have had a battle, too. If God is a God of love, why do people suffer so much? But we don't want to doubt. We know God makes no mistakes. Even though we don't understand now, some day we'll know why. We want to say with Job, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

Caroline went to the hospital on April 19, 2003. Her situation soon looked hopeless. Even though several transfusions were given her, we saw that FA was taking her down, and she was getting very weak. On May 9, 2003, she died at 34 years of age. So

our four daughters all lie side by side in the cemetery.

I have not written this to get pity, but to give God praise for strength and faith which He has given.

[It is difficult to overstate how severe such a test has been for these parents in their seventies. Going from an apparently healthy family of twelve children to only six surviving children through much pain and exorbitant medical expense, would test any of us. To see one's loved ones in intense suffering is one of life's severest trials. Thank you, John, for telling your story to our readers. God be with you, John and Helena] —PLMJ 

helpers at home

Spring Time De-clutter

Mary June Glick

As March approaches we begin to think of spring. Spring along with daffodils and crocuses brings renewed energy and enthusiasm. For us women that seems to suggest housecleaning, since it's still too early to dig in our gardens and flowerbeds. Some women give the house a twice-a-year, thorough cleaning. Others settle for once a year. I admit that I don't clean as I used to. My strategy is to give each room an extra weekly cleaning. Then I tell myself that my housecleaning is finished and my mind is at ease. I

am learning as I'm getting older and have less energy, that not everything has to be done.

I would like to give a few tips to you women, especially young mothers who find housecleaning to be overwhelming:

1. Take one or two rooms each week with your weekly cleaning and give them an extra thorough cleaning—dusting, cleaning windows and sweeping down the cobwebs. Or take one day to do all the windows, another to dust the furniture, and so on.

2. Make a list and cross out each job as you go. A lot of frustration comes from a cluttered mind.

3. Get rid of clutter. Clean out the magazine rack and go through the bookcase. Return books to the library or to the owner. Sort through the toys; you will be amazed at how many broken or unused toys you'll find. Have one bag for the throwaways, another for the "giveaways." Organize the toys. Plastic storage containers with lids are very nice. Put art supplies in one, doll toys in another, Legos in another, and so on. Mark each box. Encourage the children to play with one box at a time and then to put things back in place. My daughter-in-law puts her older girls in charge of organizing the toys.

4. Clean out your closets. Get rid of what you don't use. Throw out things that are too old and give away what is still good. Someone may be grateful for them. Organize. Hang all hangers in the same direction so you could quickly grab them in case of a fire.

Use stewardship in your closets.

5. Go through your kitchen and get rid of all those gadgets you never use.

6. I have always enjoyed having my own desk where I can organize my mail writing materials, cards, stamps and so on. You can even use baskets to hold these supplies.

You may have guessed by now that I would rather organize than clean. I realize we are all different in these areas. I believe that a cluttered house can make a tired and frustrated woman.

And that brings me to the thought of decluttering our minds. Get rid of those bits of gossip, the stress of fear and worry, the thoughts of anger and jealousy. Don't harbor bitterness and resentment, but fill your mind as Paul tells us in Philippians 4:8 with things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely and of good report.

It's springtime! It's time to enjoy a clean house and a joyful spirit.



junior messages

The Fiery Furnace

Anita Yoder

Ligonier, IN

The day finally arrived for Michael and his classmates, the great day for the field trip

to Greenfield Village. The school provided a bus and volunteer parents, so that a teacher or parent led a group

of five students.

“You are all on your own. Just meet back at the park for lunch,” Mr. Miller beamed. “And, remember to look for interesting facts to share tomorrow. Leaders, be responsible for your students and stay together as a group.”

“Mrs. Schrock, let’s go this way; we want to see the barns,” the boys decided together.

“Is that fine with you girls?” Mrs. Schrock asked.

They agreed by falling in step with the group. What a big, exciting place of history!

As they walked along the paths, they toured a mill and a barn, next to where field work was being done as was long ago. Then they saw women washing laundry outside by hand.

“It took so much work to live long ago,” Shelly said.

“Oh, look at those cute little ducks,” Adrian laughed.

A puff of steam and a loud whistle startled the group. All five students surrounded their leader and pled, “Can we have a train ride?”

“Well, let’s see. It’s nearly 11 o’clock; we are quite a ways from the train station. Why don’t we do that after lunch?”

“Yes, goody!” they bounced and clapped, almost stumbling over each other.

“Let’s see what’s in this building.” Happily they followed Mrs. Schrock

in eager anticipation.

“My, this place is warm,” stated Ryan matter of factly.

“Why is there a fence in here on the inside?” asked Julia.

“It looks to me like a glass blower is working,” Mrs. Schrock commented. “Follow me; let’s get a better view.” The group managed to squeeze in closer. The glass blower was attaching a handle to a beautiful burgundy pitcher. When he saw the group gather, the glass blower explained his craft.

“Take a look at the crucible across the fence at your feet. It is a porous container filled with sand. We crafters fill the crucibles with chunks of glass and put them in this furnace.” He opened the doors so everyone could see the different pots sitting in the fiery, hot furnace. “These chunks of glass need to reach a specific temperature before we can use them. And since there are several of us demonstrating this craft, we always keep plenty ready to use.”

“Oh, isn’t that beautiful!” exclaimed Adrian, as the finished pitcher took shape. “I would love to buy one for my mother.”

They watched earnestly as he started the next project, opening the furnace doors and reaching in to grab another red hot chunk of glass.

“Think of the three Hebrew boys in the fiery furnace,” whispered Michael. “They were willing to go to

a furnace like that, instead of bowing down to worship an idol.” The solemn students all turned to look at Michael.

“That’s right!” acknowledged Mrs. Schrock. “We’d better go find the park. We’ve been here for 25 minutes. Reluctantly, they made their way out the side door.

“How interesting that was!” Julia remarked. “I could watch all day.”

“Ooooooh, that furnace was hot! Did you see those flames?” asked Ryan.

“What was the purpose for the fiery furnace for the three Hebrew boys?” Mrs. Schrock asked.


“God took care of them and was in there with them. They had faith that God could keep them safe if He wanted to,” one student ventured.

Mrs. Schrock continued, “Was the fiery furnace for the three Hebrew boys, then, if they had faith already?”

“No, Mrs. Schrock, it was for the king and all the other people,” Shelly said. “That must have been extremely difficult for them to go through all that for the sake of the other people.”

At the end of the day, in the gift shop, the group looked adoringly at all the beautiful glass pieces. But the prices were far out of their reach.

“I wish each of you could have a piece like this, but it looks like they aren’t affordable,” Mr. Miller observed. “One thing we won’t forget is that glass blower. Heat makes beautiful things. I think the fiery furnace for the three Hebrew boys, made their faith shine, too, wouldn’t you say?”

“Yes,” they sighed, as they looked longingly and walked away slowly from the window full of beautiful, sparkling glass treasures. 

youth messages

Unlimited Visibility

Anne Yoder

El Resbaladero, El Salvador

Good morning and welcome aboard Delta flight 695, non-stop service from Atlanta to San Salvador. It’s a perfect day for flying, weather conditions

clear, temperature 52 degrees, visibility unlimited.” The flight attendant kept on talking, but I was no longer listening. Unlimited visibility? Is that possible. Regardless of weather

conditions, isn't our visibility always limited?

Several hours later, I found myself gazing out across a wide expanse of clouds. As far as the eye could see, clouds stretched out in every direction. Their billowing peaks looked like range upon range of snow-topped mountains. I wondered what lay beyond the horizon, beyond that

last wispy bank of clouds that bordered my view. I wondered, too, what lies beyond the horizon for me, my future, my dreams, and aspirations.

And at that moment, seated on that Delta airplane, I felt a quiet thrill of joy knowing that I can trust my future into the hands of the only One whose view is truly unlimited.



I AM

Anne Yoder

El Resbaladero, El Salvador

- When you feel alone...I AM the All-present One
- When life seems uncertain...I AM the Anchor of your soul.
- When everything seems against you...I AM the shelter in time of storm.
- When you know you've failed...I AM your Redeemer.
- When you need strength...I AM the Bread of Heaven.
- When you're confused...I AM the Truth.
- When night is dark around you...I AM the Light
that shines in the darkness.
- When you need to belong...I AM the Vine, ye are the branches.
- When you're sad or hurting...I AM the Comforter.
- When you're faced with decisions...I AM the Wonderful Counselor.
- When your problems are too big for you...I AM the Almighty.
- When you need security and love...I AM your Abba Father.



THOUGHT GEMS

We get tired of people who think that the right to freedom of speech includes the continual obligation to use it.

• • • • •

Men of genius are admired; men of wealth are envied; men of power are feared; but only men of character are trusted.

• • • • •

One of the marks of a gentleman is his refusal to make an issue of every difference of opinion.

• • • • •

Girls who fall in love with a fellow at first sight sometimes wish they had taken a second look.

• • • • •

A poor housekeeper's idea of housework may include sweeping the floor with a glance.

• • • • •

To really know a man, observe his behavior with a woman, a flat tire and a child.

• • • • •

Lazy men seem to prefer learning the tricks of the trade rather than the trade itself.

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Periodicals