



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

## DECEMBER 2022

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Calvary Messenger

December 2022

**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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## Lesser Lights

*Richard Stoltzfoos, Burgettstown, PA*

In Balaam's dream, a scepter rose,  
A star would come to smite the foes,  
The star of a king, the star of a God.

But Israel raised rebellion dark,  
Took Moloch's tent, and Remphan's mark,  
The star of a king, the star of a god.

A star's thin call in night air rings,  
To lead three kings—sweet gifts they bring—  
The star of a king, the star of a God.

Heed the Word and light your eyes,  
Till in your hearts the Day Star rise,  
The star of a king, the star of God.

Christ is the season, light, and sign,  
The Morning Star of David's line,  
The star of a king, the Star of God.



## Earth-Shattering Dangers

On November 24, 2021, NASA launched a spacecraft on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket from the Vandenberg Space Force Base in California. This spacecraft was the Double Asteroid Redirection Test (DART)<sup>1</sup> that was intended to crash into Dimorphos, a small asteroid about 6.8 million miles from Earth, to test a potential technique to protect Earth from collisions with large space rocks.<sup>2</sup>

On September 26, 2022, at 7:14 p.m. EDT, the DART spacecraft or Impactor<sup>3</sup>, with a central box-shaped structure approximately four feet square weighing 1260 lbs., crashed into Dimorphos, a relatively small space rock approximately 560 feet in diameter, about the size and mass of the Great Pyramid of Giza. It effectively changed the asteroid's motion in space. This marked humanity's first time

purposely changing the motion of a celestial object and the first full-scale demonstration of asteroid deflection technology.<sup>4</sup>

While this small asteroid posed no danger to Earth, it was mankind's practice shot at redirecting future space objects that could alter or destroy the planet Earth. NASA continues to search for and identify celestial bodies that could affect or destroy the planet. What can we learn from this recent scientific experiment?

This project is akin to (but not at all close in proportion to size or distance) attempting to find and destroy birds or animals that may strike your vehicle on a trip across the country. Of course, the paths of birds and animals are random and without the constant trajectory of space rocks. In years gone by, small items were sold to mount on the front of your vehicle to warn animals of your approach so they would turn away. These were more or less successful.

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1 <https://www.space.com/dart-asteroid-mission>

2 <https://www.space.com/dart-asteroid-smasher-reveals-dimorphos-mysteries>

3 <https://dart.jhuapl.edu/Mission/Impactor-Spacecraft.php>

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4 <https://www.nasa.gov/press-release/nasa-confirms-dart-mission-impact-changed-asteroid-s-motion-in-space>

We may rely more on our alert senses to keep from colliding with animals crossing the highway while we drive. While we can do everything in our own power and incorporate every possible preventive measure for safety, we cannot possibly imagine or prepare for all of life's inherent dangers.

How do you prepare and respond to dangerous events that could hurt or destroy you? Do you live in constant anxiety or fear that at any moment a deer will jump into your line of traffic and cause an accident? Have you ever considered the inherent danger involved in meeting any vehicle on a two-lane highway when both of us are traveling at 55 miles per hour? Several decades ago, a neighbor was traveling on a state highway and was struck in the head by a rock that came through the windshield from an approaching truck. He survived after a considerable time in a coma. Life is filled with an innumerable amount of near-misses that we usually take for granted. This reminder of the dangers around us is not to strike fear into our hearts but to remind us that we have a heavenly Father Who knows about all of the things that will cross our paths and is with us when those things affect us.

I am reminded almost daily by the conversation of my fellow workers

that many people live in constant fear. Their response to the dangers around them is to build a personal arsenal of weapons and ammunition to be able to defend themselves when or if their lives are threatened. While we have no blanket promise of peace and safety, I rest in a great peace that the *“angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.”* While God does ask us to be alert and aware of our surroundings, *“watch and be sober”*, the best of mankind's efforts is no comparison to God's physical and spiritual protection.

We also have God's promise that He made to Noah after the flood that He would not again send a flood to destroy all the creatures on the earth. *“I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth”* (Genesis 9:13-16). (I believe it is very possible that an

asteroid may have been one of the factors God used during the flood.)

There is, however, one event that we should be preparing for and looking for. That is the second coming of the Lord.

*“But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let*

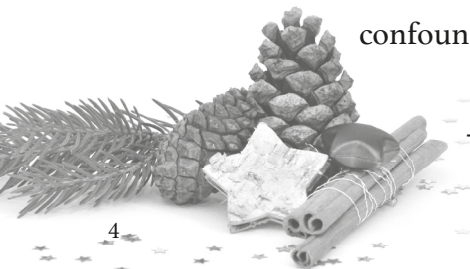
*us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation. For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do”* (I Thessalonians 5:1-11).

Let's keep listening for the trumpet of the Lord and His appearance in the skies! It is nearer than it has ever been. Will NASA see the approaching King of Kings and Lord of Lords?

-AY 

Trust in yourself and you are doomed to disappointment;  
trust in your *friends* and they will die and leave you;  
trust in money and you may have it taken from you;  
trust in reputation and some slanderous tongue may blast it;  
but trust in *God*, and you are never to be  
confounded in time or *eternity*.

-D. L. MOODY



## Announcement

# Helping People in Need Seminar

January 17-19, 2023

Washington, IN

## THE HEART MENDERS HANDBOOK: Common Problems

### Tuesday, January 17, 2023

*Getting Started (Foundations)* - Tom Johnson

*Battling the Blues (Depression)* - Bryan Fleagle

*Ghosts and Goblins (Worry and Anxiety)* - Merlin Martin

*I Can't Bear This (Grief and Loss)* - Paul Garber

### Wednesday, January 18, 2023

*Hidden Passion (Sexual Sin)* - Dave Snyder

*Tongues of Fire (Communication Issues)* - Ben Waldner

*I Own You (Abuse)* - Bryan Fleagle

*Just One More (Addictions)* - Paul Garber

*Don't Hurt Me (Fear of Man)* - Tom Johnson

### Thursday, January 19, 2023

*Why Me, God? (Hope in Suffering)* - Merlin Martin

*I Just Can't Help It (OCD)* - Ben Waldner

*I Hate It (Bitterness and Anger)* - Bryan Fleagle

*Chief Heart Mender (The God of Hope)* - Dave Snyder

Registration Deadline: January 6, 2023

To register, or for more information regarding the seminar, please call

812.254.3399 or email [freshstarttrainingcenter@yahoo.com](mailto:freshstarttrainingcenter@yahoo.com)

A **pint** of example  
is worth a **gallon** of advice.



## Comparisons at the Christ Event

[Based on Luke chapter 1]

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

### Elizabeth

1. Barren
2. An aged woman
3. Before conception—a reproach
4. Angel Gabriel visited her husband.
5. Gabriel gave a message to Zacharias.
6. Elizabeth was of the lineage of Aaron.

### Zacharias

1. An old man
2. A priest
3. A just man before God
4. Well-known among the people
5. Learned of the plan of God directly from Gabriel
6. Asked for a sign
7. Did not immediately believe
8. Could not speak for nine months
9. Experienced the double miracle of not speaking for nine months and then speaking again
10. Prophesied concerning his son, John

### Mary

1. A virgin
2. A young woman
3. After conception—a reproach
4. Angel Gabriel visited Mary.
5. Gabriel gave a message to Mary.
6. Joseph was of the lineage of David.

### Joseph

1. A young man
2. A commoner
3. A just man before God
4. An unknown man in the general society
5. Learned of the plan of God directly from an angel in a dream (Matthew 1)
6. No record of either Mary or Joseph asking for a sign
7. No record about Joseph's response
8. No record of Joseph having any physical limitations
9. Apparently was not tested by God in these matters
10. Received the prophecy concerning Jesus from the angel of God (Matthew 1)





- Both women were filled with the Holy Ghost.
- Both women were righteous, noble, and believing.
- Both women prophesied.
- Both women responded matter-of-factly.
- Both women were godly and God-fearing.
- Both women were good listeners.
- Both of their sons were named before conception.
- Both sons were born in differing and unusual circumstances.

This historical story has timeless applications and many worthy examples of godliness. We are again assured that God uses varying kinds of people to fulfill His good will. They are remembered in Holy Writ as good examples for Christians everywhere. *“And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save His people from their sins.”*

*“But when the fulness of the time (singular) was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5). “That in the dispensation of the fulness of times (plural) he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him” (Ephesians 1:10).*



**The Bottom Line is:**

Receive His *gift*,  
 Experience His *love*,  
 Ponder His *peace*,  
 Exult in the *joy*,  
 Relish the *good will*,  
 Share in the *hope*,  
 Join in the *song*,  
 Give glory to *God*.  
*Amen and Amen!*



# 'Twas the Night Before Christmas

'Twas the night before Christmas, the eve of Christ's birth.  
Many people were resting all over the earth.

The shepherds were watching their sheep in the night,  
When all of a sudden they saw a bright *light*.

And what to their wondering eyes should appear,  
But a *beautiful* angel high up in the air.

His face was all shining, his garment so *bright*,  
That the shepherds began to tremble with *fright*.

But as he came *nearer*, the words that he said,  
Soon gave them to know there was nothing to dread.

He told them of *peace* with no fear or danger,  
For their wonderful gift they would find in a manger.

So leaving their sheep they went into town,  
To seek for this gift they would look all around.

They came to the stable, the covers they lift,  
And there in the manger, God's wonderful *gift*.

So *pure* and so holy, so full of God's love,  
They knew it was Jesus, God's gift from above.


And as they returned from this wonderful boy,  
Their hearts were all running over with *joy*.

And so as we think of this Savior again,  
May our worship this Christmas not be in vain.

Let us *love* Him and trust Him;  
There's none that's too small.

May the Lord richly *bless* you,  
Happy Christmas to all.

[Selected by Aaron Lapp.]

William E. Jasper 

# The Foolishness of Preaching

John E. Glick, Narvon, PA

“**F**or the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God” (I Corinthians 1:18). Six times we find the word foolish or foolishness used as Paul wrote about preaching. Of course, it is evident that he was referring to carnal man’s opinion of it.

According to the Scriptures, the only way to receive eternal life is by faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible says that *“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God”* (Romans 10:17). *“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?”* (Romans 10:14).

God has chosen to have the message of salvation conveyed to mankind through human instruments. One of the primary ways of doing this is called preaching. To preach is to proclaim God’s truth. It includes warning against sin, announcing the good news of salvation, and instructing on holy living. God’s message can reach the hearts of humans as it is declared by fellow humans. The humanity of

the preacher enables him to identify with those who hear the message. Because he is “made of the same stuff,” he understands something of the needs of those he preaches to. A Spirit-inspired message, coming from the heart, will reach the hearts of those who hear. Such preaching has great potential of being used by God to change people’s lives.

Preaching has been God’s way of proclaiming His message since early in the history of mankind. Noah is called a preacher of righteousness. Likely, he urged the ungodly of his day to repent and turn to God. Jonah preached repentance to the people of Nineveh. The prophets proclaimed God’s truth to Israel and other nations. They called the people to repent of idolatry and worship the true God. John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles all were preachers who ushered in the New Testament age. Before Christ ascended to heaven, He commanded that the Gospel should be preached in all the world. Paul said he was appointed a preacher and an apostle.

In one sense we are all called to be preachers. People are reading our lives. Our words and actions ought

to be speaking to others around us. Our manner of life should convict the sinner and encourage the saint. Many times this includes verbal interaction with others.

Then there are those men who are ordained, commissioned, or in some way especially called to the ministry of preaching. This is indeed a high and holy calling. It calls for purity of life and a close walk with God. The effectiveness of one's preaching is closely connected to his intimacy with the Lord. The church of today is in great need of men who are filled with God's Spirit and enthused about His message. Sadly, today in many churches, both the quantity and quality of preaching have been diminished. Our Anabaptist churches are not immune from this. It is not so many years ago that tent revivals would sometimes continue for several weeks with the tent filled to overflowing. Preachers would boldly speak out against the sins of their day. Many would walk the sawdust trail to repent and turn to God. Some of us can remember hour-long sermons on Sunday morning. Winter Bible schools were well-attended. Sunday evening services frequently included preaching.

I acknowledge that there may be legitimate reasons for less of some

such activities. Changes in lifestyles may make certain types of meetings less practical in our day. We also have some good things going that were not available in the past. But I fear that some of the changes we see are due to a departure from a fervent love for the Lord and His Word. Abundance of activities geared toward entertainment can easily be stealing our time. Our affluent lifestyle may well be fostering spiritual complacency.

Certainly, there are other activities that can be a meaningful part of collective worship. Much could be said about the importance of praying, singing, testifying, etc. But I believe Scripture indicates that preaching was central in the worship services of the early church. Is that not the pattern we should still follow today? Is it a good thing when singing groups draw larger crowds than preaching services? Do we have our priorities right when the sermon time is cut back to 30 or 35 minutes? Could it be that modern technology has affected our attention span?

Preaching that reaches the heart is rich with the Word of God. Stories can be helpful in a sermon but should enhance and not distract from the focus of the message. A message born in the prayer closet of the preacher will be much more effective than

an internet commentator's outline. A discourse on politics or world events will never inspire like God's unchanging Word. God's Word is like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces. It is a perfect food that meets the spiritual needs of all who gladly receive it. When it is expounded by men of God it can have amazing effects on the hearts and lives of people.

Despite obvious apostasy, encouraging things are still happening. I see God raising up a generation of younger men who are taking the baton and enthusiastically proclaiming His message. God's purposes will not be defeated. There will be a faithful remnant when our Lord returns. Jesus said, "And

*this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come"* (Matthew 24:14). A dear brother used to give this advice to preachers. "Pray till the tears come, study till the message comes, preach till Jesus comes."

We should not be surprised that preaching is considered foolishness by those who don't know the Lord. But when we are born again by the Spirit of God, we begin to desire things that never appealed to us in our unregenerate state. A hunger for God's Word is a mark of the true Christian. Should it not be our passion to receive it with all readiness of mind and then to pass it on to others?



## mission awareness

# The Christmas Season

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

Christmas time is a season when missionaries may face loneliness (isolated; standing apart from others), somewhat with a heavy heart. Missionaries can turn this season into a time of joy by preaching and teaching on the glorious doctrine of the incarnation of Jesus Christ. It can be a special time

of personal visits with individuals and families in sharing the Good News of the Kingdom. Let us continue to engage in singing Christmas carols that have touched many lives through the centuries. There is probably not a time of the year when nationals need missionaries more than during the Christmas season.

Now I am aware, not all missionaries in certain lands can personally, publicly, and freely share the Gospel because of religious or government restrictions. This may be a time to especially remember our Christian workers on the field in prayer or by writing them a note of encouragement. There are deeper struggles missionaries may face. Today we live in an age of electronic mail when news travels at the speed of light. May we not forget our missionary friends whom we have blessed and sent to some far away land. It is also of great value and equally meaningful that missionaries give updates and regular reports of their labor in the Lord. Read on.

## **Struggles Missionaries May Face**

*(from the ALIGHT paper, printed by CLP, March-April 2004)*

At commissioning services for outgoing missionaries, emotions run high and congregations promise support. Missionary families leave with the feeling, "These people are really behind us." But in several years, when the newness has worn off, they begin to wonder how far behind their friends really are.

Missionaries often struggle for answers to questions their home friends never faced. How can a

needy mission congregation provide for a widowed church member with six small children? How can they encourage Christian teens or mothers standing alone in the midst of immorality, dishonesty, distrust, and broken homes? How can missionaries strengthen each other in facing physical dangers, robberies, kidnappings, and threats against them? How can missionary parents meet the educational, social, and fellowship needs of their older children in a foreign country?

Missionaries may struggle with discouragement when a number of believers forfeit church membership in order to vote in national elections. "Where did we fail?" they ask themselves. The devil knows discouragement hinders progress.

What is the answer to all these pressures and perplexities? The missionaries should trust God. Homefolks may glibly say that, and the missionaries may firmly believe it. With sincere hearts they are trying to cast their cares on the One Who many times has been their Fortress and their Deliverer. But demonic spirits are often a very real spiritual opposition. And missionaries are human. Pressures, sleepless nights, and the constant battle against evil take their toll physically, emotionally, and

spiritually—these things may lead to burnout. In addition to these things, the missionaries may feel out-of-touch and forgotten by the congregation who blessed them and sent them on their way!


What can home folks do thousands of miles away? Jesus said, “All power is given unto me.” He also said, “...lo, I am with you alway...” The same all-powerful Lord is with the missionaries and with us—a direct link. Holding their needs up to the Source of power is supporting them, much as Aaron and Hur held up Moses’s arms until victory came. Does our failure to pray enough sometimes limit the missionaries’ abilities and successes? One mission board chairman says, “Praying regularly with compassion about needs of specific persons and places is better than simply praying for missions and missionaries all over the world.”

Praying is a most important service, but contacting the missionaries themselves is also needed. In *Paraguay Ponderings*, Miriam Schrock reminds us that letters from home supporters bring encouragement.

*A people starved for news, soul-hungry for fellowship, lonely in the hidden corners of their hearts. No visitors to bring news. No telephones to contact far-away friends and family. No mailboxes, no fax machines, no visiting ministers for months on end.*

*And then letters come, “Letters, letters!” The cry resounds through the house, penetrates through the walls, and is joyfully echoed by each one who hears, “Letters!”*

*Quietness falls, interrupted only by rustling papers, a chuckle, or by a tidbit of news to share. Interrupted also by little voices asking wistfully, “Did I get anything?”*

*And the happy squeals of delight as we joyfully hand them a bit of paper with their very own name on it. The little ones were not forgotten. The dear folks at home wrote that they are praying for us daily. Our aching and hungry hearts are full. Almost reverently we return to our forsaken tasks and find that they too are lighter, for we have received letters, and home folks continue to pray.* 

*[Used by permission]*

When we think of how no two **SNOWFLAKES** are alike,  
we find it inspiring that they work so well together  
on such joint projects as closing schools  
and making roads impassable.

## marriages

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

### **Burkholder-Martin**

Bro. David, son of Manas and the late Mabel Burkholder, LaGrange, IN, and Sis. Regina, daughter of Lamar and Doris Martin, Lancaster, PA, on October 8, 2022, at Fair Haven Mennonite Church by Wilbur Yoder.

### **Eicher-Musser**

Bro. Caleb, son of Henry and Katie Eicher, Wellman, IA, and Sis. Katrina, daughter of Amos and Joanne Musser, Kalona, IA, on July 1, 2022, at Upper Deer Creek for Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church by Delmar Bontrager.

### **Kauffman-Bender**

Bro. Timothy, son of Kenneth and Barbara Kauffman, Guys Mills, PA, and Sis. Lucinda, daughter of Simon and Virginia Bender, Mifflinburg, PA, on June 4, 2022, at Shady Grove Mennonite Church by Simon Bender.

### **Mast-Overholt**

Bro. Milton, son of Darrell and Debbie Mast, Russellville, KY, and Sis. Marcena, daughter of Nate and Rose Overholt, Russellville, KY, on October 15, 2022, at Plainview Mennonite Church for Providence Mennonite Fellowship by Josh Graber.

### **Yoder-Miller**

Bro. Cordell, son of Rudy and Christine Yoder, Goshen, IN, and Sis. Jodi, daughter of Oran and Joy Miller, Millersburg, IN, on October 14, 2022, at Fair Haven Church by Phaylon Schrock.

### **Zehr-Jantzi**

Bro. Dylan, son of Tim and Charlotte Zehr, Millbank, ON, and Sis. Rosina, daughter of Larry and Beatrice Jantzi, Brunner, ON, on October 29, 2022, at Donegal Mennonite Fellowship for Fairhaven Amish Mennonite Church by Arnold Jantzi.



## cradle roll

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

**Beiler**, Marcus and Joanna (Kurtz), Paradise, PA, eighth child, sixth son, Zebulun Eli, October 5, 2022.

**Bender**, Javan and Melody (Petersheim), Abbeville, SC, fifth child, fourth son, Bryant Clay, July 22, 2022.

**Brenneman**, Joel and Sharla (Hooley), Falkville, AL, first child and son, Taylor Andre, September 26, 2022.

**Fisher**, Leroy and Rebekah (Miller), Mifflin, PA, tenth child, fifth daughter, Sariah Hope, August 24, 2022.

**Garber**, Lyndon and Abigail (Overholt), Melvern, KS, second child and daughter, Autumn Joy, September 14, 2022.



**Helmuth**, Ross and Jenise (Wittmer), Loogootee, IN, second child, first daughter, Arayna Joy, August 17, 2022.

**Herschberger**, Daniel and Ruth (Beiler), Honey Brook, PA, sixth child, third daughter, Katrina Joy, October 25, 2022.

**Hershberger**, Nevin and Veronica (Hochstetler), LaGrange, IN, second child, first daughter, Piper Jane, September 30, 2022.

**Kanagy**, Benji and Esther (Riehl), LaGrange, IN, third child, first son, Gabriel Benjamin, October 4, 2022.

**Kanagy**, Ken and Susanna (Stoltzfus), Blackville, SC, third child, first daughter, Adelyn Joy, born June 20, 2022, adoption finalized October 25, 2022.

**Kauffman**, Dwayne and Bethany (Hurst), Swanton, MD, second child, first son, Avery Brennan, September 20, 2022.

**Kauffman**, Zachary and Samantha (Yoder), Reedsville, PA, first child and son, Christian Timothy, September 14, 2022.

**King**, Ryan and Stephanie (Mast), Goodspring, TN, first child and daughter, Morgan Rae, September 27, 2022.

**Knepp**, Gary and Sarah (Raber), Lexington, IN, fourth child, third son, Bryce Carter, June 13, 2022.

**Lapp**, John Alan and Lydia Ruth (Stoltzfus), Holtwood, PA, fifth child, fourth son, Zayne Asher, October 5, 2022.

**Lara**, Jorge and Eunice (Mazelin), Montezuma, GA, second child, first son, Nicolas Joel, August 26, 2022.

**Miller**, Bradley and Charity (Yoder), Millersburg, OH, third child, first daughter, Emerald Nicole, October 12, 2022.

**Miller**, Jason and Carolyn (Graber), Auburn, KY, third child, second son, Hudson Ty, October 2, 2022.

**Raber**, Jason and Katrina (Wagler), Lexington, IN, seventh child, fifth daughter, Hadli Grace, September 28, 2022.

**Rissler**, Earl and Lisa (Weaver), Lewisburg, Pa, eighth child, fourth daughter, Edith, July 18, 2022.

**Savchenko**, Maksym and Olha, Russellville, OH, fifth child, third son, Daniel, September 12, 2022.

**Wagler**, Brandon and Irene (Knepp), Loogootee, IN, second child and daughter, Kylie Ann, August 18, 2022.

**Wagler**, Jeffrey and Kristin (Wagler), Odon, IN, fifth child, third son, Beckham Jefferson, October 12, 2022.


## ordinations

**Yoder**, Caleb and Sherilyn (Troyer), Partridge, KS, third child and son, Rhys Gilbert Lewis, October 9, 2022.

**Yoder**, DJ and Hannah (Detweiler), Auburn, KY, first child and daughter, Rose Adeline, October 2, 2022.


**Yoder**, Jared and Rosanna (Miller), Hanover, IN, third child, second daughter, Savannah Kate, September 15, 2022.

**Yoder**, Joe Allen and Glenda (Bender), Rural Retreat, VA, fourth child, second daughter, Kylie Chante, October 12, 2022.

**Yoder**, Weston and Shirley (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, first child and son, Darren Paul, August 1, 2022. 

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

**Bro. Gabriel Beachy**, 57, (wife, Sheila Ropp), Wellman, IA, was ordained bishop for New Hope Mennonite Church, Washington, IA, on June 5, 2022. Preordination messages were given by Glen Chupp. The charge was given by Delmar Bontrager. Elwyn Stutzman shared the lot.

**Bro. Brian Miller**, 35, (wife, Rosie Gingerich), Grove City, MN, was called by the voice of the church and ordained deacon at Believers Fellowship Mennonite Church, Grove City, MN, on September 25, 2022. Preordination messages were given by Nathan Yoder. The charge was given by Glen Chupp. 

## obituaries

**Friesen**, Anna, 81, of Lott, TX, and Spanish Lookout, Belize, passed away April 28, 2022, in Belize. She was born to Abram and Anna Schmitt on July 25, 1940, in Durango, Mexico.

Surviving are her husband, Peter Friesen, of Lott, TX, whom she married May 28, 2016; 17 children and stepchildren, and many grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her first husband, Abram Friesen, two daughters, and two sons-in-laws.

The funeral was held at Country Side Park in Spanish Lookout, Belize.

**Kuepfer**, Barbara Ann, 75, of Newton, ON, passed away on October 18, 2022, at the Rotary Hospice Stratford Perth. She was born November 7, 1946, in Stratford, ON, to Elmer and Annie (Lebold) Schmidt. She married Roy Kuepfer on May 13, 1967.

Barbara was a member of the Fairhaven Amish Mennonite Church. She will be missed by all for her gracious card-giving.

She was the loving mother of Arnold, Carolyn (Jason) Gerber, Judith Kuepfer, Dirk (Annie), Sheila (James) Roes, Silas (Elsie), Mark (Christy), Eric (Katie), Charlotte (Shawn) Jantzi, and Jessica

(Ryan) Carney.

Barbara was a special grandmother of 22 grandchildren. She will be missed by her stepmother, Ella Mae Schmidt, stepsisters and brothers, a brother-in-law, four sisters-in-law and their families, and by many nieces and nephews.

She was predeceased by her father, Elmer Schmidt, mother, Annie Lebold, daughter, Margaret Kuepfer, a sister-in-law, brother-in-law, and several step-siblings.

The funeral was held at the Donegal Mennonite Fellowship on October 23, 2022. Interment followed at the Mornington Amish Mennonite Church Cemetery with Arnold Jantzi officiating.

**Schrock**, Mary E., 95, Kalona, IA, passed away July 16, 2022, at her residence. She was born December 22, 1926, in Etna Green, IN, to Peter and Emma (Mullet) Graber. She was married to Olen L. Schrock December 2, 1948, in IN. They moved to the Kalona area in 1956.

She was a homemaker and much more. She enjoyed people, sewing, quilting, and flowers. She raised large volumes of vegetables to preserve for winter use. It's how she fed and raised her family. She never gave up on having a garden even after her mobility became limited. She was always generous with her produce and loved to share it with everyone.

Mary sewed hundreds of quilts, wall hangings, and comforters. She donated many comforters to mission projects in Mexico and later to CAM. She also donated many beautiful quilts to Pleasantview Benefit Sale and MCC sales as well as to her children, grandchildren,

and great-grandchildren.

She was baptized in her youth and was a member of Sharon Bethel Church. Mary was active in her church and with Prison Ministry as well as giving hours of time to sort and pack clothing to send to various missions.

Mary's greatest desire was that her children walk in a relationship with the Lord and live their faith.

She is survived by her 10 children: Wayne (Norma), Millersburg, IN; P.R. (Sherry), Wellman; John (Diane), Wellman; Carl (Julie) and Lawrence (Linda), both of Syracuse, IN; Jay (Lori), Kalona; Ezra (Dawn), Wellman; Ruth (Lawrence) Schlabach, Kalona; Rachel (Mike) Wagler, Naples, FL; Rosemary (Mark) Slabaugh, Kalona; 31 grandchildren; 29 great-grandchildren; three sisters: Dorothea Gingerich, Kalona; Ruth (Joe) Graber, Spooner, WI; Susie (Homer) Hershberger, Leon; a brother, Paul (Anna) Graber, Ava, IL; and brother-in-law, Eli Kuhns, Etna Green, IN.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Olen, on December 18, 2016; parents, two sisters: Amanda Kuhns and Martha Kaufman; brother, Ralph (Sharon) Graber; and two brothers-in-law: Jacob Gingerich and Enos Kaufman.

A funeral service was held July 20, 2022, at Fairview Mennonite Church in rural Kalona. Burial was in Sharon Bethel Cemetery.

**Yoder**, Carolyn Ann, 41, of Mifflintown, PA, peacefully passed away on August 12, 2022, at her home surrounded by her loving family, after a

courageous five-year battle with cancer. She was born December 5, 1980, to Levi and Naomi Fisher in Lancaster, PA. On April 7, 2001, she married Steve Yoder.

Carolyn was baptized as a youth at Shade Mountain Church and was a faithful member until her death. She will be remembered for her loving spirit, gentle and patient ways, and the kindness and generosity she showed to everyone. She loved her family dearly and found joy in being a wife, mother, and homemaker.

She is survived by her parents, husband, Steve, children: Shane, Caleb, Sheila, Serena, Carmen, Cedric, and Charise; and eight siblings: Nathan (Ruthie), Elvin (Sara Lynn), Stephen (Hannah), Rosena (Darvin) Zook, Rhoda (Patrick) Ramos, Sharon (Steve) Beiler, Janie (Desi) Denault, and Arlin (Sharon).

The funeral service was held on August 15, 2022, at Cedar Grove Brethren in Christ Church with Daniel Fisher and Leroy Yoder officiating. Interment followed at Shade Mountain Church Cemetery.

**Yoder**, Naomi, 84, of Meyersdale, PA, died peacefully at her home on September 24, 2022. She was born on June 14, 1938, in Dover, DE, to the late Jonas L. and Rachel S. (Beiler) Stoltzfus. She was a devoted wife to her husband, Alton J. Yoder, for 54 years until his passing.

She was a dedicated mother who encouraged reading and taught her children to accept Jesus as their Savior.

Naomi was an active member of Mountain View Mennonite Church, serving on the food committee and as

president of the sewing committee for a period of time. An avid quilter until her passing, there were always quilts being worked on in her home. She loved flowers, and while her favorite color was blue, she always made sure there were a variety of colors around her home where she could see them.

Naomi cherished family gatherings which she hosted her entire adult life. In her later years, she enjoyed putting puzzles together with family and friends. She enjoyed reading and was very fond of watching birds.

She was preceded in death by an infant daughter, a grandson, Austin, seven sisters, and one brother. She is survived by four sons: Vernon D. (Eleanor), Meyersdale; J. Victor (Kimberly), Huntersville, NC; Kevin R. (Ericka), Pittsburg; Keith J. (Debra), Centreville, VA; and three daughters: Edith A. Yoder, Meyersdale; Regina S. (Lyndon) Yoder, Statesville, NC; Connie L. (Jason) Lapp, Birdsboro; 17 grandchildren and five great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held at Mountain View Mennonite Church on September 28, 2022, with Terry Yoder and Daniel Shetler serving. Interment followed in the church cemetery.

**Yoder**, Noah W., 71, of Montezuma, GA, passed away March 17, 2022, surrounded by his family. He was born May 7, 1950, to William and Emma (Weaver) Yoder in Princess Ann, VA. He married Susan King on March 16, 1973, and they cherished 49 years together.

He dearly loved his Jesus, wife, children,


and grandchildren, whom he prayed for daily. For many years he loved to dairy farm alongside his boys. He also owned and operated Yoder's Storage Buildings.

In 1992, he was ordained minister in the Clearview Mennonite Church. In 1997, he was ordained bishop. He retired as bishop in 2021. His desire was to continue serving the Lord through preaching, but because of health issues, he was not able.

Surviving are his wife, Susan, five sons: Jeff (Gloria), Chad (Angela), Randy (Rhonda), David, Douglas (Malinda), all of Montezuma; two daughters: Virginia (Dave) Hochstetler, Washington, IN; Jewel (Lamar) Yoder, Montezuma; five

brothers: Norman (Vera), William Jr. (Lila), Ernest (Ellen), David (Dianne), all of Montezuma; Ivan (Rosemary), Lexington, IN; two sisters: Lovina (Roy) Yoder, Susan Yoder, both of Montezuma; and sister-in-law, Kathryn Yoder, Montezuma.

He was preceded in death by his parents, brother, Paul W. Yoder, and niece, Margaret Yoder.

The funeral service was held on March 20, 2022, at Clearview Mennonite Church with his fellow ministers, Clyde Yoder, Henry Jr. Overholt, Wesley Yoder, and Dwight Yoder officiating. Burial followed in the church cemetery. 

## observations

We had six children born into our home. By now they have had more than 100 birthdays between them. As the children grew up, we often got them a birthday gift of some sort. As parents, we sometimes vacillated between choosing something that the child needed and something he or she wanted. An ideal gift was something that met both of these criteria.

Christmas Day is celebrated on December 25. While most of us understand this day has very little to do with the actual calendar day when Jesus was born, it is referred to as the Christian holiday that celebrates Jesus' birth. So, how do we

demonstrate our love for Jesus on this holiday commemorating His birth? If we wish to show our love to Jesus by giving Him gifts, what sort of gift would be fitting? Since Jesus is God, there isn't much He's really lacking or needing that we can provide, is there? Of course, as His hands and feet, we can give Him His rightful place in our lives, His children. I'm not sure if that is as much a gift as our "reasonable service." But we could see it as a gift, I suppose.

Maybe as we commemorate Jesus' birth we should see what we can give Him that pleases Him. A heart of surrender to Him and acts of service to those we have opportunity to bless

certainly agree with how Jesus taught His followers to live.

Christmas is a blessing for God's children inasmuch as Christ's Message and His glory is proclaimed in word and deed and attitude. We will likely miss that blessing if we skip straight to pleasing ourselves and each other in gluttonous and consumptive endeavors. Indeed, God is pleased when we love each other well. Let's anchor these Christmas activities and celebrations in an awareness that all of our lives should be to the praise of His glory.



Amou Haji was an Iranian man who recently died at age 94. For more than 50 years he had avoided the use of soap and washing with water because he feared it would make him ill.

He told the *Tehran Times* in 2014 that his favorite meal was porcupine. He also indicated that the non-standard choices he lived out were due to "emotional setbacks" he experienced while he was younger. His stance on personal hygiene reinforced his tendencies toward social isolation.

Some kind people took an interest in his well-being and provided a small cinder block structure for him in which he could seek shelter from the elements. Because of his aversion

to soap and water, he acquired the unofficial title as "the world's dirtiest man." Earlier this year, Mr. Haji acquiesced to the urging others were exerting on him, and he washed with soap and water. He soon became ill and passed away a couple of months later. It is unclear whether these two events are related.

We can opine what we wish regarding Mr. Haji's self-inflicted vulnerability to pathogens and germs. But since he lived to be 94 years old, we observe that his aversion to cleanliness didn't sentence him to die young.



Good stewardship of our own bodies and health are worthy responses as we recognize that we owe our lives to God. However, we can never, even with perfect choices and scrupulous carefulness, erase the inevitable fact that we are all mortal in the physical sense of the word. The distinction between adequate care for our bodies as the Lord's temple and the need to be in control of our health, gets a bit steep and slippery sometimes. Good health is a gift. Our best efforts can really tilt the balance in favor of long life and good health. But we have no guarantee of good health. There is a fairly solid correlation between the accumulation of birthdays and the accumulation of health challenges. It's one of the ways God continues

to remind us that we won't be here forever.

God invites us to a posture of surrender to Him rather than the impulse to control our lives, circumstances, and others. Our health is part of this package.

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Earlier this year researchers in Alaska attached a tiny GPS tracking chip in a young bar-tailed godwit from this spring's hatch. A mature bar-tailed godwit can weigh up to 22 ounces and measure 15-16 inches from the tip of its bill to the tip of its tail. So it is considered a large migratory wading bird.

On October 13 this particular micro-chipped bird left Alaska to migrate south. Eleven days later, on October 24, it touched down on the Australian island of Tasmania. Remarkably, this non-stop flight traversed 8,435 miles! This is the longest documented non-stop bird flight in the world. Very few of this species of birds have been tagged. So it is not known whether this non-stop flight is representative of typical migratory habits of the bar-tailed godwit or whether this astonishing journey is an outlier. Either way it is an amazing testament to God's creative genius in designing this long-distance flier.

A bird like this typically loses about

half of its body weight on a migratory journey like this. The winter is spent fattening up and regaining body condition which will be needed for the return flight.

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This is being written while my wife and I are in Kenya. Sunday, October 23, was one of those particularly rich experiences that seems to flavor cross-cultural worship experiences. We were privileged to attend the annual Family Seminar for the five Christian Believers' Fellowship churches in the Nakuru area. These churches were founded under the direction of Amish Mennonite Aid and continue with varying levels of support. Approximately 300 folks gathered at the Lamp and Light facility for this event. Three messages were shared, with each of them tailored toward the men, women, and children respectively. The combination of spirited Swahili singing, an attentive audience, and the presence of more than 100 children all contributed to the bouquet of details that shaped our impressions of this event. A crew of skilled Kenyan cooks prepared a delicious meal for the crowd, consisting of ugali, rice, beans, stewed meat, cooked cabbage, and chai. The fellowship and interaction were inspiring and challenging.

A similarly inspiring event occurred when the pastors and deacons met for an annual business meeting. With about a dozen missionary pastors and a bit more than twice as many Kenyan brothers in various leadership roles, there were almost 40 brethren who met. It was immensely gratifying to observe the national and missionary church leaders work together in mutually beneficial ways with various brethren leading out in a variety of capacities.

Currently there are 12 Christian Believers' Fellowship churches further west in Kenya surrounding the Kisumu area in addition to the five churches in the Nakuru region. A handful of believers is meeting regularly in Nyamira County and is eagerly anticipating when a

pastor can be sent to establish the congregation there. In the meantime, they continue to live joyfully and grow in the Lord, seeking fellowship with others as they are able.

It is exciting to see the faithfulness of God's children in this place and in this time. God is still calling people to Himself and equipping people to carry the work of the Kingdom forward.

• • • • •

The folks in Kenya are experiencing inflation. The price for many staples like flour, rice, beans, corn, and sugar have risen by as much as 50% or more according to anecdotal accounts on the street. Many of those trying to adjust to these increased costs have very little margin to continue adjusting.

-RJM 

## A Woman After God's Heart

### Christmas Light

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



It was on this wise that on each yuletide season of the falling away of the year, those who wished to sing melodies in celebration of the Advent of the Child Jesus would assemble around the highly regarded 1886 Felgemaker organ at the riverside Presbyterian Church. After multiple practice sessions, the

choir would present the collection of hymns and carols to all who cared to grace them with their presence and worship the King.

The Chorale was comprised of a hodge-podge of aged and nearly-aged with but a sprinkling of youthful voices. Mrs. Fulton, the accomplished organist, had the honors each season



of inviting all who would participate. She selected melodic pieces to bring joy to the giver and the receiver. Some were sacred. Others were more humorous than holy.

And so it was that on a certain fall day, the choir's gentlemanly violinist encountered his Mennonite friends at a local marketplace of sundries. They seemed to him as such that harbor affection for harmony and song. He invited the lasses employed at said marketplace to sing for him while he would play "Oh Beautiful Star of Bethlehem" on his violin as part of the collective concert. And indeed, they eagerly accepted his proposal.

Mrs. Fulton received word of the special act in rehearsal, and beseeched the Mennonite sisters if they would kindly consider linking in with the larger choir. She declared of a surety that their voices would be an advantage to the greater company. The sisters, ever in search of delight and of immersion with their neighbors, eagerly followed Mrs. Fulton's instructions.

But alas, they knew not how to respond to the Santa song that stood as part of the repertoire. Their sincere consciences could not trill through the Santa lines. Oh! What was to be done?

Together they voiced their hesitancy to Mrs. Organizer. Gracious and obliging, she arranged for the

Santa song to follow the special "Oh Beautiful Star of Bethlehem" violin/vocal rendition, and so the Mennonite girls could sit out on it unobtrusively, but participate throughout the other carols. The performance was superb, and attendees declared that night that they had heard angels sing.

Then dawned another fall of the year and another occasion for sounding Christmas joy onto hearers. Again, Mrs. Fulton beseeched the Mennonites to gratify the choir once more with their company. Without hesitation, the sisters were pleased to assist.

Cautiously, Mrs. Fulton inquired of the young ladies, "Is there whereof you are not pleased with in this listing of carols? We wish to be most considerate of your valued preferences."

The young ladies faltered briefly upon affirming that there was only one slight infringement upon their scruples, that being the line "Gee, the traffic was terrific" in "Home for Christmas." They had never used their precious Lord's Name in vain heretofore, and they never wished to begin doing so.


At the following meeting of practice the copies given to each participant had neatly lettered in the place of the Jesus abbreviation: "*Man*, the traffic was terrific!"

And so, the celebration of the riverside Christmas at the Presbyterian

Church was not blemished and the performance caused many throughout the pews to praise and glorify God for all the things which they had heard and seen.

Yet another season of carols fell upon the riverside congregation. Mrs. Fulton invited the Mennonite youthful ones with the word that “among others, we will sing five anthems this year!” Conductor Monti asked if any selection in the repertoire was less than pleasing to their standards. He stated that they intend this to be pleasant for everyone, and he wishes to promote community spirit with each selection. This time two Mennonite

friends of the sisters, a tenor and a soprano, united with the chorale. When Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus* rang out in the closing moments it was as if heaven came down and glory filled each soul.

The Mennonite youthful ones will live and sing their devotion with no help from Santa or Presley. They remain appreciative for the inspiring honor of praising the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, whether it take them alongside their Presbyterian neighbors or in the more predictable margins of their native surroundings. 

## junior messages

# Twelve Hours of Peace

*Hannah Eicher, McArthur, OH*

**T**he world is a little kinder, a little gentler, a little happier around December. Families gather and churches hold special services. Even at the mall, Christmas carols play over the noise of hurrying holiday shoppers.

Here in peaceful America, we forget the realities of war and the fear and sorrow it brings. I’m going to tell you a story of such a time.

Travel back in time with me, all the way to 1917. Those of you who

enjoy history will remember that this was a sad year for the world; World War I was raging in Europe. Many lives were being lost every day, and devastation, killing, and bombing were rampant.

It was Christmas Eve. Allied and German soldiers were facing each other in France, each side pounding the other with artillery shells. They fought in parallel lines, living in cold, muddy trenches with a few hundred yards of no-man’s land and barbed

wire between them. They kept low, afraid of showing themselves for fear of being shot.

It was a terrible way to spend Christmas, and we can be sure, as the night crept on, the thoughts of the soldiers on either side were turning to their families at home who would even now be beginning their holiday celebrations. Would they ever see their homes and families again? In a war, no one had any guarantee.

On the battlefield the sounds of guns and artillery shells whistling through the air was all that was heard. Would the awful war not stop, even for Christmas?

Then, at exactly 10:30 that evening, the Allied soldiers noticed something strange. The German guns had all fallen silent! Their own artillery was the only sound to be heard. Waiting and wondering, they listened as a little later the Allied guns in the rear also fell silent. An eerie quiet settled over the battlefield. What was happening?

Soon the news worked its way through the trenches. "Have you heard the news? The German high command has asked for a ceasefire—a Christmas truce!"

The hearts of the war-weary men lifted. No, they couldn't be with their families, but perhaps Christmas wouldn't be so bad after all!

At 10 minutes before midnight, the sound of a bugle split the silence. The truce was official! Flares from both sides brightened the dark night.

The Allied soldiers watched in amazement as the German men scrambled out of their trenches, and they weren't carrying their weapons. And then—what was that sound?

"Stille Nacht, heilige nacht,  
Alles schläft, einsam wacht..."

The Germans were walking across the no-man's land, singing the beautiful old carol. What a different sound from the whistle of shells and the barking of guns!

The Allied soldiers hurried to follow suit. They climbed out of their trenches, joining in the singing in their own tongue.

"...Round yon virgin mother and child,

Holy infant, so tender and mild..."

Different languages blended together, the music rising in the still, cold air.

Working quickly, engineers from both sides began to cut the barbed wire that separated them, and men from both sides met, greeting one another like friends.

It was amazing and beautiful. Only a few hours before, they had been shooting at each other, convinced that anyone on the other side was their enemy. Now, they built fires and

warmed themselves together around them, very likely talking as well as they could.

From both sides, chaplains arranged religious services, and soldiers from both sides participated in communion together. The happy celebration went on until noon of Christmas Day.

Then snow began to fall, and the men headed for cover in their trenches. The guns moved into position, and the battle began anew and again, the shooting and shelling, the killing.

The Christmas truce had not lasted long, only 12 beautiful hours. But it

was an example of what could happen if the whole world would lay down their weapons and walk toward each other in the spirit of the Christ of Christmas.

Children, remember to pray this Christmas season. Pray for peace in the world. Pray for the leaders of our country and the nations around the world. Most of all, pray that men might “hush the noise” of their strife and find the One Who made the angels sing, the One Who came to earth to show us what love looks like. Then, and only then, will peace come to this sin-sick earth.

Resource: *Your Story Hour Episode* 

## youth messages

# Under the Potter's Hand

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

**Y**outh is a time in life when anything seems possible. Much of our future is ahead of us, and there is an endless list of places to go and things to experience. It's easy to allow our dreams and passions to influence what we think God wants us to do. When life doesn't make sense, it's good to take a step back and look at the bigger picture.

God told the prophet Jeremiah to go down to a potter's house and

God would reveal His message to him. Jeremiah 18:1-6 says, “*The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to*

*make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."*

Recently while doing a study on brokenness, I decided to research whether or not a broken clay pot can be reused. As I began to explore the world of making pottery, I was struck with the many parallels that exist between it and our lives as Christians seeking God's will and trying to understand why things are happening to us. As youth, we have many questions, and it is sometimes difficult to discern what God is trying to teach or show us.

When a potter wants to prepare some clay for shaping or molding (or "throwing," in potters' terms), they need to be sure that the clay is pliable and clean. When using clay found in the field, as a rule that clay has some impurities. You can use a thin metal sieve to remove the larger impurities, but with the smaller ones such as small grains, you can use a process known as clay washing. The first step is to dry the clay very thoroughly so that it will disperse into water easily. Then take a hammer or something heavy and break big pieces of clay into small ones. After that, you put the clay in a jar, pour water over it, and

let it disperse. Depending on the type of clay, it can take from a few hours to several days to disperse. After the clay has dispersed, you mix the clay thoroughly and let it settle. The impurities will gravitate to the bottom of the jar while the clay and water will be at the top. There are a few more steps, but we'll leave it at that.

The beauty of the symbolism stopped me in my tracks and brought me to tears. For the sake of this comparison, we will liken ourselves to clay, the Word of God is the water, and God is the Potter. As mankind, we were first formed from the dust of the earth. In our original state we were nothing but dirt. Spiritually, in our original state, we were like the clay found in the field. We want to be useful and we might have ideas and dreams of how God will use us. But before the Potter can even begin to shape and mold us, we must be pliable and clean. If we aren't pliable and clean, we've started to dry out and there are impurities in our lives, so God has to start over. He has to "wash us," which involves hammers! It involves crushing and pounding. It calls for sifting, and yes, even sitting still and allowing ourselves to soak in the Word (the time frame which I might add is different for different types of clay) in order to separate the impurities from our lives. The

process of separating impurities takes time. It doesn't happen overnight—it's a process.

When God is satisfied with our cleanness and that we are ready to be shaped and molded, something else has to occur. The clay needs to be kneaded or “wedged” as the pottery community calls it. The first two steps of wedging call for a clean work area and a lump of clay to work with. Step three is to start wedging (or kneading) the clay. You roll it away from you by pushing down and away, then roll it back to you while putting your weight on it. This process removes air bubbles from the clay. Step four involves using wire to cut or slice the clay ball in half and check for pockets of air or bits of dried clay. If there are any air bubbles, press the clay back together into a ball and continue to wedge. In step five, if there are no air bubbles, press the clay together tightly and form it into a ball by rolling it on a work surface. Put moderate pressure on the clay while forming the ball. Step six—the clay is now ready to use for either wheel throwing or hand building. If you do not use all your wedged clay, make sure to keep it moist by covering with damp towels.

So even when we are considered ready to use, we may not be 100% ready yet. I don't know about you, but

that sounded like a lot of pressure! I want us to envision God wedging or kneading us. Sometimes life feels dark, and we may feel like God is so far away because He's applying pressure and pushing us away from Himself. But wait! What does it say the Potter does then? It says He stops, continues applying pressure, and then draws us back to Himself. What a beautiful picture! God allows pressure in our lives to get rid of those air pockets. The cutting? Ouch! I don't like my life being dissected and inspected. Sometimes our lives feel like they are falling apart because God has sliced us open (spiritually) to see if there are still pockets of self and the world that need to be dealt with. Even when we feel we are ready (and we may very well be), it might not be the time for us, and we may need to sit a while until God is ready to put us on the wheel. During that time we have to continue to keep ourselves covered with the moisture of the Water of the Word so that we don't dry out and need to go through the process again! We need to remain patient until God is ready to use us.

Staying ready and hydrated is one of the hardest things for us as humans to do. Personally, when I think I know what God wants for me, it's easy to run ahead of God. When we run ahead of God's plan for us, we

can quickly make a mess of things. God's timing is perfect.

If we stay ready and God is ready to work with us, God places us on His wheel. When shaping or “throwing” pottery on a wheel, it is extremely important that the clay is in the center of the wheel. Ask yourself if you are in the center of His “wheel” (or will)? For the sake of the argument, let's say you are. What now? Does it mean He is done? Far from it! The pressure, pushing, and shaping has just begun. For a few years, I felt that God wanted me to be a mission pilot, so for three years I pursued that dream. I went to Mennonite Air Missions in Guatemala for a few weeks. I started flight training, and studied Spanish. One day my brother told me, “Hey, did you see that AMA needs a school teacher in Cayo, Belize? You should check it out.” I called AMA's personnel director and life changed for me. I was shaping my own idea of what God wanted me to be. God applied some pressure in various areas of my life and my “shape” as a pilot changed to that of a school teacher. I could have ignored that pressure and continued with my plans. But then I wouldn't be who I am or where I am today.

Did I mention that air-dried clay that is not in the shape the Potter wants to use can be crushed and go

through the entire process all over again? How often do we push back against God's pressure and shaping in our lives and then have to go through it again? If we push back at God through any of these steps, we remain unusable. Until we submit to the Potter and His will, there is no going forward. We are literally going in circles. When we fight His will, we don't take on the form that He wants for us. I vividly remember those times when I felt that I had discerned God's will for my life and future, whether it was in regards to a relationship, a job, or my church family. God took what I was shaping, crushed it, and through the pain, pressure, and shaping, God created something more beautiful than I could have imagined for myself.

Where are we in the process? There may still be impurities and things in our lives that are keeping us from being used. Maybe we are in the midst of being wedged and pressured and pushed and then drawn back again in order to crush those empty pockets—those wasted areas in our lives that will weaken us as a final product. Perhaps He's still trying to get us centered on His wheel, or maybe He's currently applying pressure to shape an important aspect of your life. He knows the final product He has designed. Our

willingness to submit to His hand makes the difference in how long and painful that process will be for us.

**“But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand” (Isaiah 64:8).**

*Resources-*

*Thepotterywheel.com – How to prepare clay for pottery*

*Kleistonestudio.com – How to recycle clay*

*Lakesidepottery.com – Throwing a basic pot—Pottery wheel step-by-step tutorial*



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*Abbreviations used: BL=Bottom Line;*

*Ed=Editorial; GE=Guest Editorial; JM=Junior Messages,*

*Med=Meditation; MA=Mission Awareness; Obs=Observations;*

*P=Poem; W=A Woman After God’s Heart; Y=Youth Messages*

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Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

Courage is the fear that has said its prayers.

• • • • •

Babies are little rivets in the bonds of marriage.

• • • • •

A man is never so tall as when he stoops to help a child.

• • • • •

God so loved the world that he did not send a committee.

• • • • •

Many people hate any change that doesn't jingle in their pockets.

• • • • •

Conscience helps, but the fear of getting caught doesn't do any harm either.

• • • • •

One cannot help being old, but one can resist being aged.

• • • • •

Anger makes your mouth work faster than your mind.

• • • • •

The world at its worst needs the church at its best.

• • • • •

It takes both rain and sunshine to make a rainbow.

• • • • •

Advising a fool is like beating the air with a stick.

• • • • •

Prosperity makes friends; adversity tries them.