



# Calvary

## MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

MARCH 2023

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Calvary Messenger

March 2023

**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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## Peace With God and Man


*Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX*

Placing my faith daily in the atoning sacrifice of Christ  
Ever thirsting for a deeper communion with my Creator  
Always striving to think and live within His perfect will  
Cleansing myself from all sins of spirit, soul, and body  
Enjoying my salvation despite tribulation and affliction

Waiting expectantly for the soon return of my Savior  
Involving myself cheerfully in the work of His Kingdom  
Trusting God to meet every need through His resources  
Holding nothing back from Him Who died to set me free

Gazing intently into the Word with the goal of learning  
Obeying promptly whatever commands I have received  
Delighting in God's presence and reveling in His love

Attempting my best to live in harmony with everyone  
Never allowing myself to nurse any grudge indefinitely  
Denying the pleasure of gloating over the fall of my foe

Humbly submitting to human institutions of authority  
Uttering graceful speech that edifies the brotherhood  
Making myself small so the weak and timid can shine  
Admiring the success and progress of my fellow men  
Noticing the pain and struggles of the disenfranchised  
Initiating the reconciliation with an estranged relation  
Touching the heart of this broken world with kindness  
Yielding the reins of management to the next generation 

## Muscle Memory

Some years ago I read about the comparison of reaction time between teenage drivers and senior citizen drivers. As I recall, while the normal reaction time of younger people is accepted to be much faster than older people, the experiences of the older people helped them make better choices in emergency driving situations.

Nearly 50 years ago, I took a typing class in high school. Becoming proficient in typing is the result of keying a series of letters and words over and over again until your fingers find the correct keys in the correct sequence without thinking.

Most skills are learned in a similar process. Remember, if you can, the difficulty it was to know how hard to press on the gas pedal to pick up speed appropriately when you were learning to drive. Likewise, it took a bit of practice to know how hard to press on the brake pedal to come to a gradual stop instead of a jerky stop. This complex sequence of tensing and relaxing muscles can be called muscle memory.<sup>1</sup> But there are many

1. <https://medium.com/oxford-university/the-amazing-phenomenon-of-muscle-memory-fb1cc4c4726>

skills we have learned in life that do not depend on *physical* muscles being tensed and relaxed. Instead, there are *spiritual* muscles that need to be developed. The acquiring and practicing skills of character and Christian living is the subject for this month's discussion.

### The Foundation

Of course, we are not able to acquire enough "skills" to receive eternal life. This is the work of grace and love of our "great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" as we read in Titus. "*For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works*" (Titus 2:11-14).

### A Healthy Diet

A key element in any growth plan,

natural or spiritual, is a healthy diet. The Word of God should be the primary source of and guide for all our intake. While there were times when Old Testament prophets literally ate the scroll, usually verses related to eating God's Word are figurative. *"Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts"* (Jeremiah 15:16). All the spiritual nutrients we take in must be true to God's truth in His Word. God's Law supersedes all others! Read and study the Word! *"The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver"* (Psalm 119:72). We won't know what spiritual muscles to exercise unless we know the character traits of godliness.

God's Word promises a multiplication of grace and peace with a steady diet of the knowledge of God.

II Peter 1:2 *"Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord,"*

3 *"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue."*

4 *"Whereby are given unto us*

*exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust."*

What powerful promises that begin with a healthy spiritual diet!

### **Exercise**

Definition: muscle memory<sup>2</sup>

*The ability to reproduce a particular movement without conscious thought, acquired as a result of frequent repetition of that movement.*

The New Testament is full of traits of a Spirit-led person. While we become a new creature because of the Spirit of God living in our lives, we often need to confess and repent of our failures to respond correctly to difficult situations we encounter. The fruit of the Spirit is a well-rounded list of godly traits to develop. *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law"* (Galatians 5:22). The Bible is one of the best commentaries of itself. I Corinthians 13 gives us many examples of godly love. *"Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily*

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2. Oxford Languages

*provoked, thinketh no evil; rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things” (4-7). And the list goes on. “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye” (Colossians 3:12).*

The Apostle Paul included a list of short sentences (unusual for him) in I Thessalonians. One of those is “*Pray without ceasing*” (5:4). There are many reasons to pray—praise, gratitude, worship, guidance, strength, needs, intercession, and more. What a wonderful achievement of spiritual muscle memory when we breathe a prayer to our Father without conscious thought.

Developing a list of people and ministries to pray for on a regular basis blesses all of those involved. There is an octogenarian in Virginia who has developed such a list. He has told me numerous times that he prays daily for the editor of *Calvary Messenger*. What a powerful gift of enablement to fulfill God’s role in a ministry! God bless you, Brother Simon!

## **Grow**

There is always the danger of becoming spiritually tepid if we become stuck in ruts of mere habit, even if they are good habits. Supposedly, there was a sign on an Alaskan wilderness road that said, “Choose your rut carefully; you’ll be in it for the next thirty miles.”

On being stuck in a rut, Curt Iles says, “It’s true. I learned in African bush driving that the rut you chose is very difficult to get out of. During the rainy season, dirt roads became paths of deep mud. Whatever rut I chose to follow would pretty well guide me through the next section of the road. With difficulty, you could change ruts, but there was a much greater risk of bogging down or sliding off the road.

“It’s also true in life. The ruts, or pathways, we choose for our life set the pattern for our direction and movement forward. All of us are prone to get stuck in ruts of habit and comfort.

“It’s been said that ‘A rut is a grave with both ends open.’”<sup>3</sup>

God told His people their mere spiritual habits were not His true desire and delight. Instead, God desires that the habits come from our hearts.

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3. <https://www.creekbank.net/choose-your-rut-carefully/>

“To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats” (Isaiah 1:11).

“For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings” (Hosea 6:6).

On the other hand, having well-established habits can make it easier to grow. Rick Heyland, in his book, *Live Your Purpose*, quotes another author on adding or *stacking* a new habit on an established one.

“James Clear, in his book, *Atomic Habits: Tiny changes, Remarkable Results*, teaches about the principles of habit stacking. The principle talks about stacking an already accepted or practiced habit with a new one to help get new habits started. For example, after you brush your teeth in the morning (an already established habit), you do 10 push-ups (a new habit that you want to form). Build your new habit behind an already established routine so you can get some habit synergy.”<sup>4</sup>

Is it surprising that this principle works? It’s a biblical one and guarantees spiritual success. “*And beside this, giving all diligence,*

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4. Rich Heyland, *Live Your Purpose*, Ci4life, LLC, 2020

*add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (II Peter 1:5-8). That list should keep anyone occupied for the rest of his life.

### Rest

“*And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* (Philippians 4:7-9).

May we exercise a godly life such that even when we become feeble and frail, we will without conscious thought respond to life’s challenges and emergencies with grace and love.

–AY 

## The Glory of Baptism

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

**I**ntroduction: I have a list. As you have seen, teachers have lists. The inspiration for this ongoing contribution of The Bottom Line is to, as God directs, write an occasional article about the glory of God's work in His church and in His kingdom. These writings will not appear every month in succession.

This first entry features Peter McGilligan. Peter and his wife, Mauren, came to our church as tourist visitors in the latter 1960s or early 70s, obviously as hippies. Back then we saw a few hippies out in the countryside, but mostly they clustered in certain parts of the cities. They were a part of society, often drop-outs, and quite frequently from well-to-do families. Their parents often were the middle class, upper-middle class, or higher class who had a high-pitched penchant of chasing an eventual and wealthy retirement. The hippies beat them to it; they chose, mind you, to retire early. And they did, in their own way of an unprecedented mode of a deviant lifestyle. They were drop-outs from colleges and from the contributing

work force, and rather routinely were antagonists against the norms of government.

Peter and his wife (no children) made an aimless trip to Lancaster County. Somehow, they arrived at our Weavertown Church with long hair, scraggy beard and moustache, in clothing unseemly even to show up for work on a Monday morning. As our church people have always done, visitors at church are invited to our homes for dinner. That day they were our guests.

A year or two later, I was sitting near the back of the church. Following the benediction, the unknown visitor, who was seated in front of me, turned around. Immediately, I knew. I blurted out, "Peter!" It was Mr. McGilligan himself, er, Bro. McGilligan, I soon learned. We both were excited to meet each other!

Peter had gotten a person-enhancing haircut and an extensive trimming of his beard and moustache. A covenant-erring church brother said to me many years ago, "My facial hair is my identity." That church brother wanted more facial



hair, whereas Peter, now converted, wanted less, as was becoming for a Christian. Peter got himself trimmed up to identify with Christians; he was done posing as a worldling.

By this time, Peter and his wife quite notably had gained a new freedom that had been a desperate quest when they joined the hippie movement. One could now see it, not only in their facial hair, but also in their eyes, as a great index of a happy heart. Their smiles, their tone of voice, their new interests all “spoke” of a new life in Christ and being more free than ever.

They invited Marian and me to come to their church in New Jersey to witness their baptism. We made it a priority to go and further share their joy.

This illustrious experience of their in-house baptism by pouring was a genuine glory upon this earlier unlikely couple for believer’s baptism. They made no secret of their joy, declaring it to be of and by Jesus Christ. There was a manifest glory descending, as it were, from heaven. From that glorious center for the dwelling place of God, every believer’s water baptism has upon it the seal of God to each individual who participates upon his declaration that he believes “*that Jesus Christ is the Son of God*” (Acts 8:37).

The witness of glory is by the visitation by God upon the occasion. Jesus Christ is present by the preaching suited to the event, and surely the Holy Spirit comes near as He abides in each of us.

In the time of Christ, John the Baptist was baptizing those who came to him at the river Jordan. “*Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to John,*” and requests to be baptized. John hesitates, and indicates that Jesus should be baptizing him. Jesus sets it straight by saying this is not a matter of worthiness, but much rather a participation to fulfill all righteousness personally before God. Jesus was then baptized, whereupon “*the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him.*” Glory hallelujah! This became a central feature of our Lord’s personal baptism. The climax and conclusion for this outstanding baptism was the audible “*voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*” (Matthew 3:13-17).

With this historic baptism, the first of its kind in the Bible, there was no audio recording, no frilly attire, no camera, no banquet, and certainly no Romish halo upon the head of Jesus. Some of these outer trappings, when utilized, can mostly serve as a false glory. The major glory part belongs

to God in a believer's baptism. What the participants experience is an inner glory, as the song says, "Heaven came down, and glory filled my soul." Amen!

There was one other outstanding feature about Peter McGilligan's baptism; the pastor at his church was an African-American. When the Ethiopian eunuch was baptized in Acts 8, it was a *White* man (Philip), baptizing a Black man. That day in New Jersey, a Black man baptized a White man.

When our friends were serving the refugees on the island Chios in the past several years, adult believers were baptized with great joy and giving much glory to God. The Muslim men, in particular, reflected that glory as they became very expressive of the Lord Jesus, their Savior from sin. The glory of God came down upon them, and they unashamedly reflected that glory back to God. They might be in danger for their lives, but they possessed a vibrant faith and a living hope. They sensed and expressed an overflowing glory in their soul!

Believer's baptism marks a new beginning. It is the formal initiation in the start of a chosen discipleship to follow Christ. A disciple is a learner of the ways of the master-teacher. By every intent, a disciple seeks to

imitate the ways of the teacher in his talk and observes how to more closely follow in his walk.


Believer's baptism is a crisis event. It is decidedly a point of beginning and continuing without turning back to the old life of sin. It marks a commitment to following Jesus, ready to "*bring forth fruits meet (illustrative) for repentance*" (Matthew 3:5-12). The old tree is pulled out, roots and all, "*and cast into the fire.*" A new tree is planted with new fruit being in evidence. It is the start of a new obedience.

Believer's baptism signals a change to a new leader. The two million (estimated) Israelites coming out of Egypt and marching to a new promised land "*were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*" (I Corinthians 10:2). It solidified their new allegiance from their old master, Pharaoh, to their new leader, Moses. Water baptism signifies a new allegiance from Satan to Jesus Christ.

Believer's baptism is a humble response to both faith and obedience. The Bible says, "*and many of the Corinthians believed, and were baptized*" (Acts 18:8). The element for salvation is to believe. "*Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved*" (Acts 16:31). Baptism is a seal to the prior decision to believe on Christ the Savior. After that

declaration, they then were baptized (verses 32 and 33).

The glory of believer's baptism is the faith of Christ to salvation, affirmed by water baptism. The glory belongs to God Who then shines into our hearts with an assurance that those baptized formally belong to God as His children.

**The Bottom Line** is that in this month, there could be many regularly-scheduled baptisms taking place in our churches. May the glory of God once again descend, neither by a cloud, nor by a divine voice, but as an assurance by the Spirit of God that God is well-pleased with these participants in holy baptism. Amen and Amen! 

## The Ox and the Muzzle

*David Yoder, Partridge, KS*

**A**s a faith tradition, conservative Anabaptists have been blessed with the practice of ordaining church leaders from within the congregation. This is not only a time-honored tradition, but we believe modeled in Scripture. In Acts 6:3, Peter tells the young church to *“look ye out among you seven men of honest report...”* and in Titus 1:5, the Apostle Paul exhorts Titus to *“ordain elders in every city...”* In both cases, the Apostles imply that those called to serve would come from the congregation they will serve. I Thessalonians 5:12 admonishes the believers to *“know them which labor among you,”* again leaving the impression that there ought to be a relationship between those who lead and those who are

led. This observation does not judge other groups who practice a different model in choosing leaders but is an effort to underscore the value we believe our model exemplifies. The model we follow has generally served conservative Anabaptists well.

When we ordain a church leader, we have expectations from our understanding of Scripture. We place significant emphasis on the qualifications of a minister as taught in the pastoral epistles. We also expect our ordained brothers to serve as bi-vocational pastors, meaning that they earn their own living as they minister to the congregation's needs. As a rule, our congregations are led by a team of pastors which makes the bi-vocational pastorate more doable. We have misgivings about the

leadership model of salaried pastors, and rightly so, but could it be that we have disregarded explicit teaching about this matter by the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 9:1-12? As pastors we find it awkward to teach on this subject for obvious reasons. We rely heavily on voluntarism for many offices in our churches, so we can find it difficult to teach on this subject when the treasurer, trustee, usher, or funeral director is expected to render his service free of charge. It may be helpful to recognize that the teaching in I Timothy 5:17-18 is directed toward those providing spiritual leadership for the congregation. Secondly, few offices bring with them a long-term commitment as does the role of a pastor, neither do other offices carry the eternal weight of responsibility referred to in Hebrews 13:17. There is nothing in the Scriptures forbidding compensating the non-ordained where that is appropriate. Still, the Scriptures that speak to the subject are apparent directives meant for those providing spiritual leadership and nurture for the congregation.

In the past we have often been slow to acknowledge the value of the services of those who have been tasked with teaching and nurturing us and our children, at least if how we remunerate them monetarily is an

accurate indicator. In our businesses we are typically willing to compensate an employee commensurate to his productivity. A school teacher and a pastor's effectiveness is more difficult to measure in terms of dollar value, but how we compensate them in comparison to an employee can indicate what we value.

Are there ways that can help move us toward a more biblical practice? With our commitment to allow scriptural directives to shape our way of doing things, it is likely that many of us and our lay members could warm up to this scriptural directive as well. It isn't always easy to accept the generosity of those we serve, especially if it seems like we are better situated financially than some of our lay brothers. Might an important first step be for us pastors to embrace this as a biblical directive and graciously receive assistance? It is noble of us to give sacrificially as we minister to the people we have been called to serve. Still, we can become so accustomed to giving that we short-change our lay brothers and ourselves by declining an offer for assistance. Receiving their generosity when they offer us financial or material help can be an important way of building relationships within the body. So to move toward an approach of pastoral assistance supported in

Scripture, we may need to take the lead by humbly accepting the offer of our brother to help us. Unless we are willing to receive our brother's kindness, there is little reason to talk about this subject. Allowing others to provide for some of our practical needs is consistent with the idea of a "supported" ministry rather than a "salaried" ministry.

So what are the practical implications, and how might pastoral support look in our context? Most churches in our constituency already have some form of pastoral support by lifting periodic love offerings for their pastoral team. Depending on the size of those offerings, they can compensate a pastor for expenses he may incur in travel and even for lost wages for the time he spends in ministry away from his work. When love offerings do not cover out-of-pocket expenses or lost wages, would it not be reasonable for the church to pick up those expenses and at least a portion of lost wages?

Following are some ways the ministers in our congregation are blessed where our lay leaders have initiated ways to provide some level of support for those who are ordained. Their initiative started some years ago by reimbursing expenses we incurred when we traveled for church-related events, generally 80% of the IRS


allowance for mileage. This includes travels to the annual ministers' meetings, regional meetings, and the bishop meeting each fall. Since we are located some distance from where these events are often hosted, airfares are covered when it is more feasible to travel by air. In recent years, members of the congregation have established a fund, to which individuals contribute, that provides a per-diem stipend for times when church responsibilities take ministers away from their work, creating a loss in wages. These arrangements help spread the financial load of ministry among the congregation rather than the pastors absorbing it themselves. The intent of this article is to encourage congregational involvement in supporting pastors. That said, it should also be noted that in the context of a "supported" rather than "salaried" ministry, pastors and congregants partner to share the load. The voluntarism we value in our churches applies to pastors as well. There are many ways that ministers donate their time without remuneration. Sermon preparation, counseling, encouraging members, and spending time with the sick are a few examples. And in a healthy body there will be others who take time in personal ministry that lightens the load of the ordained.

We are aware that life will never be entirely fair for every person, and that there will always be ways that we give and take, with some enjoying benefits that others may not experience. The human tendency has us looking at others when it feels like they have it better than we do, and focusing on ourselves when it feels like we have it harder than others do. This writing is an effort to lift out a disparity that the Bible addresses that has significant implications for the well-being of the body. The words of the Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 9 remind us that ignoring the material needs of elders can make it difficult for them to serve the body effectively. Hence the body suffers.

While the Scriptures cited above make the case for supporting ministers, as church leaders we should be sensitive to lay brothers who invest disproportionate amounts of time serving the church in comparison to other lay brothers. Because of varying circumstances, only some ordained ministers will feel the same need for financial assistance. Where our congregation offers support, the individual pastor still decides what mileage and hours he turns

in for reimbursement. Receiving funds even when we may not feel we need them can allow us to privately assist lay brothers who seem to be committing more than their share of time in serving the body.

I am told of a prominent pastor who was offered a raise in salary by his church. He politely turned down the offer. His congregation insisted he takes the raise. They said, "We want to see what you do with it." The financial assistance we receive from our churches is still a stewardship we are entrusted with and deserves the same careful stewarding that ought to characterize the way we manage the rest of our possessions.

Behind all this is an even greater principle we ought not to ignore that the Apostle Paul highlights in II Corinthians 8. In verse 9b he advocates a level of equality "*that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality.*" We are indeed to look out for each other. So regardless of where we find our role, we owe it to each other and for the good of the Kingdom to care for one another. 

The poor man is not he who is without a cent, but he who is without a *dream*.

-HARRY KEMP


## I See Beauty

*Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS*

For some time, I have been scribbling in the back of my journal, jotting down beautiful things I saw. The list began with notations at the annual ministers' meetings when I returned with significant treasures gathered from watching people. From there, I noted the lovely things in our church, at home.

These bits of goodness I have strung together like a string of pearls for your reflection and enjoyment. As the editor deems best, he will dole them out in the coming editions. Do not think all is flawless harmony in our marriage, family, and church;

we are saints under construction! But by taking time to write these small essays, I hope to highlight the goodness that is present and to motivate you to look for the same in your church, your family, and your marriage.

Anyone can complain and whine and find fault—at least the faults of others. Can you see the good, the beautiful, and the true in your church and family? Will you look for it? I believe by watching for it, you will step toward becoming more truly good, more deeply beautiful and more really true. 



The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched, they must be felt with the heart.

—HELEN KELLER

## marriages

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

### **Brenneman-Peachey**

Bro. Marcus, son of Lowell and JoAnn Brenneman, Falkville, AL, and Sis. Lauren, daughter of Merv and LoisAnn Peachey, Belleville, PA, on November 12, 2022, at Valley View A.M. Church by Eli King.

### **Friesen-Koop**

Bro. Philip, son of Peter and the late Anne Friesen, Lott, TX, and Sis. Emily, daughter of Gerhard and Clara Koop, Spanish Lookout, Belize, on September 3, 2022, in Belize by Peter Dyck.

### **Gerber-Jantzi**

Bro. Samuel, son of Raymond and the late Deborah Gerber, Brunner, ON, and Sis. Denise, daughter of Emmanuel and Laura Jantzi, Newton, ON, on December 10, 2022, at Faith Mennonite for Fellowship Haven A.M. Church by John Byler.

### **Williams-Mast**

Bro. Jerry, son of Joanna and the late Scott Williams, Goodsprings, TN, and Sis. Kendra, daughter of Tim and Anna Joyce Mast, Crossville, TN, on December 3, 2022, at Bethlehem Baptist Church for Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Ray Miller.



## cradle roll

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

**Byler**, Lavern and Cheryl (Yoder), Whiteville, TN, fifth child, second daughter, Sophia Elva, November 16, 2022.

**Coulter**, Jared and Eunice (Peachy), Honey Grove, PA, third child, second son, Asher Rafael, January 7, 2023.

**Eash**, Philip and Kaitlyn (Yoder), Romney, WV, first child and daughter, Jade Noelle, December 22, 2022.

**Eby**, David and Sarah (Glick), Charleston, IL, first child and daughter, Amber Joy, October 14, 2022.

**Gerber**, Peter and Jenia (Eugenia) (Muntean), Mitocu Dragomirnei, Romania, fifth child, second daughter, Vanessa Anna, December 23, 2022.

**Hershberger**, Randy and Diane (Miller), Winchester, OH, third child, first son, Caleb Isaiah, January 9, 2023.

**Jara**, Jeremiah and Rosanna (Otto), Crossville, TN, third child, first son, Lucas David, January 2, 2023.

**Jess**, Jeremy and Lorraine (Yoder), Arcola, IL, third child, second son, Bryce Matthew, October 19, 2022.



**Kauffman**, Bryan and Emily (Shirk), Lott, TX, second child, first son, Beau Alex, December 28, 2022.

**Kauffman**, Doug and Rose (Yutzy), Harrison, AR, third child, second daughter, Jillian Celeste, December 28, 2022.

**Keim**, Steven and Deanna (Weaver), Coshocton, OH, first child and son, Lucas Allen, January 2, 2023.

**King**, Jonathan and Melissa (Mast), Honey Brook, PA, second child, first daughter, Tianna Grace, December 5, 2022.

**Martin**, Kendan and Meredith (Troyer), Rochelle, VA, fourth child, third son, Clark Remington, January 26, 2023.

**Mast**, Duane and Debora (Mast), Torrington, WY, third child, second son, Blake Judson, August 3, 2022.

**Miller**, Caleb and Juanita (Yoder), Shreve, OH, fifth child, third daughter, Alayna Kianne, January 23, 2023.

**Miller**, Christopher and Hannah (Miller), Arthur, IL, second child and son (one deceased), Mason Cole, November 1, 2022.

**Miller**, Joshua and Kathryn (Stoltzfus), West Lafayette, OH, first child and son, Thaddeus Michael, January 17, 2023.

**Miller**, Justin and Rosanna (Brenneman), Rochelle, VA, fourth child, second son, Asa Flint, January 9, 2023.

**Miller**, Karl and Darella (Rohrer), Grove City, MN, fourth child, first daughter, Natasha Fern, December 8, 2022.

**Morinigo**, Jonas and Kerri (Byler), South Hutchinson, KS, third child, second daughter, Jelisa Nicole, January 3, 2023.

**Showalter**, Weston and Heidi (Miller), Newcomerstown, OH, fifth child, fourth daughter, Chloe Elsie, November 13, 2022.

**Stoltzfus**, Arlin David and Charissa (Barkman), Atglen, PA, fourth child and daughter, Kari Elise, January 25, 2023.

**Stoltzfus**, John Paul and Regina (Stoltzfus), Honey Brook, PA, second child and son, Benito Paul, October 24, 2022.

**Stoltzfus**, Michael and Esther (Zook), Gap, PA, second child, first son, Zyire Kade, November 17, 2022.

**Stutzman**, Marcus and Amanda (Yoder), Torrington, WY, sixth child, third son, Jeffery Eugene, April 9, 2022.

**Wagler**, Lamar and Amy (Miller), Auburn, KY, third child, second son, Weston Hayes, January 1, 2023.

**Witmer**, Walter and Rachel (Miller), Rawlings, VA, second child, first son, Hudson William, January 6, 2023.

**Yoder**, Brandon and Chrissy (Stoltzfus), Whiteville, TN, first child and daughter, Kyra Jade, December 29, 2022.

## ordinations

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

**Bro. Jonathan Miller**, 45, (wife, Malinda Swarey), Stuarts Draft, VA, was ordained bishop for Pilgrim Christian Fellowship on January 29, 2023. The charge was given by Simon Schrock, assisted by Tim Miller and Jonathan Martin. Ken Miller shared the lot.

**Yoder**, Michael and Emma (Stoller), Bluffton, IN, fourth child, second daughter, Eva Marie, December 5, 2022.



**Bro. Michael Ropp**, 38, (wife, Monica Eash), Romney, WV, was chosen by voice of the church and ordained deacon at Slanesville Mennonite Church on January 15, 2023. Preordination messages were given by John Lapp. The charge was given by Dan Stoltzfus, assisted by Tim Weaver and Wayne Lapp.

**Bro. Ben Stoltzfus**, (wife, Marian Beiler), Parkesburg, PA, was ordained bishop at West Haven Amish Mennonite Church on August 28, 2022. The charge was given by Lee Stoltzfus, assisted by Dave Stoltzfus and Paul Overholt. Ivan Stoltzfus shared the lot.



## obituaries

**Nissley**, Mary E., 78, of Paradise, PA, passed away at Fairmount Homes on September 30, 2022. She was born in Lancaster, PA, to the late William B. and Susan S. (Diener) Stoltzfus. She was the wife of the late David L. Nissley who passed away in 1999.

She was a member of the Mine Road Amish Mennonite Church of Paradise. She graduated from Conestoga Valley High School and then from Lancaster School of Practical Nursing. She worked as an LPN for 10 years, then devoted herself to her husband and children.

She enjoyed gardening, yard work, going to benefit auctions, and her Monday morning ladies' breakfast.

She is survived by seven children: Louella (Jonathan) Miller, Blackville, SC; David (Lillian), Paradise; Susan (Sokhon) Kem, Blackville, SC; Chad (Bethany), New Holland; Philip (Shelly), Harrison, AR; Evalina (Micah) Miller, Dundee, OH; Matilda (Virgil) Miller, Antrim, OH; 41 grandchildren, three great-grandchildren, two siblings: David D. (Rosanna) Stoltzfus, Gordonville; Sara Jane Stutzman, Gap; and mother-in-law,

Matilda Lee Nissley, Aroda, VA.

She was preceded in death by her father-in-law, Ira Nissley.

The funeral service was held at Calvary Monument Bible Church on October 3, 2022, with Floyd King serving. Interment followed in the Mine Road Amish Mennonite Cemetery.

**Miller**, Miriam Edna, 83, of Holmesville, OH, went to be with the Lord on January 19, 2023, after an illness of one week. Miriam was born near Hartville, OH, on July 18, 1939, to Menno and Ellen (Frey) Bontrager. On August 2, 1958, she married Lester E. Miller, and he preceded her in death on April 26, 2020.

Miriam was a faithful member of Peniel Christian Fellowship. She had operated Miriam's Back to Health Store.

She is survived by her three sons: Marlyn Ray (Mary), Burns, WY; Glenn Roy (Arlene), Millersburg; Matthew Bryan (Nicole), Holmesville; 10 grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren, and brother-in-law, Dan Hershberger, of Sugarcreek.

She was preceded in death by a grandson, daughter-in-law, Jessica, and a sister, Viola Hershberger.

The funeral was held on January 22, 2023, at Peniel Christian Fellowship with burial following in the church cemetery.

**Overholt**, Linda Kay, 65, passed away peacefully on December 4, 2022. She was born July 31, 1957, in Canton, OH, to Mose and Alta Troyer. She married John Overholt on September 1, 1979.

Linda dedicated her life to serving her heavenly Father, her family, and her many friends. She loved singing and was a woman of many talents, including creating beautiful wedding dresses and florals, helping her husband with design in his construction business, canning his many bushels of homegrown vegetables, and teaching music at her church school.

She and her husband had answered God's call to pastor a small church in Belize in years gone by.

She courageously battled cancer in the midst of the grief of her husband's passing away in April 2020. She fought so hard to be here for her family.

Left to cherish her memory are her children: Judith (Wendell) Beachy, Alexander Moses, and John Martin II (Heidi). She is also survived by grandchildren: Isabella, Sophia, Jackson, Elliott, and Jacqueline Beachy; Troy, John Martin III, Greyson, Miles, and Haley Overholt; her mother, Alta (Yoder) Troyer; and siblings: Judy (Tom) Wagler, Allen, Perry, Merle (April), and Amanda (James) Weaver.

She was preceded in death by her husband, John Martin Overholt, father, Mose Troyer, an infant daughter, Gabrielle Hope, and infant son, Gabriel Lyndon.

The funeral service was held on December 8, 2022, at Emmanuel Mennonite Church with Lonnie Beachy, Ryan Good, and Phil Stoltzfus serving. Interment followed in the church cemetery with Ken Beachy officiating.



**H**ody Childress, a retired Air Force veteran and small farmer from Geraldine, Alabama, died on New Year's Day, 2023, at the age of 80 years old. He was known as a devoted husband who lovingly cared for his wife after she was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. As her illness progressed, Hody was observed to physically carry her to places where she was unable to go on her own power. She died in 1999. Hody also lost a son and his father in a tornado back in 1973. He was a man of rather modest financial means who lived life cheerfully and didn't complain.

About 10 years ago, he took Brooke Walker, the owner of the local pharmacy, aside and quietly asked if there was anybody in town who was unable to afford the medication they needed. The owner said that, unfortunately, there were quite a few folks like that in their small town. So, he handed her a crisp \$100 bill folded up tightly and instructed her to use it for someone who needs it and to not breathe a word about his role in this. He said, "Don't tell a soul where the money came from. If they ask, just tell them it's a blessing from the Lord." He repeated this exercise

every month until shortly before he died. It seems as if the only people who knew about this were a daughter he had confided in and Walker. His second wife didn't even know that he was doing this.

After he died, his daughter and Walker felt free to share this story. A book could probably be written about how this humble man trusted Walker to be careful to help the people who really would be blessed by this assistance and his instructions to consider this as a blessing from the Lord. The stories of those who received this blessing tug on a person's heart strings. One of the beneficiaries who was especially touched by this generosity later came back with some cash for Walker to add to the money that Mr. Childress regularly left.

Walker commented that Childress's kindness and his trust in her to do the proper thing with his monthly gift has prompted her to be a more compassionate person. Residents of Geraldine and the surrounding community have begun visiting Walker's business with cash donations to continue what Childress started. They've called it the Hody Childress Fund and will keep it going as long as money keeps coming in.

I'm impressed by how Mr. Childress's example of giving strikes the important notes of humility, generosity, anonymity, and ability to relinquish control of his gift once it left his possession. These are all hallmarks of Christian generosity and giving.



As a demographic group, farmers are usually regarded as hardworking folks with a wide range of skills and a strong dose of independence. They often like to “keep things going” by themselves as much as possible.

In the last years, heavy equipment manufacturers have produced ever more complicated and specialized machines. Increasingly, this equipment needed to be returned to authorized dealers for repairs and service work. Some of this was due to built-in features that made it impossible for anybody but “authorized” personnel to do the work, and some of it was regulated by company policy. Farmers are among those who were increasingly vexed by these encroaching limitations on their ability to do their own work. The “Right to Repair” movement took shape and tried to find ways to facilitate the ability of owners to choose by whom and where their equipment was maintained and repaired.

BBC reports that an agreement was recently reached that feels like real progress to the “Right to Repair” folks, which include equipment owners and independent repair providers.

Here is part of BBC's report on this decision:

“Tractor maker John Deere has agreed to give its US customers the right to fix their own equipment. Previously, farmers were only allowed to use authorized parts and service facilities rather than cheaper independent repair options. Deere and Co. is one of the world's largest makers of farming equipment. Consumer groups have for years been calling on companies to allow their customers to be able to fix everything from smartphones to tractors. The American Farm Bureau Federation (AFBF) and Deere & Co. signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU).

“It addresses a long-running issue for farmers and ranchers when it comes to accessing tools, information and resources, while protecting John Deere's intellectual property rights and ensuring equipment safety,” AFBF President Zippy Duvall said.

“Under the agreement, equipment owners and independent technicians will not be allowed to ‘divulge trade secrets’ or ‘override safety features

or emissions controls or to adjust Agricultural Equipment power levels.”



Erica Chenoweth, a political science researcher at Harvard, grew up with the assumption that violence was the most effective means to worthwhile goals. In 2006, a fellow researcher suggested that she analyze historical data in an effort to test this supposition. As she embarked on the project, she felt confident that her research would confirm what she already knew.

So, she studied over 100 years of data regarding attempts to change regimes across the globe. But her erstwhile confidence was replaced by surprise. She concluded that non-violent campaigns were 50% more likely to succeed in affecting regime change, while those that employed the well-worn tactics of violence were only 25% successful.



Those of us who are Christ-followers already knew that the way of love that Jesus taught, rather than violence, is the right way to conduct ourselves. Doing what is right shouldn't depend on whether we find the observable results to be effective or whether academia confirms it or not.

So, even though Chenoweth

was surprised by the results of her research, some of us are more likely to quietly nod our heads knowingly.



I also note that Chenoweth decided to attempt impartial research despite her “clear grasp” of the realities she set forth to research. Her story is a good reminder that we should be cautious about our assumptions. It's also worthwhile observing that when a person examines evidence with an open mind, impartial research has the potential to reverse a well-entrenched bias.



By the time this is read, it will have been more than one year since Russia invaded Ukraine in what Putin called a “special military operation.” The toll that this conflict has levied on both Ukraine and Russia is sobering, to say the least. The results are not equal for Russia and Ukraine, but they affect both countries deeply. Some estimates are that a quarter million lives have been lost in addition to the infrastructure destruction in Ukraine.

However, the effects have spread far beyond the borders of Ukraine and Russia. The difficulty that the war has brought to the production and distribution of agricultural products has affected global food and fertilizer prices. The inflationary effect on

these prices tends to squeeze those on the margins first. So, small farmers in places like Africa are experiencing hunger and hardship because of a war thousands of miles away. What a sad, sad picture.

Sometimes it is too easy for someone like me, who lives far away from the conflict, to become a bit callous to the difficulty that those more directly affected by this senseless violence are experiencing. One year after the invasion, this difficulty is still piercing and present for multitudes of people, even though it might seem distant and stale in the news cycle.

Doing what we can to alleviate the difficulties is fitting. Intercessory prayer is one thing we can always do. We should pray for those who are making the decisions in the military theater. We should pray for those immediately and distantly affected by the conflict. Let's not neglect to especially pray for our brothers and sisters in Christ who are affected. Let's pray that God would shine His love and His purposes through His people in these dark times. Let's pray that God would grant them the ability to receive the necessary measures of grace, deliverance, and courage as the situation dictates.

-RJM 

## A New Year

*Anya Hursh, Krivoshientsi, Ukraine*

The old year slipped away quietly while our hearts were bowed in prayer. There were no fireworks or Christmas lights to announce the coming of the new year. An uncanny quietness cloaked the village. Although curfew kept us from having our annual midnight church service and supper, the youth gathered at Brother James's place for fellowship, a time of worship, and supper. We reminisced of bygone New Year's Eves when we were gathered together as a complete

congregation. We thought about the church families who once worshiped with us but are now scattered across the world. We missed the joyous excitement of previous New Year's Eves.

This eve held a holiness and a hush that comes from living for a year under the shadow of God's everlasting hand even while being caught in the crossfire of war. It held a deep gratitude of knowing how immensely blessed we are to still be among the living in a land where

there are so many dying.

It was soon after 1:00 a.m. when the silence of the village was shattered as an explosion shook the house and our hearts. Likely, it was a missile knocked down by the vigilant air defense. We held our breath, wondering where it had hit. Were our homes and families intact? Thankfully, the following morning we found out that no one had been hurt. It must have landed in a field. But all the same, it was a sober reminder of the stark realities of war. For many people, it was not a night of rest. We could hear the hum of helicopters overhead watching for missiles. Many were launched into Ukraine that night, some of them carrying the message, “Happy New Year!” as a cruel mockery.

That night and the next few nights were intense and stressful for people living in the cities as missiles and bombs wreaked chaos and fear. In one of the eastern cities, a church house that had been packed full just a week earlier for the Christmas service was destroyed by a missile. Miraculously, no one was killed. Had it hit earlier, it could have been a totally different story.

There is a certain heaviness in our hearts as we stand on the threshold of a new year. While we are grateful to be alive and in Ukraine, the

usual excitement and anticipation is dampened by the dread of what this year might cost us. The only way we can find the courage to step into the new year with confidence is knowing that God, Who has been faithful throughout 2022, will be with us every moment of 2023. He goes before us and will make a way through the darkness.

So much has happened in the last year. The normal life we once knew turned upside down on February 24. In many ways it was a year of loss, but it was also a year of great gain. Our circle of friends and acquaintances has multiplied as we have learned to know so many new people from all across Ukraine. Refugees who ended up in our village have now become close friends. Our church attendance is as large as ever, even though many of the original members are gone. We have learned to know pastors, churches, and volunteers from all across Ukraine who have a common goal—easing the pain of the people by helping wherever they can.

We have met and served with many volunteers who traveled across the ocean to spend backbreaking hours packaging food parcels. They drove many kilometers across the Ukrainian countryside to help deliver food parcels and did their best to connect with and bless the people of



Ukraine in spite of language barriers. Meeting so many new people can be exhausting, but their presence and their willingness to serve others made it a refreshing experience.

It was a year of rich experiences, many of which we had never anticipated. It was a year of inner grappling as priorities, people, and places suddenly rearranged their positions in our hearts. It was a year rich with God's protection. We saw miracles and felt His care in very real ways.

I would not wish the life we live on anyone. But neither would I exchange it for anything else. It has been hard, but beautiful. It has been dark, yet the glimmer of light keeps us going. This past year has held some of the loneliest moments ever, but it has also held many moments of awe as we realize that we are not alone. Never before did we realize what a grand privilege it is to be a part of such an expansive family that stretches across the globe. In those first months of war we received encouragement and prayer support from believers in many different countries. It was a gift we will never take for granted. Thank you!

It has been a year of food parcels. Our church people, refugees, and volunteers have worked to package over 180,000 food parcels in our print

shop/church house. The Grace Press volunteers have packaged another 150,000 at the base in town.

And still the needs are endless. Requests for food parcels are processed as fast as we can, but the waiting list is long. The food boxes are booked as far as two months ahead of time.

The trips to the east to deliver food parcels have lost their novelty. It is exhausting to see more destruction and to hear more sad stories of grief and loss. The cold weather takes its toll on everyone. Even the vehicles seem to be tired of living on the road. They rebel at the rough roads and the intense lifestyle by breaking down.

Sometimes I wonder how long we will last. How long will it be until this war is over? Will the country ever be restored to its original beauty? And what about the broken lives? We have strong hope that someday Ukraine will again bloom, that the broken buildings will be rebuilt, and that the broken hearts can find healing. We know life will never be the same because we cannot raise the dead from the grave or restore innocence to the abused. Sometimes in the middle of it all, hope grows weary and darkness presses thick.

Just as it was in Jesus' day, not everyone is grateful. I wonder how He would have responded to people

hollering at Him for not giving them enough bread and fish. It takes wisdom to know how to relate to the people who seem to find their only fulfillment in pushing others down and grabbing all they can. It is hard to filter the neediest people from the needy. Sometimes those who fight the loudest get what they want, while the quiet person in real need is overlooked. Oh, that God would help us to be as wise as serpents but as harmless as doves!

The gratitude of many others more than makes up for the selfishness of some. We hear the heartfelt thanks. We see the glimmer of hope in people's eyes and feel the handclasps and the hugs of gratefulness. And we know that we are only one link in a chain that includes many others. And so we reflect the gratitude back to you. Whether you have been a faithful prayer supporter, have donated funds which purchase the food products, or have spent backbreaking days packaging food parcels, your link in the work is significant. And so, we send you many heartfelt thanks.

We wish you could see it all in person. We wish you could feel the biting cold of the wind contrasted with the burning warmth within as yet another person blinks back tears of gratitude. We wish you could see the horrors this war has brought and

the flicker of hope that still shines in eyes. We wish you could hear the rumble of bombs, the eerie wail of air raid alerts, and the beautiful sound of people singing and praying, raising songs of lament and praise. We wish you could experience for just a little while the darkness of living without electricity, because then you would see how bright and encouraging even a small candle is!


These prayer support letters have been an attempt to give you a glimpse into this life, although it is hard to realistically portray life in Ukraine. These letters fail miserably to catch the depths of horror or the sweetness of beauty. We have become accustomed to a higher level of danger, inconveniences, and stress, yet in many ways, we still live normal lives. We still wash piles of dirty dishes, try new recipes, drink tea, and go shopping. The cows still need to be milked. We still make cheese and yogurt to sell at market. For some of us, life has a certain level of normalcy that is often not captured in the letters. So in a sense, things are better than they sound, but in the same way, things are worse than they sound in these letters. The worst stories, the darkest days, and the greatest fears never make it into these letters. Some stories are simply too sad to share. Some burdens are

too heavy to put into words.

The goal of these letters has been to testify of God's redeeming grace and to raise awareness and prayer support. Thank you for reading, caring, and praying. Your prayer support and encouragement throughout the past year have meant so much. Thank you for investing in our lives. Your prayers have made a difference. Thank you!

Please continue to pray. We need God's guidance and protection as much as ever. The physical war is still raging strong. So is the spiritual war. Pray that we would all be faithful.

anyahursh@gmail.com

*[This is only one of many updates Anya has written to family and friends. Let's keep praying for their family and church family as they bring God's Light to the suffering people in Ukraine. AY]* 

## The Call to Heal

*Robbie Martin, Mill Hall, PA*

**I**nnocent people are dying while Christians sit back and do nothing! It is time for us to rise to the challenge and throw away our fears. We have relaxed in our journey of following Christ and have not done our part in saving lost souls.


Young men, God is calling us to be "doctors" in our world! It is time for us to get out in the world and spread God's healing love. We have assets to utilize that older men do not have such as singlehood, time, and energy. In our culture, working hard, getting married, and raising a family are the main achievements. However, this isn't always what God has in mind for us. Although these three things are commendable, are we willing to

follow the Spirit's guidance even if it doesn't line up with what we want to do?

In the Great Commission Jesus calls us to spread the Gospel to all nations. We, as American Christians, haven't quite grasped that. There are people going overseas to lesser-reached countries, but few stay here to reach out to the ones around us. Because of our country's freedom and comfortable lifestyles, we are losing zeal for our Christian walk and aren't fulfilling the Lord's command. Many people are living and dying without receiving the lifegiving message from us.

One of the biggest hinderances in our line of duty is fear. Fear paralyzes

us. We would like to share our faith, but we are afraid of people's reactions. I struggle with this too. We must fully rely on God and move when His Spirit leads. How can we keep God's gift of healing to ourselves while others die without it?

It is our primary duty to fulfill God's call by offering a cure to everyone. Let us not live our lives in health and comfort while unbelievers die in sick hopelessness. If we follow Jesus wholeheartedly, He will give us the strength we need to supply the lost with healing. 

## mission awareness

# Brokenness, a Requisite for Usefulness

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

I will introduce Anna Good from the Conestoga Valley, Pennsylvania. Oh, I wish you could have met her. She was a peasant-dressed, jolly, neighbor, Mennonite lady. She was slightly mentally disadvantaged. Anna wore a long flowery dress with a bonnet and men's work shoes.

She often visited our family in the old farm house in the 1970s. Anna had these pithy expressions of wisdom and proverbs. We never forgot this one in Pennsylvania Dutch, "Vie iss an gaul und an oye gleich?" "How is a horse and an egg alike?" Then she would laugh and wait for an answer. "Well, they both have to be broken to be useful!"

The prophet Hosea often uses

farming methods to express his thoughts. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (10:12). Fallow is "freshly-plowed land but not cultivated or seeded. It is left to rest, neglected, and unused. It lies waste and needs to be broken or mellowed before it is fitted to receive grain" (Charles Finney).

The Bible has many verses on the great theme of brokenness as well as examples. David confessed his sin with Bathsheba in deep humility, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Psalm 51:17).

Isaiah uses the most descriptive

terms of God. *“For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones”* (Isaiah 57:15).

Jacob had his ups and downs in life. He had been away from his promised homeland for around 20 years. This had not been without struggles with his father-in-law, Laban, and jealousy between his wives. However, God had blessed him with a large family and lots of wealth. Jacob was called to go home by heavenly messengers. Laban trailed behind Jacob and his long caravan. He overtook Jacob and chided him for running off without being able to say good-bye and have a departing celebration. Laban ultimately made a peace agreement with Jacob.

Jacob continued to travel with his wives, family, and estate. But Esau was on the way to meet him with 400 men. Jacob was afraid and greatly distressed, so he organized his family into three bands. Jacob was left alone at Peniel and wrestled with the angel of the Lord all night. Jacob persevered in prayer and asked to be blessed. The angel changed Jacob's name to Israel, *“for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men,*


*and hast prevailed”* (Genesis 32:28). The next morning he came hobbling along. Now some imagination may be in order. His hair was unkempt and his clothes were dirty. He may have been bleeding, and he was crippled. Yet he was blessed! Was this a mountain peak in Jacob's life? It was! This could well have been the pre-incarnate Christ because Jacob said, *“I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved”* (Genesis 32:30). Jacob and Esau were reconciled with tears of forgiveness. A preacher once said, *“Delightful mountaintop and valley character-building experiences often run on parallel tracks and arrive at their destination at the same time.”* Interesting!

Gideon faced a multitude of Midianites, Amalekites, and the children of the east with only 300 men. But Gideon worshiped the Lord. He said to his men, *“Look on me, and do likewise...”* (Judges 7:17) What is symbolized by each of these three crude and common weapons? Trumpets—the Word of God (Ezekiel 33:3); pitchers—our bodies and souls (II Corinthians 4:6-7); lamps—the flame of the Holy Spirit in our spirits (Matthew 5:16; Acts 2:3-4). When the pitcher was broken the light could shine forth. The trumpet heralded the message, and the victory was won! Praise God!

It was when the poor widow surrendered her little pot of oil and poured it forth that God multiplied it to pay for her debts and abundantly supplied her means of support. It was when the boy on the grassy mountainside surrendered his five “johnny cakes” and two fish that Jesus blessed and broke the loaves and fed 5000 people. (Johnny cakes are small Belizean buns baked on a fire hearth.)

The beautiful act of devotion by Mary (John 12:3-8) was only of value when it was brought to Jesus and broken and poured on His feet. The fragrance filled the room with an aroma of sweet smell. It is only when our hearts are broken before the Lord that the sweet fragrance of the Holy Spirit fruit can flow through us and touch other lives. Jesus’ broken body and the blood that was shed at the Cross is an aroma of sweet smell bringing eternal life to those who

believe and obey Him.

Brokenness makes all the difference in God’s service. When accomplishments are achieved, it matters not who gets the credit. We can rejoice together. Traveling with Jesus by the way of the Cross is not cheap. It involves a continual attitude of repentance, godly sorrow, restitution, and confession. There are no shortcuts by the way of the Cross; no bypasses, no underground tunnels, and no helicopters flying over it. It is costly! Jesus said, “*Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake and the gospel’s, the same shall save it*” (Mark 8:34-35). Brokenness will affect your usefulness. It will put a joyful spring in your step and a song of praise in your heart and mouth! 

**Character** is like bells,  
which ring out sweet notes,  
and which, when touched,  
accidentally even,  
*resound with sweet music.*

-BROOKS

# It Wasn't Going to Be Like This

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



**C**lasp the pieces of ceramic, I nudged each broken piece into its place against the other pieces that had once formed a lovely turquoise dish. The dish had shattered and now instead of a whole, I held a half-dozen undefined jagged edges, and if I loosened my grasp they would fall into that many pieces again. Intent on some form of restoration, I carefully applied the gold-hued powder glue to each serrated edge, quickly uniting the appropriate places, willing them to hold.

I was using the Japanese artform, *kintsugi*, which means *to repair with gold*. It is the art of repairing broken pottery by mending the breakage with an adhesive mixed with powdered gold. It treats the breaking and repair as part of the history of an object rather than something to hide. This adds purpose for keeping an object even after it has broken; emphasizing cracks and repairs as events in the life of an object rather than allowing its service to end at the time of its breakage.

*Kintsugi* embraces the beauty of the golden repair lines; highlighting them, in fact! It enhances, beautifies, and defines rather than lessening the functionality and value of the vessel. The single word we could use to describe *kintsugi* is both complex and simple at the same time: redemption.

I gave this small turquoise bowl, now crisscrossed by irregular golden lines, to a friend. A friend whose life had taken an unexpected and difficult turn. She needed this reminder of the beauty in her repair lines and a hands-on visual of how God redeems the broken places to form even *more* beauty in us than before.

In this after-Eden world, each one of our lives holds a *kintsugi* story. We all experience suffering, brokenness, and disappointment to varying degrees. And although we listen to many sermons about original sin and the resulting devastation, nothing prepares us adequately for the gut-wrenching disappointments life hurls at us.

You know too well the jagged

edges in your existence. Perhaps those edges for you were shaped by an infant's grave. Or several graves. Or the oncologist visits, then chemo, then... You're in the middle of waiting to see what the final *and then* will look like.

When we were wed we envisioned long years of "happy ever after." We could only wish that a heart attack had taken our man's heart, instead of his desire for the other woman. And when we cuddled and raised our babies, they were going to grow up to be contributing members of a godly community. Nothing prepared us for this turning away. The gaping ache in our heart is an endless yawn for answers. How and why could this have happened?

When we moved to a new setting, we'd been confident that this was where church life would be restful. Fulfillment in the classroom, loving the indigenous, investing in the lives of others, in whatever shade it colors—used to heighten our sense of purpose. But when failure, sickness, or any other disfunction breaks all this goodness apart, no words describe the pain. Bullying, mockery, or abuse comes from those who should have protected the innocent. Again, no words.

A young lady courts a young man, but it ends on this side of marriage.

Or she wishes he would choose her, but instead, he asks her best friend. Disappointment shatters not only those of advanced age but those of any age who look forward, anyone who anticipates and dreams, long term or short.

But, ladies, we have a group of sisters who've lived where we live. Let me tell you about them because they show us how to grieve deeply, and do the next thing, while holding onto hope. When we look at the course of their lives, their gut-wrenching disappointment pierces our hearts too. They'd followed their Master, trudging along with or behind the disciples, sometimes on the fringes. They ministered to Him, providing for Him the domestic comforts women can best provide. They'd watched Him heal their friends, including their own demonized brokenness and unclean hemorrhaging. He'd boldly praised their devotion even when the religious leaders scorned their wasteful extravagance—calculating it into shekels. These ladies thought, "Just maybe, yes! Probably, surely, hopefully—this was their Messiah of Whom the prophets spoke! This is the One Who would finally bring an end to the ruthless, domineering Romans."

But then everything spiraled in a horribly wrong direction. One



week it seemed like the crowds would crown Him King, but the next, the tide turned and evil ruled the day. Even the men from their own group, Jesus' disciples, ran away from Him. They could hardly lift their eyes to watch while their cherished, bruised, and bleeding Master-Teacher-Friend-Shepherd began to carry the splintery cross beam, upon which He was viciously fastened moments later. This isn't how this life was supposed to turn out! Had Yahweh dropped the ball? Something had gone terribly awry. They watched, powerless to keep this from happening or even to be of any assistance. But, *no* power would keep them from gazing at Him until He took His last breath. Just maybe He'd come down off His cross and set their wrecked world aright once more as He'd done over and over in a more personal sense while winding the Galilee hills. They knelt, weeping as they'd never wept before, watching, daring to stay close by. They stayed so close they could hear Him speak. If only they might wake up to find this a nightmare!

And then it was all over. I don't know if the ladies remembered Jesus' earlier words about dying and living again. If they *did* remember His repeated resurrection promise, they were probably confused by the

disciples who *didn't* remember those words from this apparently-failed Messiah. The men only lamented, "We had hoped that He was the One to redeem Israel."


That darkest night of all dark nights the women boldly followed Joseph and Nicodemus to watch where they'd place Jesus' body. They probably reasoned that if they'd come before sunrise in this unfamiliar-for-them region, they'd need to know which tomb was His. Early morning of the first day of the week, they came, prepared with spices, to do the honors. As before, they persisted in wielding their womanly talent, to bless Jesus. This devastating end would not keep them from continuing to serve Him. Not stoically, but bravely, and torn by dripping wet grief they embraced this twisted new reality and acted on it. These ladies were not missing-in-action at the most significant times. They did not run and hide from the tragic events. They showed up. They stayed up, and they looked up.

I don't believe it was mere coincidence that the resurrected Jesus first appeared to these very ladies. Because they were present. They were bursting with both fear and joy when their very own beloved Jesus blazed into their disappointed lives. He came to them, saying their

names! He came, transformed and better than before.

Did the crucifixion hold our Lord? Was that the end? Sisters, as we are left cradling the broken pieces of the life we'd hoped for, it feels as if the shards pierce our hearts. There is One Who stands with us, helping us hold the pieces together. We glimpse the scars in His palms as He applies the golden glue that mends and redeems. As we process our sadness with Him, and as we keep on loving Him instead of blaming Him, beauty begins to

be restored at our broken places, forming our own beautiful scars. If we *show up and look up* while it's still dark, He reveals Himself to us.

Glory of glories! With all this *beholding* going on, we begin to be mirrored in Him. Or He in us. "*For we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*" (II Corinthians 3:18). Look up, sisters, our Redemption draws nigh! 



## junior messages

### He Hears Our Prayers

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

*God hears when we pray. He hears our grandchildren's prayers and that is precious. MEB*

#### Hope in the Hunt

**M**y grandson loves the excitement of his dad shooting a deer—the cadence of the wait and the suspense

of the hunt! Their family lives off a gravel road surrounded by woods, brush, and several open fields. Most years, his dad goes deer hunting in an unusual and rather easy way.

My daughter shared this story.

Saturday was opening day of deer hunting season (rifle). Kyle\* spent the majority of the day looking out of the windows of their house with binoculars and hope.

Five times he went out to the barn to Dad, who was working on his truck, saying “Dad, I think I see a deer. You had better come look.” So Dad would go check but could not see anything. Was something wrong with Dad’s eyes, or did he lack the ability to see a deer behind every bush?

By late afternoon, Dad completed his work and came in. He sat down in his arm chair, stating emphatically, “I am NOT going out again.”

Just like that, Kyle peered out the window once more. “Dad, THERE’S A DEER!”

Dad sat up. And sure enough, a doe was walking across the field. Dad ran for his gun and headed for the upstairs window. The rest of us plastered ourselves to the downstairs windows, and then we waited and waited. The deer had stopped completely, giving Dad a chance at a broadside shot. The deer was also only two jumps from the hedgerow.

Dad kept things exciting.

“Bang,” said the gun. The deer leaped lightly away, definitely unhurt.

The suspense ratcheted up a notch. One more leap and the deer would disappear!

“Bang,” barked the gun. This time the deer dropped amidst the whoops and hollering from downstairs.

How many men do live practice only, include an audience of the entire family, and still succeed? At least one.

The youngest child, Henry, said, “Deer. Boum. Dead.”

Kyle said, “Mom, I prayed Dad would get a deer today. But I had almost given up hope.”

### **Help for the Hand**

I was in a hurry when we were cleaning our cabin. The presence of two grandsons and the knowledge that three more were at home with our daughter-in-law contributed to my speed-cleaning endeavors. Determined to still do a thorough job, I grabbed paper towels and wiped up the edge of the bathroom floor, swiping up any stray hairs. Carelessly, my finger scraped a log. I jerked back, but it was too late. A long splinter was now living under my fingernail, nearly the length of the nail. Ouch!

“Why was I so careless? Would I need to rush to the doctor?” These thoughts raced through my mind, with my finger throbbing, as the

grandsons and I drove home. This time haste made a hurt hand.

I asked my daughter-in-law for help. Would she be able to extract that piece of wood with a fine point tweezers?

“Let’s pray first,” I requested. With grandchildren around us we bowed our heads, asking our Father to enable Carolyn to pull out the splinter.

I situated myself beside a big window, and Kyle shone my cell phone light on my finger. Carolyn bent over my hand. “I know this will

hurt,” she murmured. We watched breathlessly as she got a grasp on the wood that was just even with my finger nail. She pulled slowly, paused, and pulled again. We watched with awe as the whole splinter slid right out. We gazed at the slender sliver that had caused such pain, and we certainly praised the Lord!

Several days later Kyle’s dad got a splinter in his finger. “Dad, you need to pray,” announced Kyle. Then he grinned, “I think we need Carolyn.”

*\*Names have been changed.*



## youth messages

### Just a little Chat (Part 1)

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

**T**he volleyball game had been lively that night. Dave had thoroughly enjoyed the exercise and the snack afterward. It sure hadn’t hurt that the teams he’d been on had won several times that evening! As he walked to his truck, Dave noticed Brad also heading to his nearby vehicle. Brad hadn’t seemed like himself tonight. Usually upbeat and talkative, he was awfully quiet that evening. “Hey, Brad!” Dave called as he turned to intercept his friend, “You got a sec?”

Brad looked up from where he was

putting his shoes in the back seat of his car, “Oh hey, Dave, I didn’t see ya there. What’s up?”

“I noticed you didn’t seem like yourself tonight.” Dave answered slowly, not sure where this conversation might go. “You seemed kinda down. You got something on your mind?”

“Was it that obvious?” Brad asked. “I didn’t mean to be a downer. I just have a lot on my mind.” His voice trailed off and an awkward silence hung in the air.

Dave’s heart went out to the younger

man. He knew that the changes their church had gone through over the last year had been hard on their youth group. Several families from their congregation had started attending elsewhere and a few of Brad's friends had been among those who had left, including Brad's best friend and cousin, Carson. An idea slowly began to form, "You got plans tomorrow? I'd like to try that new coffee shop in town. It's been open for a couple weeks and I haven't been in there yet. You wanna get breakfast and talk?"

"Oh, you mean *Solid Ground*? I was in there with Carson soon after it opened. Their coffee is amazing, and I saw their menu said they have some breakfast sandwiches too." He paused, "Ya, I think I could do breakfast. Dad said he wanted my help cleaning up the shop a bit after lunch so my morning is free."

"Great! How does seven o'clock sound?" Dave asked.

"Seven? As in a.m.? On a Saturday? Who even raised you?!" Brad's grin slowly settled into its customary place on his face. "Make it eight o'clock and it's a deal."

Dave glanced at his dashboard as his truck rolled into the parking lot of *Solid Ground* the next morning. It read 8:02. He chuckled as he saw Brad leaning against his car tapping his wrist. They smiled as they greeted

each other with a handshake and entered the café. They ordered their food and found a secluded table. They made small talk for a while until a server brought them both steaming cups of the house blend coffee and their food.

"You boys drink as much as you like!" she said with a conspiratorial wink, "The in-house coffee has free refills. On the other hand, you'll have to pay for the food if you want more. Is there anything else I can get you?"

"Oh, we aim to get our money's worth." Dave answered. "Everything looks great! We'll holler if we need anything. Thanks!"

"Yes, thanks!" Brad inserted. "This food does look amazing."

"My pleasure, sonny," the matronly server answered as she turned and bustled away.

"You mentioned that you have a lot on your mind?" Dave said as he started in on his food.

Brad chewed slowly then washed down his mouthful of food with a swig of coffee. "It's been kinda hard, you know? What with everything that has happened in the past year and my friends going to different churches. I really miss hanging out with them, and sometimes I feel like leaving too. I just want everything to go back to the way it was."

Dave nodded. He had suspected

that this was part of what was bothering his young friend but to hear him say it confirmed his suspicions. "Have you talked with your parents about it at all?" he asked.

"No, it was hard enough on them that Uncle Jameses aren't attending here anymore. It's been pretty hard on Mom that her sister left and now my parents are trying to limit how much time I spend with Carson. I don't understand what is so wrong with spending time with him! They're Christians, and they seem happy. Why don't they like it if I hang out with Carson and his buddies?" Brad trailed off as he realized his outburst had drawn the attention of some nearby diners.

"What do Carson and his buddies do when they get together?" Dave queried.

"Well..." Brad hesitated. "We just hang out, listen to music and stuff. Sometimes they watch a movie, but they've never watched any bad ones when I'm around. Some of the guys are pretty big Penn State football fans so they've invited me to watch games with them, but so far I haven't been able to come up with a good enough excuse to do that. I've never been that big into sports, but I think I could get into it if I watched it with them regularly."

Dave contemplated that for a bit

while he ate. After a few minutes of silence, he asked the question that weighed on his mind. "Is that what you want? I know some of the things they've had to deal with in that church. Do you really want to get involved in a situation like that?"

"What do you mean 'a situation like that'?" Brad countered. "I didn't realize they had stuff going on over there."

Dave thought a bit. He wanted to be careful how much he said. Brad was only 17, and he needed to be careful not to say too much, but he needed to give him enough information so he wouldn't get curious and start looking for answers from a less-reliable source. "Phil Stoltzfus is one of the ministers over there. He used to go to school with Dad and is a second cousin or something. He asked my dad for advice about some of the problems they've had with immorality in the church, and it isn't just among the young people."

"Immoral? Who and what!? Carson never mentioned anything about it." Brad gasped. "Is it like big stuff or just little stuff?"

"I don't know particulars. Dad just mentioned it to me once as a precaution. He told me to never put myself in a compromising situation or even in a position where someone could question my character. That's

why I never work alone at someone's house. I always take one of my siblings along. Dad also mentioned that they have some false doctrine that they've been dealing with." Dave thought a moment. "I think he said they have folks questioning the six-day creation, and even people teaching baptismal regeneration."

"Is it really that big a deal?" Brad asked. "Don't people have the right to believe what they want as long as they get along and have peace in the church?"

"Not necessarily. We follow the New Testament teachings as closely as we can. Obviously, we can only do what we believe God's Word is telling us," said Dave. "It's dangerous if after this many years of accepted church doctrine, people start doubting God's Word and coming up with new interpretations of Scripture. When a body of believers doesn't all agree on the same sound Biblical doctrine, and all they focus on is loving each other without true unity of heart and vision, you end up with a shallow

church. Then you end up with a myriad of so-called "little issues" that can grow into big ones very quickly."

"I hadn't thought of it that way." Brad stared contemplatively into his slowly-cooling cup of coffee. "Thanks for this, Dave, I want to think about this and then maybe we can pick up this conversation again later. I've gotta make a couple stops here in town before going home, and some of those places close at noon. Carson's little sister is getting baptized this Sunday and my family is going for the service and fellowship dinner. Maybe we can get together again next Saturday."

"Sure," Dave replied. "I hope you enjoy your visit tomorrow. I'll be praying for you, and don't hesitate to reach out to me anytime, Brad. I want to do anything I can to help."

-to be continued 

*Disclaimer: All people and locations in this story are fictitious. However, the issues that they are facing are not. Those are all based on real life experiences and known issues in Anabaptist churches.*

*Spread* your arms to those with needs, And serve with *joy* and *zeal*;  
Fill each day with *golden* deeds, And give your very best.

-WILLIAM A. WARD

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Periodicals

## THOUGHT GEMS

A pint of example is worth a gallon of advice.

• • • • •

Critics are people who go places and boo things.

• • • • •

The kindest people are those who forgive and forget.

• • • • •

Happiness is a thing to be practiced, like a violin. *-John Lubbock*

• • • • •

From our ancestors come our names; from our virtues, our honors.

*-Grover Cleveland*

• • • • •

Don't be discouraged; it may be the last key in the bunch that opens the door.

• • • • •

Choose a goal for which you are willing to exchange a piece of your life.

• • • • •

Don't discourage the other man's plans unless you have better ones to offer.

• • • • •

Character is made by many acts; it may be lost by a single act.

• • • • •

Truth is stubborn. It doesn't apologize to anyone.

• • • • •

Stretching the truth won't make it last any longer.